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Mediums of Belief: Muslim Place Making in 20th Century Turkey

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Mediums of Belief: Muslim Place Making in 20th Century Turkey

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

by

Timur Warner Hammond

2016
This dissertation explores the contemporary place of Islam in urban life through a mixed-methods project based in Istanbul, Turkey. In cities around the world, the form and practice of Islam is being reshaped by new kinds of political governance, economic development, and cultural consumption. At the same time, debates about religious authority, social integration, and communal identity often revolve around questions of how people move through, transform, and inhabit the public and private spaces of the city as Muslims. Istanbul is a city in which those questions and debates have particular relevance.

On the one hand, Islam is an unmistakable part of the city’s landscape. Istanbul’s mosques and minarets articulate a Muslim urban identity rooted in the very stones of the city. On the other hand, everyday practices of being Muslim in Istanbul today are also inextricable from a rapidly changing set of political, social, and economic transformations. These two dimensions –
an Islam rooted in the city and an Islam woven through local, national, and transnational networks – come together in the Istanbul district of Eyüp, long known as one of Istanbul’s most important Muslim shrines. In this dissertation, I argue that Eyüp’s built environment functions as the key medium of connection through which both residents and visitors link themselves to the world around them, an act at the heart of making a place for Islam in the city. I show that the form of the built environment and the meanings it carries are not rooted and unchanging but the outcome of debates and contests between unequally positioned individuals and groups.

Drawing on both archival and ethnographic methods, I show how, why, and with what consequences Eyüp’s built environment has mediated different connections over the course of the 20th century. In Chapter One, I explore three different buildings in Eyüp that connected Islam to the modern in different ways: the construction of a new Halkevi (People’s House), the restoration of the Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque, and the expansion of Eyüp’s road network. By placing Eyüp’s religious landscape in a particular relationship to the modern city, these projects helped create a new image of urban Islam. Chapter Two turns to the 1990s, a period in which Eyüp’s landscape was configured not as modern but as Ottoman. Excavating the cultural politics of the local municipality and the constellation of institutions, laws, and agendas that made Eyüp’s redevelopment possible, I argue that making Eyüp Ottoman involved the articulation of new connections between past and present even as other connections between residents and the district’s working-class landscapes were erased. Chapter Three focuses on the geography of observance that characterizes Ramadan in Eyüp. Avoiding simple mappings of religious versus secular space, I argue that this geography of Ramadan is best understood in terms of the overlapping connections that link private and public space, internal piety with external observance, and this one district with the world around. In Chapter Four, I examine the
normative rules of place that govern how the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan should be used, moved through, and experienced. Rather than be rooted in place, I find that these rules are in fact the product of interconnections between people, places, and narratives. Focusing on three groups typically seen as out of place in the mosque – foreign visitors, tourists, and women – I argue that the greatest tensions are located not in the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims but in the different forms of being Muslim in this mosque.

My archival and ethnographic study of the Istanbul district of Eyüp shows how Islam’s place in the city is made through contested acts of connection. Although these connections take multiple forms and make use of diverse materials, the built environment functions as the key medium through which people articulate meaningful connections with the world around them. This dissertation brings together scholarship in cultural geography, cultural anthropology, urban studies, and Middle East area studies to provide a rich account of how Islam is lived, experienced, and articulated in relation to the changing city of Istanbul.
The dissertation of Timur Hammond is approved.

Michael R. Curry

John A. Agnew

Suzanne Slyomovics

Lieba Bernice Faier, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016
For my parents,

My first teachers.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... ix

A NOTE ON NAMING PERSON AND PLACE ................................................................................... xii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................... xiii

VITA ...................................................................................................................................................... xvii

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 1
  An Arrival ........................................................................................................................................... 1
  Dissertation Argument ....................................................................................................................... 12
  Contribution to the Literature ........................................................................................................... 15
  Mediums of Connection ....................................................................................................................... 22
  Returning to the Path .......................................................................................................................... 31
  Methods & Positionality ....................................................................................................................... 34
  Mapping the Dissertation .................................................................................................................... 38

CHAPTER 1: MAKING EYÜP MODERN ......................................................................................... 43
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 45
  Setting the Stage: Reform and Resistance in ‘Modern’ Turkey, 1923-1940 .................................. 50
  Building a Halkevi (People’s House): Bringing the City to Eyüp ................................................. 57
  Zal Mahmut Paşa: A Mosque for the Modern ................................................................................. 68
  Boulevards and Squares: Routes of Modern Life .......................................................................... 83
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 94

CHAPTER 2: MAKING EYÜP OTTOMAN .................................................................................. 98
  Opening Scene: A Curious Fountain ................................................................................................. 98
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 100
  Setting the Stage ................................................................................................................................. 102
  Making Eyüp Ottoman ...................................................................................................................... 111
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 142

CHAPTER 3: THE GEOGRAPHIES OF RAMADAN IN EYÜP ...................................................... 145
  Opening Scene ................................................................................................................................. 145
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 148
  Spaces and Rhythms of Observance ................................................................................................. 151
  “Bir Başka Güzel”: Eyüp as a Place of Distinction ........................................................................ 158
The Political Geographies of Ramadan .......................................................... 162  
Responses ......................................................................................................... 170  
Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 182  

CHAPTER 4: OUT OF PLACE IN EYÜP SULTAN? ............................................. 189  
Opening Scene ................................................................................................ 189  
Introduction .................................................................................................... 191  
Mediating the Rules of Place ......................................................................... 194  
Foreigners in the Mosque ............................................................................. 205  
Turkish Tourists in the Mosque .................................................................... 212  
Women in the Mosque ................................................................................. 218  
Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 223  

CONCLUSION: GLOBAL CITIES OF ISLAM ..................................................... 228  
Introduction .................................................................................................... 228  
Summarizing the Dissertation ....................................................................... 232  
Future Research Trajectories ....................................................................... 236  

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................. 242
# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: View of Eyüp when arriving by ferry from Eminönü. Timur Hammond, 2012. .......... 1

Figure 2: Mosque of Eyüp Sultan and square. Timur Hammond, 2013. .................................. 2

Figure 3: Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, view from inner courtyard into outer courtyard. Timur
Hammond, 2012....................................................................................................................... 3

Figure 4: Eyüp in relation to the wider city of Istanbul. Google Maps. Map data © 2016. ........ 5

Figure 5: Outer courtyard of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Timur Hammond, 2012. ....................... 11

Figure 6: Floral detail of Ottoman-era gravestone in Eyüp's cemetery. A vendor sells crowns
woven of flowers in background. Timur Hammond, 2013.................................................. 14

Figure 7: Billboard advertising the Eyüp Municipality's renovation of the square. The main text
reads, "The Eyüp Sultan Square Has Been Reorganized Once More, Covered With Marble
and Carpets." Timur Hammond, 2012. .................................................................................. 33

Figure 8: View from near the Pierre Loti Cafe, looking east across the Golden Horn. Timur
Hammond, 2012....................................................................................................................... 42

Figure 9: Overturned graves in graveyard between Kızıl Mescid and Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque.
Photograph probably taken by Ali Saim Ülgen in 1950s. © SALT Research (TASUH3269001).................................................. 44

Figure 10: Family graves in Eyüp Cemetery marking the language reform. Some are written in
Ottoman Turkish, some in modern Turkish. Timur Hammond, 2012......................... 54

Figure 11: View looking from roof of Zal Mahmut Paşa toward tomb of Nakkaş Hasan Paşa and
Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, 1933. © SALT Research (TASUH0717).......................................... 76

Figure 12: View of Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque, many of its windows broken, from lower medrese
courtyard, likely 1950s. © SALT Research (TASUDOCM0017)........................................... 81

Figure 13: Detail of "Ebedi Eyüpsultanlılar" Fountain. Timur Hammond, 2012.................... 99

Figure 14: Legacies of Eyüp's industrial past. Depots and workshops in the hilltop neighborhood
of Nişancı, Eyüp. Timur Hammond, 2012............................................................................. 105

Figure 15: Markers of 1990s restoration projects, highlighting partnership of Eyüp Municipality
and a man named Şerif Dilber. Timur Hammond, 2013......................................................... 124
Figure 16: That fountain in January 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 17: View of restaurants lining one side of Eyüp's central square. Many of these restaurants have been opened since the 1990s to cater to increasing numbers of visitors. Timur Hammond, 2012

Figure 18: Ramadan Complex being built, July 5, 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 19: Fiberglass Arcades, Half-Assembled, July 6, 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 20: Ramadan arcades, painted, assembled, and nearly complete, July 10, 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 21: Mahya lights hung from minarets of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, reading “There is no God but God.” Timur Hammond, 2012

Figure 22: Temporary kiosks built to house restaurants and cafes during Ramadan. They are rented out by the Eyüp Municipality to vendors from outside the district. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 23: Stage built by the Eyüp Municipality to host Ramadan programming. Municipality logos are displayed prominently. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 24: Schematic map of Eyüp's central square during Ramadan in 2013. © Timur Hammond

Figure 25: Banner hung from one of the major restaurants beside Eyüp's central square thanking Mayor Ismail Kavuncu for his efforts, August 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 26: Eyüp's central square being used for families to picnic during Ramadan in 2012. Timur Hammond, 2012

Figure 27: A comfortable afternoon in the Ramadan complex, July 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 28: Visiting the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan as tourists during Ramadan. Timur Hammond, 2013

Figure 29: Schematic plan of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Primary doors marked in red. © Timur Hammond

Figure 30: In the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, the son cemaat yeri is located to either side of the main door (in this picture, green). Timur Hammond, 2013
Figure 31: The inner courtyard of the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, crowded with visitors. Timur Hammond, 2012.......................... 199

Figure 32: People praying before the tomb of Hacı Beşir Ağā, inner courtyard of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. The Arabic inscription above is the Surah al-Fatiha, the sign below an explanatory sign in Turkish. Timur Hammond, 2012.......................... 201

Figure 33: German tourists watching Friday prayers in Eyüp. Timur Hammond, 2012 .......... 210

Figure 34: Signs posted by local officials in January 2013. The sign on the left was addressed to all visitors, the sign on the right was addressed to women in particular. Timur Hammond, 2013................................................................. 221

Figure 35: Female visitor to the mosque reading an explanatory sign in Turkish in the outer courtyard of Eyüp Sultan. The sign appealing for the assistance of female visitors stands to the left. Timur Hammond, 2013. ................................................................. 222

Figure 36: Crowds in Eyüp during Miraç Kandili (Lailat al-Miraj), 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013.................................................................................................................. 231

Figure 37: Screenshot of a video posted by the Eyüp Municipality to Facebook in May 2016 advertising President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's participation in the opening of 13 new buildings in Eyüp. May 4, 2016................................................................. 237
A NOTE ON NAMING PERSON AND PLACE

One of the challenges in writing about Eyüp is the slippage between the name of the place and the name of the person buried as its center. For reasons of consistency, I’ve made the following decisions. I use the Turkish spelling, hence the person buried at the district’s center is named Halid bin Zeyd Ebû Eyüp el-Ensârî (instead of Khalid bin Zeyd Abu Ayyub al-Ansari). Following the conventions throughout the Muslim world, his name is sometimes shortened to the patronymic Ebu Eyüp. At other times, however, his name is given as Eyüp Sultan Hazretleri (His Excellency Eyüp Sultan). For reasons of specificity and consistency, I refer to the person as Halid bin Zeyd. The district’s name also shifts: Sometimes it is also named Eyüp Sultan, but more frequently it is given simply as Eyüp. Thanks to the vagaries of shifting pronunciations and transliterations, the district can also be spelled Eyüb, Eyyüb, Eyyüb, Eyoub, Eyoup, and Ayoub. Although I preserve those spellings in primary sources, I choose to use Eyüp as the ‘standard’ spelling of the district’s name.
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I benefitted from a range of opportunities and resources at UCLA. Over the years, classes and conversations with faculty in the Department of Geography and elsewhere helped me learn and grow. My thanks to James Gelvin, Nile Green, Güliz Kuruoğlu, Helga Leitner, Adam Moore, Gabi Piterberg, Eric Sheppard, and Sherry Ortner for their time and teaching. For always being ready to listen and to help, my deep and sincere thanks to Kasi McMurray. My time at UCLA spanned four different Student Affairs Officers, and my thanks to Irina Tauber, Kristina Magpayo, Lisa Lee, and Nayla Huq for helping me sort out a range of academic and financial matters.

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This dissertation was finished while living in Vermont. Pablo Bose, Meghan Cope, Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, and Harlan Morehouse welcomed me to the world of UVM Geography, providing both encouragement and a venue in which to present work. I am excited to teach with them next year. As tends to happen with dissertations, the final months were filled with exceptional acts of friendship: Kate, Abigail, Alice, and Ceren, thank you.

Throughout this entire process, my family has been and continues to be a source of love and support. My parents were my first teachers – though in different ways, they continue to nurture my curiosity about and engagement with the world around me. Even if I didn’t always listen to my father’s suggestions, I came to appreciate them with time. From my mother, I learned how to listen. My brother’s sense of humor has always helped me keep this project in perspective. While in Istanbul for fieldwork, I lived with my family: my grandmother, my uncle, and his wife. Their unflagging generosity and warmth helped make Istanbul a home for me in a way I could have never expected. Most important of all, the opportunity to live with them made it possible to spend two years with my aging grandmother. Even as her Turkish slipped away, my growing grasp of the language provided a rare and intimate opportunity to learn more of her.

I met Mike, Judy, Maia, and Erika at the beginning of this dissertation process. They have been a constant presence in the background, and I look forward to our friendships growing in the years ahead. And finally, there is Kirsten. You have taught me to be patient and generous with myself – building a life with you has brought me so much happiness, and I look forward to wherever it is that we go next.
VITA

Before attending the University of California, Los Angeles, Timur Hammond earned an undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, where he majored in English with a minor in Creative Writing. His undergraduate experience included a semester abroad at the American University in Cairo (Fall 2003) and an independent summer research experience in Samarkand, Uzbekistan (Summer 2004) funded by a Smallwood Grant from the UNC-CH Office of Undergraduate Research. From 2001-2005, he was the recipient of a National Merit Scholarship and the William Davie Scholarship, a merit-based award from the university.

While at the University of California, Los Angeles, Timur was the recipient of Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for the study of Arabic (2007-2008), modern Turkish (2009-2010, Summer 2010), and Ottoman Turkish (Summer 2011). He completed his MA in Geography at UCLA in 2010 with a thesis entitled “It Has Made Me Who I Am: Istanbul, Orhan Pamuk, and the Fashioning of a Literary Territory.” He worked for six quarters as a Teaching Assistant in the Department of Geography, and he also designed and served as the instructor of record for courses in the Department of Geography and the undergraduate cluster program on Los Angeles. These courses included Mapping Los Angeles (Spring 2011), Water: Myth, Monument, and California (Winter 2009), California (Summers 2014, 2015) and People and the Earth’s Ecosystems (Summers 2014, 2015).

He has been a frequent presenter at the national meetings of the Association of American Geographers and the Middle East Studies Association. In 2013, his paper “Matters of the Mosque: Assemblage, Islam, and Eyüp Sultan” was the winner of the Ph.D. Student Paper
competition in both the Middle East North Africa Specialty Group and the Cultural Geography Specialty Group.

Beginning in Fall 2016, Timur will be an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of Vermont.
INTRODUCTION

An Arrival

If you arrive in Eyüp by boat on a Saturday afternoon in springtime, you disembark from the ferry at a small wooden building and follow the crowd to an intersection crossing the four-lane shore road that connects Eminönü to Alibeyköy.

Figure 1: View of Eyüp when arriving by ferry from Eminönü. Timur Hammond, 2012.

When the light changes, the crowd pushes across the road. To your left, there are families picnicking in a small park. To your right, there is a fountain and a small mosque. The road narrows as you pass an old house clad in wood, then the old post office, long since shuttered. The noise of car traffic begins to recede as you move with the crowd towards the center of the neighborhood. At the next intersection you see two tombs at the entrance to the next street, as
though they had been positioned there to watch the people flowing deeper into the district. The street narrows again, and you find yourself working your way through a crowd of people browsing the stalls on either side. The stalls sell headscarves, prayer beads, perfumes, Qur’ans, prayer books, plaques inscribed with Allah, spices, dates, water from Mecca, plaques inscribed with the words that begin the Qur’an, *In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful*. You pass more tombs on either side of the street. In the small gardens that surround these tombs, you see gravestones, some darkened by age, some newly polished and repainted in green, their letters picked out in gold. The street opens suddenly and you find yourself in a big square. Families are gathering to take photographs in front of the splashing fountain or to feed the pigeons assembled in one corner of the square. The square has been paved in marble, and it shines a brilliant white in the midday sun.

![Figure 2: Mosque of Eyüp Sultan and square. Timur Hammond, 2013.](image)
If you follow the crowd, you pass into the first courtyard of the mosque. Men perform their ablutions at the slope-roofed fountain in the center of the courtyard and at the faucets along one wall. You pass by the women queuing to enter the mosque’s women’s section, then under the spreading branches of a plane tree and into the inner courtyard of the mosque. You find a press of people, arrayed in loose groups but all facing the same wall, tiled in beautiful blue.

Figure 3: Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, view from inner courtyard into outer courtyard. Timur Hammond, 2012.

There is a small window in the tiled wall, and if you make your way to the front of the crowd and look through the window, you will see another door into a small chamber. At the center of the chamber is a tomb inlaid with silver and mother of pearl. All about you, people are arrayed in various positions of prayer, some reading from small books, some mouthing prayers.
silently, some simply leaning their hands against the tiled wall. This is the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd Ebû Eyyûb el-Ensari, Companion of the Prophet Muhammad.¹

As the stories tell, Halid bin Zeyd joined in the 7th century Arab siege of Constantinople. When he fell – either in battle or of disease and old age – he was buried in the vicinity of the as yet unconquered Byzantine walls. Over the course of the following centuries, Halid bin Zeyd’s tomb was lost from view, lingering on only in story and memory. In 1453, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the young Ottoman sultan, asked Akşemseddin, his chief religious adviser, to discover the tomb’s true location. Akşemseddin withdrew to meditate and pray. When he emerged from his seclusion, he took the young sultan to an unmarked patch of meadow and said, *This is where you will find the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd.* The sultan immediately commanded that his soldiers dig in the spot indicated. At a depth of two meters, the men found a stone gravestone reading, *This grave is Ebâ Eyyûb.* Beneath the stone they found the body itself, miraculously preserved as though he had just been buried. The sultan immediately ordered the body washed and buried again and commanded that a tomb be built immediately upon the site. After the tomb – and after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople – came a mosque, a library, a school, and a bath. After those came more cemeteries, smaller mosques, and a neighborhood that took its name – Eyüp – from the man buried in this tomb at the center of this mosque. If the Ottoman Fatih Sultan Mehmet is known as the conqueror of Constantinople, Halid bin Zeyd is often described as the city’s spiritual conqueror; where the Ottoman conquest of 1453 marked a *political* triumph, it

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¹ For reasons of consistency, I shorten his name to Halid bin Zeyd, although the names Ebu Eyyub and Eyüp Sultan are also used frequently. See “A Note on Naming Person and Place.”
was Halid bin Zeyd’s death – and the miraculous rediscovery of his body – that marked the religious conquest of the city.\(^2\)

This tomb and the district that surrounds it thus occupy a central place within the narrative of Istanbul as an essentially Muslim city. Against those who use monuments like the Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome to describe Istanbul as a Greek or Byzantine city, or those who turn to the districts of Taksim, Galata, and Pera to characterize the city as a cosmopolitan and international one, Eyüp functions as the site that guarantees Istanbul’s past, present, and future as a Muslim city. As I was frequently told over the course of my fieldwork, “If he [Halid bin Zeyd] hadn’t existed, this” – meaning both Eyüp and Istanbul – “would never have been (Olmasaydı burası olmazdı).”

![Map of Istanbul with Eyüp highlighted](image)

**Figure 4: Eyüp in relation to the wider city of Istanbul. Google Maps. Map data © 2016.**

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That statement acquired its fullest meaning when I asked people to explain the district’s present character. To explain why the present mattered, they shifted the discussion to a distant origin that determined the present.³ The throngs of people who visit Eyüp today were thus both the result of Halid bin Zeyd’s presence and the proof of the story’s truth. “If he hadn’t existed, this would never have been.” Eyüp’s religious character in the present could only be told in terms of that origin. In one sense, the use of origins to tell the history of Eyüp and Istanbul mirror histories of place around the world, whether those which locate the identity of the United States of American in an originary and inviolate Constitution, define Europe’s identity as an essentially (and internally) Christian one, or justify Israel’s present claims in a pure Biblical past.⁴

**Eyüp is Not Unchanged**

As I learned over the course of my fieldwork, however, there were other ways of narrating this district’s importance. Eyüp’s present religious character could not be understood solely in terms of Halid bin Zeyd and the inaccessible past he represented. Two issues in particular challenged a characterization of Eyüp’s unchanged Islamic importance. The first issue was the number of people I met who described Eyüp not as a place of presence but as a place of absence. In lieu of the throngs of visitors, the burbling fountains, and bustling shops, these people experienced Eyüp in terms of the businesses and people who had once filled its streets during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. “Eyüp is gone,” they would say, “Eyüp yok olmuş.”

³ Compare Marilyn Ivy’s observation about origins as events: “The event never simply exists as such, but produces its effects only after the fact, in a repetition that becomes its own spectral origin.” Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 22.

The Eyüp that they remembered – the absent Eyüp – was constituted in two ways: First, the face-to-face and neighborly encounters that once defined social relations in this district. “Once,” long-time residents said, “everybody used to know each other. Now you can walk the street and it’s like we’ve become strangers in our own home (yabancı olduk).” Second, they were referring to the physical sites – bakeries, grocers, cafes, car-repair shops, cinemas, and banks – that once served the neighborhood. Those sites used to nurture the social encounters that made Eyüp ‘Eyüp,’ and their disappearance provided a powerful material reminder of vanishing social relationships. The Eyüp that they remembered was also religiously important, but they remembered an Islam that was simpler, more unadorned. “Daha sade idi,” one woman told me, “It was simpler.” How and when did this Eyüp disappear? And what was the difference between the Eyüp these long-time residents described and the Eyüp that was described as unchanged?

Their Eyüp – an Eyüp of vanished social intimacy – was in tension with an Eyüp marketed today by the Eyüp Municipality and many others as having ‘returned to its origins (öze dönüş).’ In ascribing these changes as the foregone conclusion of Eyüp’s essential Islamic identity – an identity grounded in the figure of Halid bin Zeyd – the language of origins glosses over the fierce and unequal debates about who has the authority to transform Eyüp, for whom they do so, and about the broader publics that are envisioned through this place. This debate has played out socially (in the form of social circles who don’t interact despite living in proximity to each other), discursively (in the histories, vocabularies, and imaginaries that different individuals draw upon to describe and inhabit this place), and materially (in the unequal capacity to reshape the district’s built environment).

The second issue that challenged a characterization of Eyüp as an unchanged Islamic place were the shifting acts, imaginaries, objects, and subjects involved in the practice of Islam.
Consider the act of pilgrimage. Today when one visits the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – the mosque in which the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd is located and that functions as the key site for pilgrimage – one notices a series of signs posted prominently throughout the mosque. The signs are in Turkish, and it is clear that their audience is not foreign visitors but domestic ones. They include a number of stipulations about the proper and improper modes of visiting the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd. Visitors may pray for God to have mercy on the soul of Halid bin Zeyd, but they may not ask Halid bin Zeyd to grant any of their wishes. They may not tie string around the fences that surround the graveyard, nor may they light candles. Those who do such things, the signs continue, are committing a sin against Islam and are not visiting as the Prophet Muhammad instructed. Such signs are a legacy of the 1990s, a moment in which the political ascendancy of the Islamist-oriented Welfare Party coincided with attempts to standardize the practice of Islam and purify it of its heterodox and superstitious elements. Thus the practices of pilgrimage and the practices of Islam more generally are different now than they were in the 1990s, and markedly different than devotional practices of the 1950s and 60s.

Like the acts of pilgrimage, the sites of pilgrimage have also shifted. As one man explained to me while taking me through the neighborhood, there used to be an open well in the courtyard of one local tomb. The tomb was a 16th century tomb of an Ottoman official who was not known as an especially significant religious figure. Despite that, the well immediately beside his tomb was known as a wishing well: People – generally women – would drink from the well and then pray in front of it, asking for clarification about their futures. “It wasn’t correct,” the man continued, “that sort of thing isn’t permitted in Islam. And besides, the water wasn’t clean. Local troublemakers used to even pee in it.” Today, the well is covered with a solid metal box.
that was installed in the late 1990s by the same Islamist municipality that tried to reform heterodox practices of visitation in the same period.

Despite the metal box, however, people continue to visit the well. Sometimes you will see a group of people gathered in a circle around the metal box, their hands open in the position of prayer. Sometimes one person will even spin in a slow, trance-like state hoping to find some sort of divine guidance. The adjacent tomb now has an attendant. One afternoon we were sitting in conversation when a man poked his head inside. “There’s a woman praying out here,” he said, “isn’t she not supposed to be doing that?” The attendant stood up quickly and walked to the door of the tomb. “Ma’am,” he called out as the woman walked away, “you know that sort of thing is not permitted in our religion, right? Praying like that has no benefit.”

Third, the objects of pilgrimage have also shifted. There is no clearer sign of that than in the figure of Halid bin Zeyd himself. Despite almost universal acknowledgement of the religious importance of Eyüp and the person buried in the tomb – His Excellency Eyüp Sultan (Eyüp Sultan Hazretleri), people would often say – the specific content of that importance would vary dramatically from person to person. Among the questions in a visitor survey commissioned by the municipality in the 1990s were a series asking people if they knew who ‘Eyüp Sultan’ was. Moreover, even if people knew that Eyüp Sultan was in fact Halid bin Zeyd and that Halid bin Zeyd had been the Companion of the Prophet Muhammad who hosted him in Medina, there was a considerable range in the understanding of how that information should matter. One might have the formal knowledge of Halid bin Zeyd without necessarily being affected by that knowledge; alternately, visitors might be physically affected by visits to the mosque without a full knowledge of Halid bin Zeyd’s life and history. As with the acts and sites involved, the objects of pilgrimage – chief among them Halid bin Zeyd – were not stable but markedly
unstable, requiring constant regulation in order to encourage appropriate and conscious modes of visitation.

Finally, the subjects of pilgrimage have shifted. One crowded afternoon, I was speaking with an undercover policeman who was assigned to the mosque. Looking at the streams of entering and exiting people pushing against each other, he turned to me and said, “This mosque isn’t big enough. If only it could have been built bigger!” Indeed, one of the largest shifts in public life in Istanbul over the past two decades has been the increased visibility of Islam. Since its first construction, it is likely that the mosque of Eyüp Sultan has always been a site of pilgrimage. At the same time, however, the mosque also played an important role within Ottoman court protocol and its daily visitation was not nearly as public an activity. More dramatically, the closure of the tomb in 1924 during the secularizing reforms of the early Turkish Republic and the discouraging of regular mosque attendance further circumscribed the public who gathered in this site. Beginning in the late 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, Eyüp Sultan became an increasingly popular destination for emerging pious publics. There are now so many people who visit the district during religious holidays that they fill not only the mosque but also the entire adjacent square. In the process, religious publics today literally overflow the religious landscape of the past, producing tensions of social behavior and conduct.

Moreover, today’s pious publics are often quite different than in the past. With Turkey’s socioeconomic gains of the past twenty years, a new pious consumer class has emerged. Many of the restaurants that line one side of the square now cater precisely to those groups, most of whom did not exist prior to the 1990s. The emergence of these pious consumers, however, has generated new debates about class, consumption, and public religiosity. While visitors to the
mosque and tomb of Eyüp Sultan have always been internally diverse, the range of subjects involved in ‘Muslim’ acts of pilgrimage today challenges any single characterization of ‘Islam’.

This is the puzzle at Eyüp’s center: Today, the district’s built environment simultaneously marks both continuity and rupture in the practice of Islam. For some, the district’s mosques, tombs, medreses, and graveyards constitute a tangible link between themselves and distant times and places, links that are fundamental to making Islam one central part of urban life. For others, however, those same sites sit within a void of memory, reminders of the social worlds once organized through these sites. At stake is the contested process whereby the city – with its tangled material and social fabrics, its mosques and monuments, but also its squares, factories, and boulevards – comes to be the key medium through which people articulate and transit understandings of Islam.

Figure 5: Outer courtyard of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Timur Hammond, 2012.
Dissertation Argument

My dissertation, entitled *Mediums of Belief: Muslim Place Making in 20th Century Turkey*, begins from this paradox: despite the dramatic and far-reaching transformation of its material landscape, the Istanbul district of Eyüp is widely understood as a place whose religious significance has never changed. Eyüp functions as a powerful site of continuity in a city and country marked by ruptures between the religious and secular, the traditional and modern, and the past and present. I argue that the built environment functions as the key medium through which residents and visitors alike articulate diverse connections between themselves and the world around them. These connections shape what it means to be Muslim in Turkey today, but they also shape the meaningfulness of being Turkish, cultured, and urbane.

For example, a visitor to the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan might experience the mosque in terms of its connection to the Kâbe (Arabic, *Ka‘aba*) in Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad, and the emergence of Islam. Another visitor might narrate their movement through Eyüp’s cemeteries in terms of Ottoman past that connected this district to an empire that spanned nations. A long-time resident might point to a restaurant that faces the main square, using it to tell a story of vanished shops and the social relationships they sustained between neighborhood residents, relationships in which being Muslim was one part of everyday life. These connections – whether with fellow urban residents, co-religionists, or co-nationals, with other parts of the world, or with personal and public pasts – are central to the processes through which place is made.

In Eyüp – as with anywhere else – individuals and groups with different visions of the world (potentially shaped by religion, nation, class, or politics) disagree about which connections should take precedence over others and how those connections should be articulated and
maintained. Because these individuals and groups are unequally positioned, certain forms of connection win out. What is needed is careful archival and ethnographic attention to how, why, and with what consequences these connections have been forged. Such a project helps us understand Eyüp’s Islamic identity – above all the district’s status as Istanbul’s most important Muslim place – as the product of changing and contested connections that link people, place, and tradition by means of the district’s built environment.

Eyüp’s built environment includes a variety of buildings and structures, ranging from monumental mosques to temporary kiosks, and its present shape is the product of a patchwork history of use, repair, and destruction. But within that many-textured fabric, it is the district’s religious buildings – tombs, mosques, medreses, tekkes, graveyards – that assume outsized importance. Because of their ostensibly unmediated physical presence, they become key mediums that, to borrow a phrase from the early 20th century nationalist writer and poet Yahya Kemal, “tell us to ourselves (bize bizi anlatır).”5 These religious buildings become my analytical point of departure, the place from which I explore the shifting place of Islam within Istanbul’s urban fabric.

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Figure 6: Floral detail of Ottoman-era gravestone in Eyüp's cemetery. A vendor sells crowns woven of flowers in background. Timur Hammond, 2013.

In the process, I speak to a question of much broader relevance: How is Islam lived in (and by means of) the city? In cities of the ‘traditional’ Muslim world, the form and practice of Islam is being reshaped by new modes of political governance, economic development, and cultural consumption. On the other hand, the presence of Islam in cities of the ‘non-Muslim’ world, whether understood in terms of citizenship, non-assimilation, migration, or mosques, continues to generate fierce debates that are intimately connected to the social, political, economic, and cultural forms of living in the city. These differences point to a seemingly self-evident but crucial observation: Islam is not lived the same way everywhere – in fact, the particular configurations of belief, the meaningfulness of living Islam, change from place to place. By the same token, cities are not the same – they mean something different.

Bringing those two observations together, this dissertation sets out to understand how the meaningfulness of Islam is generated in relation to the meaningfulness of the city. Turkey – and
Istanbul in particular – is a fascinating site in which to answer this question. Grounded in the city of Istanbul – a city with its own specific history of being Muslim and being modern – my work sheds light on the changing and contested ways that Islam takes shape in and by means of the urban landscape. In the process, my work brings together two literatures: One that explores the meaningfulness of the cities; and a second that analyzes the changing practice and understanding of Islam in the contemporary moment.

**Contribution to the Literature**

**How Cities Come to Mean**

My dissertation builds upon studies that have explored how power figures in the everyday production of urban space. One body of scholarship has shown that the built environment functions as a key vehicle through which ‘official’ meanings and modes of life are established. These scholars demonstrate how unequal access to power, authority, and capital produce dominant (and dominating) material landscapes, thereby naturalizing and helping to reproduce forms of inequality and exclusion. This scholarship argues that the ‘meaningfulness’ of cities is closely connected the operation of ‘state’ power and the projects of legibility, control,

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and organization that sustain them. Although my dissertation draws upon these insights, I also show the limits of ‘top-down’ perspectives: Even though state authorities frequently set out to reproduce particular forms social order and political belonging by means of the urban cityscape, analyses of these urban interventions often are unable to answer a key question: How do cities remain open to alternative forms of meaning and inhabitation?

To answer that question, I draw upon several insights. First, despite the claims for ‘official’ meanings of the built environment, many of those projects were incomplete at best. In the case of Eyüp, I show how the efforts of authorities to determine the meaning of Eyüp (and the practices associated with it) often came into tension with the everyday rhythms of life and meaning in Eyüp. Second, I build upon a body of scholarship that asks us to focus on the ‘bottom up’ production of meaning in urban contexts. Deploying a variety of concepts including ‘tactics,’ the ‘everyday,’ the ‘vernacular,’ and ‘assemblage,’ these scholars encourage us to focus on the ongoing and embodied activities that produce meaningful cities. Although methodologically,


conceptually, and topically diverse, this research shares a common orientation toward exploring the complicated meanings that emerge in resistance to hegemonic forms of power and in the gaps opened up by ‘official’ attempts to govern cities and subjects within them. Analytically, much of this scholarship seeks to explain not what buildings mean but how they mean.

It does so by conceptualizing buildings not as stable discrete objects but as “always being ‘made’ or ‘unmade,’ always doing the work of holding together or pulling apart.” Most often, this approach conceptualizes buildings not as discrete, well-defined objects but extensive networks composed of multiples nodes and linkages. One of the advantages of this analytical and conceptual shift is that we are encouraged to study buildings – the meaning-making acts buildings enable – as always being connected to elsewhere by flows of material, money, imagination, and labor. The matter of the cityscape – its simultaneous capacity to mean and to seem powerfully inert – might thus be understood “not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time.”

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Despite the recognition that religion continues to be an important part of urban life today (and as a consequence belief an important aspect of meaning-making in the city), relatively few scholars have explored how the ongoing (and everyday) making of the city – the matter of the city – goes along with the contested everyday practices of religion. Focusing on the multiple linkages between embodied worship and the material fabrics in which worship takes place helps enrich our understanding of the contested ways that meaning (religious and otherwise) is produced in and by means of the city.

Eyüp’s built environment is such a key site precisely because it stabilizes a form of Islam that marks a striking continuity in a country (and city) marked by such powerful ruptures and absences. Tracing both the top-down projects that reshaped Eyüp’s landscape and the unpredictable bottom-up experiences of it, this dissertation writes a history of how Eyüp’s urban fabric has come to matter as Islamic.

**How Islam Comes to Matter**

If the built environment plays a key role in producing durable forms of meaning, this dissertation places scholarship exploring the meanings of cities in conversation with scholarship analyzing how Islam matters in the city. I draw upon research asking three interrelated questions: How do understandings and practices of Islam transform the city? How is Islam experienced within the broader fabric of the city? And how are local practices of Islam in dialogue with transnational and global forms?

One way of understanding how Islam has transformed cities is by analyzing how Islam shaped the organization of urban spaces. In contrast to an older Orientalist tradition of research on the ‘Islamic city,’ these scholars have helped us to understand the multiple dimensions of Islam (legal, economic, social, and political) that shaped urban form across the Islamicate
In a different vein, others have drawn our attention to the ways that the definition of an ‘Islamic’ area of a modernizing city required “a complex weaving of new disciplinary understandings and categorizations of buildings and objects” that produced “a space and place that was at once spatial and temporal, as well as social and religious.”\(^\text{16}\) Collectively, this work shows how changing understandings of Islam have in turn produced dynamic urban forms.

Other scholars have worked in a very different context to ask how understandings of Islam are expressed through the transformation of the built environment. Working primarily in Muslim-minority settings, these scholars have helped us see how Muslim communities stake claims to civic belonging and visibility within a range of urban contexts.\(^\text{17}\) However, much of this scholarship has relatively little to say about the politics and experience of the built environment within Muslim-majority contexts.\(^\text{18}\)


\(^{18}\) Amy Mills and Banu Gökarıksel, " Provincializing Geographies of Religion: Muslim Identities Beyond the ‘West’," *Geography Compass* 8, no. 12 (2014). Though for an exception, see Sarah Moser, "New Cities in the Muslim World: The Cultural Politics of Planning an ‘Islamic’ City," in *Religion and
Instead of focusing on the built environment as an object per se, another body of research explores the diverse geographies of Islam as one part of a broader urban experience.\textsuperscript{19} Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, for example, find that regimes of piety and modesty in South Beirut are not rigid rules but flexible norms of place against which young people negotiate their everyday lives.\textsuperscript{20} In many cases – and particularly in Istanbul – the historicity of the city, its sense of being a ‘felicitous’ setting for a pious life, is a key part of the urban experience of Islam.\textsuperscript{21}

Finally – and closest to the concerns of this dissertation – others have explored the tensions between ‘local’ forms of worship and the ‘global’ (or ‘universal’) claims of Islam.\textsuperscript{22}

Samuli Schielke and Georg Stauth’s Introduction to their edited *Dimensions of Locality: Muslims Saints, Their Place and Space* provides a particularly good account of that debate. Noting that


Ernest Gellner’s distinction of Great and Little Traditions in Islam frequently mapped onto ‘universal’ and ‘local’ geographies, they argue that as a consequence, Gellner “fail[ed] to look at the ways people in any given local setting aim for the transcendent and locate themselves in it -- a much more complex process that cannot be described by the simple opposition of the local and the universal.”

Acknowledging their debt to Talal Asad’s formulation of Islam as a ‘discursive tradition,’ they point out that even Asad’s formulation tends to privilege a particular geography of Islam that effaces local specificity. Continuing, they ask us to remember that

Islam is only one of the many parameters that are important when people relate to cities, villages, landscapes, and the place of the sacred and saintsly within them… [M]odern nationalism, urban planning, and ethnic conflicts contribute to the formation, contestation, and transformation of not only saintly places but also their religious imagination in a way that cannot be explained by the ‘discursive tradition’ of Islam.

This dissertation builds on Schielke and Stauth’s argument that Eyüp’s Islamic identity is best understood in relation to the complicated histories of development, restoration, tourism, and pilgrimage that have transformed the district’s material fabric. What it adds is a more explicit focus on connection and relation. Rather than understand Eyüp’s Islamic identity as an ‘internal’ essence besieged by the ‘outside’ world, it shows how that identity – and thus Eyüp as place – was produced precisely through complicated process of interaction and connection.

One way to approach Eyüp’s Islamic identity is by means of its ‘religious’ landscape, one composed of mosques, medreses, Sufi lodges, and tombs. Tracing the practices and politics of inhabiting these

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26 See also Armando Salvatore, "Notes on Locality, Connectedness, and Saintliness," ibid.
sites is a crucial part of writing a history of Islam in Eyüp. At the same time, however, Eyüp’s ‘religious’ landscape has to be understood in relation to its ‘secular’ landscape – as I show throughout this dissertation, Islam is lived, experienced, and understood not only in defined ‘sacred’ sites but in relation to the broader urban fabric of Istanbul.

Because of that, Eyüp provides an ideal side from which to think about the tensions generated by claims to place, to think about the shifting connections through which belief becomes meaningful. Islam matters here, but Eyüp’s Islamic identity cannot be discussed simply as essential and unchanging. Such perspectives both ignore the real changes in the practice and understanding of Islam and render contemporary Islamist political claims inviolate. At the same time, Eyüp’s religious significance cannot be discussed only as an Islam in the service of political authority. While it is true that many of the changes in the district can be related to political shifts of a post-1994 world, the Islam of Eyüp both predates and exceeds any simple equation between political projects and religious belief. Yet if Eyüp’s significance is neither essential nor solely the product of a contemporary political project, how are we to understand its meaningfulness?

**Mediums of Connection**

From one perspective – and for many of the people who live in and visit the district – Eyüp’s Islamic meaning is rooted in place. That rootedness finds its most tangible expression in Eyüp’s religious landscape. For those people, Eyüp produces a powerful feeling of continuity, shared belief, and historical depth. From another perspective, however, Eyüp’s built environment marks not continuity but rupture, an ongoing transformation of people, lifestyles, and landscapes. For them, Eyüp’s Islamic identity is divided, filled with multiple contested (and sometimes contradictory) meanings. We thus seem to be presented with an impossible choice: Either Eyüp’s
identity should be understood as single, essential, and unchanged; or its identity should be understood as plural, fragmented, and changeable. But what if we were to refuse that opposition of either/or, to attend instead to the productive tension of understanding Eyüp as both/and? How can we dwell in that conceptual in-between? One way to do so is by turning our focus once more to the built environment and understanding it as a medium of connection.  

In doing so, I take particular inspiration from a body of scholarship that has helped us rethink the opposition of local/global through the lens of place. One way of thinking about place is to equate it with the local, the bounded, and the rooted – a site that is then acted upon by ‘global’ forces and processes. In Doreen Massey’s rethinking of place, however, the specificity of place comes not from “some long internalized history” in opposition to some external world but as a result of precisely those connections to the external world. She continues:

Within that context, ‘places’ may be imagined as particular articulations of these social relations, including local relations ‘within’ the place and those many connections which stretch way beyond it. And all of those embedded in complex, layered, histories... This is place as meeting place.

One of the great advantages of Massey’s formulation is how it opens up a more plural imagination of the relationship between the ‘local’ and the ‘global.’ Instead of seeing the local and global only as antagonistic opposites, it becomes more interesting to ask how, why, and with what consequences particular forms of local and global come to be enacted and placed in relation

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27 As I use it, the ‘built environment’ is a term that designates the diverse structures, objects, and infrastructures that comprise the material landscapes shaped by human activity that surround us. In the case of Eyüp, the built environment thus includes everything from monumental mosques to paving stones, a complicated patchwork of different materials, textures, and uses. Although a range of human activity transforms the built environment, other agents reshape it: water flowing, trees growing, even the touch of the divine. As I’ve argued, the built environment functions as the key medium through which Eyüp residents and visitors alike articulate diverse connections between themselves and the world around them – connections that are at the heart of the production of meaning and value in Eyüp.

28 Doreen Massey, Power-Geometries and the Politics of Space-Time (Heidelberg, Germany: University of Heidelberg, 1999), 22. Space, Place, and Gender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
to each other.\textsuperscript{29} Thinking in terms of place thus pushes us to explore the multiple forms of connection – shaped by inequalities of power, operating at multiple scales, and historically dynamic – whose interactions produce the specificity of place.\textsuperscript{30}

I build on Massey’s work by developing a nuanced ethnographic approach that demonstrates that connections are not simply abstract lines drawn in space. They are embodied and tangible, made of different materials that connect Eyüp to the world in diverse ways. I am thus able to show why some forms of connection take precedence over others, how these connections are embodied, lived, and contested, and how they change over time. The central mosque of Eyüp Sultan today is one particularly clear example of the contested making of place through multiple forms of connection: Halid bin Zeyd, whose presence here connects Istanbul to Medina by means of his body; the precious objects that decorate the tomb, from silver filigree to finely worked tiles, whose giving linked givers with this place and cemented their power and authority; the stones that form the mosque itself, the product of a geology of marble; water and power lines that connect this mosque to a broader urban infrastructure; stories of belief, visitation, and even miracle that circulate through various media of conversation, prayer booklet, newspaper stories, television, Facebook posts; bodies of people who work in and visit the mosque, their modes of dress and movement shaped by social class, political affiliation, religious education, nationality, official authority. Some of these connections are new, and some are so old as to seem almost unchanged. Some of these connections are mobile, shared almost instantly by


\textsuperscript{30} John Agnew, \textit{Place and Politics in Modern Italy} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
smartphone, and some are rooted, understood only by ‘being there.’ Some of these connections are permitted, and some are proscribed. Some of these connections—such as communal prayers oriented towards Mecca—are always visible, while others—the water lines that serve the mosque—become tangible only in their failure.

How might we complicate our understanding of connection in a way that captures its multiple materialities, histories, and durabilities? One way to do so is by thinking of the built environment not just as connection but as a medium of connection. By thinking of the built environment as a medium of connection, I seek to highlight three interrelated claims: that places are made through diverse acts of connection; that the built environment materializes many of those connections; and that the connections materialized as the built environment provide durable forms of mediation between individuals and communities, the tangible and the intangible, and the worldly and the divine at multiple scales. This approach tries to capture some of the ways that the meaning of social life is produced relationally through contested acts of connection and comparison.

In doing so, I draw upon three different approaches to the question of media, mediation, and materiality. The first approach, primarily located within religious studies and the anthropology of religion, asks us to consider the role of media in “connect[ing] people with each other and the divine.”31 In much of this scholarship, media—and the acts of ‘mediation’ they

enable – function as key objects that express two distinct dimensions. The first dimension is how material things play a key (but contested) role in mediating between the everyday physical world and an understanding of the transcendent. As Birgit Meyer has argued, “Any contact with invisible spiritual forces, including the Christian God, is predicated upon practices of mediation through which these forces are made addressable, tangible, and sense-able in the first place.”

The second dimension is the dual role of media in the contemporary practice of religion. On the one hand, new forms of media – books, newspapers, radio, television, the Internet – are not so much ‘used’ as they have reshaped “the conditions of existence that make the expression of religion possible.” On the other, new media are only one part of the way that “contemporary religious movements… [organize themselves] using forms and epistemological structures taken from the secular public sphere.” Thinking in terms of mediation provides one way to explain how the spread of new public media – sometimes taken to be part of the ‘secularization’ of the

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33 Although some try to distinguish between mediation (as a general process) and mediatisation (a process connected to the emergence of modern print media). See David Morgan, "Mediation or Mediatisation: The History of Media in the Study of Religion," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011).


world – has resulted not in the disappearance of religion but its reconfiguration.\textsuperscript{36} Though this work is particularly useful for thinking the role of new media like film, radio, and Facebook in contemporary religious movements, it – somewhat surprisingly – has relatively little to say about the built environment.\textsuperscript{37} While religious buildings (or religion in buildings) merit some attention, they are rarely considered as part of the broader fabric of urban life. We can draw on this scholarship to ask how the built environment – understood as a form of media – mediates between the tangible and intangible while also reshaping the conditions of existence that make religious life and belief possible. One of the key questions thus becomes: How does an entire district and the forms of life found there come to matter as Islamic? What are the patchwork materialities through which people encounter the spiritual – the \textit{manevi} – amidst the city of Istanbul? Drawing on ethnographic and archival research, this dissertation shows how those patchwork materialities are woven in everyday life.

The second approach takes a broader view of mediation, arguing that mediation is the key process through which social formations and individual experience are brought into provisional equivalence.\textsuperscript{38} If religion-as-mediation pushes us to consider the material forms that link the visible to the invisible, this second understanding of mediation asks us to think how people develop a sense of themselves in relation to the world around them by means of various media.


\textsuperscript{37} For other useful critical engagements, see Matthew Engelke, "Religion and the Media Turn: A Review Essay," \textit{American Ethnologist} 37, no. 2 (2010); Charles Hirschkind, "Media, Mediation, Religion," \textit{Social Anthropology} 19, no. 1 (2011).

As William Mazzarella argues, mediation thus “involves the conceptual, technical, and linguistic practices by which the actually irreducible particularities of our experience are, apparently, reduced: in other words, rendered provisionally commensurable and thus recognizable and communicable in general terms.” These practices take place in what Mazzarella calls (somewhat interchangeably) nodes or places of mediation, “the places at which we come to be who we are through the detour of something alien to ourselves, the places at which we recognize that difference is at once constitutive of social reproduction and its most intimate enemy.”

While this approach develops a more nuanced geographical sensibility, its objects of analysis are often more mobile forms of media and cultural production. Left unexplored is the way that less mobile mediums – above all the built environment – help to produce relatively stable forms of social meaning. If more mobile forms of media and cultural production are key to the production of a ‘sense of place,’ what Yi Fu Tuan has described as “a certain distance between self and place that allows the self to appreciate a place,” the built environment is in contrast often part of the ostensibly ‘rooted’ everyday habits and routines that are equally important to the making of place. If we understand globalization to involve (at least in part) the increased circulation of goods, people, and money, the built environment seems powerfully inert.

39 Ibid., 476. Elsewhere, he defines mediation as “The processes by which a given social dispensation produces and reproduces itself in and through a particular set of media.” "Culture, Globalization, Mediation," 346.

40 "Culture, Globalization, Mediation," 356. He describes nodes of mediation as “the sites at which the compulsions of institutional determination and the rich, volatile play of sense come into always provisional alignment in the service of (and always, in part, against the grain of) a vast range of social projects, from the grass roots to corporate boardrooms.” Ibid., 352.

41 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Rootedness Versus Sense of Place," Landscape 24, no. 1 (1980): 4. Michael Curry, The Work in the World: Geographical Practice and the Written Word (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 98. It is important to note that visitors have a very different relationship to the built environment in Eyüp than residents. See Chapters 3 and 4 for some of the ways that this difference plays out in the rules and norms that govern how people move through Eyüp.
People move, buildings do not. As I show in this dissertation, the perceived immobility and rootedness of the built environment directs attention away from its own materiality and the contingencies of its construction. The fact that the built environment could have been otherwise recedes into the background of everyday life. This dissertation traces the transformations of Eyüp’s built environment to show not only how Eyüp could have ‘looked’ differently but more importantly how the religious, cultural, and social meanings articulated through its built environment could also have been otherwise.

Finally, the third approach pushes us to consider how material objects – and the meanings they shape – come to be enacted through practice. Matthew Hull’s ethnography of planning bureaucracy in Pakistan, for example, begins with a crucial discussion of how documents acquire meaning. He asks to consider how the materiality of documents – photocopies, office files, maps, petitions, newspaper articles – “shape[s] the significance of the linguistic signs inscribed on them.” Hull’s ethnography is only one instance of a much broader move across the social sciences to understand the meaningfulness of the world around us as being produced through

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42 I was struck by Patrick Eisenlohr’s formulation: “In fact, media can only function as such if in the act of conveying something they are also capable of drawing attention away from their own materiality and technicality in order to redirect attention to what is being mediated.” Quoted in Matthew S. Hull, Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 13.

43 This is one reason that ‘ruins’ have emerged as such a productive conceptual object in recent scholarship. Their failure – their contingency – sometimes becomes an opportunity to foreground the production of social and cultural meanings. Caitlin DeSilvey and Tim Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," Progress in Human Geography 37, no. 4 (2012); Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 23, no. 6 (2005); Gordillo, Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction.

ongoing, iterative, and everyday material acts.\textsuperscript{45} This scholarship asks us to pay close attention to the different ways that the materiality of objects and buildings shapes the social and cultural meanings that they carry. I draw upon this approach to ask how the built environment is always being made (and unmade) through shifting links between people, places, stories, and objects.\textsuperscript{46}

However, in focusing on materiality, this approach is sometimes limited in two respects. First, the analytical attention paid to objects and buildings can marginalize the lived experiences of people who use them, live in them, and move through them. That marginalization can limit our understanding of the politics of connection that make place. Second, too much focus on materials in isolation – paper, stone, mud, plastic – can obscure the way that the power of place depends upon its particular weaving together of multiple materialities. To return to the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, what gives that mosque its power is neither simply the body of Halid bin Zeyd, the more mobile narratives circulated about him, nor the rooted force of the mosque’s stones. It is, instead, their particular combination.

Eyüp’s religious significance poses a particular analytical challenge: The striking continuities of belief and meaning in/of this district seem to point to something unchanging and essential at the heart of Eyüp. \textit{Allah’ın işaret ettiği bir nokta}, some might say, a point indicated by God. At the same time, Eyüp is also a district whose social and material landscapes have been profoundly reshaped over the course of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a place in which present forms of worship and belief are actually the product of new political, cultural, and economic contexts. The built environment is at the center of this puzzle – simultaneously marking something unchanging


\textsuperscript{46} Jane M. Jacobs, "A Geography of Big Things," ibid., no. 1; Edensor, "Entangled Agencies, Material Networks and Repair in a Building Assemblage: The Mutable Stone of St Ann’s Church, Manchester."
and recording the traces of time. Rather than resolve that puzzle – either Eyüp is unchanged or Eyüp is changed – I seek to inhabit that conceptual gap marked out by the built environment.

Conceptualizing the built environment as a medium of connection asks us to pay careful attention to the multiple materialities of connection that make place. How are connections forged between people, different lifestyles, places near and far, and multiple pasts and futures? How are those connections maintained and transformed? How and why do certain forms of connection remain visible and tangible while others are severed, forgotten, or obscured? How does the encounter of different materialities and temporalities enable (or disable) particular kinds of connection and the meanings and values that emerge out of them? Working both ethnographically and archivally, this dissertation works to show how the politics of connection play out in and by means of Eyüp’s built environment.

**Returning to the Path**

Let us return to the path we traced when we first arrived in Eyüp. If we arrive by boat today, we trace a path that is at once layered upon the routes of the past and radically different from them. The parks and wide roads that now define the shoreline are a product of the 1980s. Until then, the shoreline was a dense cluster of factories, warehouses, and depots that crowded the narrow roads between Eyüp and the entrepot of Eminönü. These factories and warehouses once employed tens of thousands of workers, most of whom lived in the informal neighborhoods (gecekondu) that sprawled across the hillsides surrounding Eyüp’s center. The current ferry building in Eyüp is a reconstruction, and the four-lane boulevard that divides the water from the center of Eyüp is the result of Istanbul’s automobile oriented growth of the 1980s. The park in which people now lunch on a Saturday afternoon was also once warehouses and workshops. There are a handful of wooden buildings original to the early 1900s, but many of them have been
heavily restored, first in the 1990s and then in the 2000s. They stand beside squat concrete buildings, their construction enabled by bribes or official indifference. The small yellow building that once houses the post office is still there, but perhaps it too will be turned into a café or restaurant serving the throngs of new visitors. When you reach the intersection where the two tombs stand watch, you see new things.

Though this intersection is centuries old. Until the 1950s, the market in front of you was a narrow lane named “The Toymaker’s Market” (Oyuncakçılar Çarşısı). The wooden toys are gone now, replaced by plastic imports, but it was the road-widening projects of the 1950s that destroyed the shops on one side of the road. For almost five decades, the road from the suburb of Rami on the hill above ran through this narrow street before turning into the narrow shore road that led to Eminönü. Despite that, the street continued to house a bakery, a pharmacy, and a handful of other shops that catered to the local workers. Now, every shop caters to those who visit the district from outside: From the religious paraphernalia to the cafes to the souvenir shops, this street is no longer part of Eyüp in the same way.

As you move forward, you pass the entrance to the medrese complex of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa. In 2013, the entrance was covered over by a large sign explaining that a restoration project was underway, but those who had been born and raised in Eyüp might remember when the medrese served as a public health clinic, serving the needs of the largely working-class neighborhood. Today, there are no signs that this building lived a life between its Ottoman past and its present.

The shining white marble pavement in the large square only dates until 2010. On the one hand, replacing the previous flagstones made preparing the square for crowded Friday prayers a much easier task. Both practically and aesthetically, the clean marble surfaces made a more
appealing temporary prayer space. Yet the change wasn’t well received by everybody. As one long-time resident derisively noted, “It looks like a bathroom now.” The place where the pigeons are now fed used to be a parking lot; for a brief period the space was proposed as a memorial site for the executed Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. Now there is only a man who sells birdseed for 1 lira and signs warning parents not to place their children inside the enclosure.

Figure 7: Billboard advertising the Eyüp Municipality’s renovation of the square. The main text reads, "The Eyüp Sultan Square Has Been Reorganized Once More, Covered With Marble and Carpets." Timur Hammond, 2012.

Moving into the mosque, it looks much the same as it did, but there are small signs to those who know. The crippled stork that used to live under the aged plane tree is no longer there, and the birdhouses that once graced the courtyard have been removed. There are cracks in the pavement from the place where the municipality tried to install large umbrellas before the Council of Antiquities forced them to remove them. The men who used to tell tesbih and candles
to pilgrims are no longer there, driven away by the local police. Security guards move through
the crowd, telling the poor to move along and not ask for alms.

But despite these changes, there is a strong sense of continuity here. If you work your
way through the women and men praying before the mosque and look inside, the tomb is still
there, marking the body of Halid bin Zeyd Ebû Eyyûb el-Ensari, Companion of the Prophet
Muhammad. On the one hand, Eyüp is gone – the world of even twenty-five years ago is
accessible only in photographs and in the recollections that long-time residents share. But on the
other, Eyüp is still here – it has been and continues to be an object of devotion, belief, and
imagination.

Methods & Positionality

Drawing on both ethnographic and archival methods, my research experience was an
iterative one, in which the repetition of certain activities – visiting particular sites, working in
designated archives, returning time after time to specific places – produced a knowledge
acquired through doing. One of the best ways to track that iterative knowledge – my ongoing
entanglement in and with Eyüp – was by following my Turkish. When I began dissertation
fieldwork in Summer 2011, my Turkish was functional, sufficient to express myself reasonably
clearly and to participate in most conversations of which I was a part. But my Turkish was also
halting and accented, so much so that any opening conversation was almost invariably
interrupted by the question, “Where are you from?” These conversations usually followed a
predictable pattern.

I would answer, “I’m American (Amerikalıyım).”

“But you speak Turkish.”

“I learned in university.”
“What’s your name?”

“Timur.”

“But that’s a Turkish name.”

“My grandmother is from İzmir and my grandfather was Tatar.”

“Oh!” they would usually exclaim, “So you’re one of us!”

As I continued with fieldwork – and as my Turkish improved – those conversations became more and more infrequent, but my position as a researcher remained poised between two worlds. At some points, this was a really productive tension, one that enabled me to move back and forth between insider and outsider; at others, however, the tension was exhausting, producing a feeling of dislocation as I tried to translate my feelings about Islam and identity into words that my interlocutors might understand.

Initial conversations about my research often began with questions about who had given me my dissertation topic. How did your professors know about this topic? Why did they give it to you? Many were curious about the trajectory that brought me from Los Angeles to this one corner of Istanbul – a trajectory in which my family background and my ability to ‘pass’ both eased and complicated that process.

The bulk of this fieldwork was conducted between July 2011 and August 2013. During that time, I lived with my family – my uncle, aunt, grandmother, and her caretaker – in the district of Üsküdar. To reach Eyüp, I would board a ferry – either the direct ferry that traveled between Üsküdar and Eyüp or the shorter ferry that would take me to Eminönü, where I would board one of the Eyüp-bound buses that followed the shoreline of the Golden Horn. There were a number of reasons to live with my family: Their emotional support, the logistical and financial benefits of sharing a home with them, and the social network that they provided. Moreover, my
living with family provided an easily translated explanation to many of my interlocutors in Eyüp when they asked where I lived. At the same time, it also meant that many of my research moments were staged through repeated visits.

One of the first places that I visited in Eyüp was a small complex immediately behind the mosque of Eyüp Sultan known as the sibyan mektebi (an Ottoman-era primary school). It was a small educational complex run by a religiously motivated civil society organization known as the İlim Yayma Cemyeti (Association for the Spreading of Knowledge). On my first visit, Mehmet Emin Hoca – the man who directed the complex – asked if I would be willing to teach English. For much of the next two years, I would visit the complex several times a week, sometimes to teach English, sometimes to take classes in Ottoman Turkish, and sometimes simply to cultivate friendships with the people who moved through the complex. Although many of the people who visited the sibyan mektebi now lived in Eyüp, they were not necessarily long-time residents.

In contrast, it was through my visits to the Foundation for the Friends of Eyüp (Eyüp Dostları Vakfı) that I began to meet people who had been born and raised in Eyüp. Founded in the late 1990s by a group of Eyüp residents (and former residents), the Foundation provided another important site through which I learned about Eyüp. Moreover, it was by comparing these two sites that I came to understand that even though different groups of people might live in the same physical neighborhood, there was almost no overlap between their experiences of living in Eyüp. Spatial proximity was no guarantee of social presence.

My ethnographic research took one of three forms. I spent the majority of my time using my position as a teacher in the sibyan mektebi to observe social life in the immediate vicinity of the mosque. Although I only attended formal prayers in the mosque a handful of times, I spent much of my weekend sitting in the immediate vicinity of the mosque, observing how visitors
from outside of Eyüp encountered the densely layered landscape of the district’s center. My field notebooks are filled with scraps of conversation I heard in passing, quickly jotted encounters with residents and visitors alike, and my own impressions of being in Eyüp. In addition to my participant observation, I also organized formal interviews with municipality officials and long-time residents. In some cases, I recorded these interviews using a digital tape recorder. In other instances, however, I took notes in a notebook, later fleshing those out into larger ethnographic scenes. Finally, I made extensive use of my camera, using photographs as a way to document Eyüp’s social life and changing material landscape, to highlight details for my research, or to simply capture aesthetically beautiful scenes. Many of the images found in this dissertation come from that photographic project. Throughout the dissertation, I use pseudonyms with two exceptions. First, my friend and interlocutor Şenol asked that I use his real name in my thesis. Second, in cases where individuals were either speaking in their official capacity or would have been otherwise identified by their position or activities, I also use their real name.

In order to trace Eyüp’s transformations over the 20th century, I also worked in a number of archives and libraries located in Istanbul and Ankara. One of the key sites for my research was the archive and library established by the Eyüp Municipality, a site that proved to be an invaluable resource for learning about Eyüp’s 1990s transformation under the mayorship of Ahmet Genç (the story that I tell in Chapter 2). A second – and unexpectedly important – archive was that of the Council for the Protection of Antiquities (Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni) stored in the offices of the Council for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage (Kültür ve Tabiat Varlığımı Koruma Kurulu). This archive provided a wealth of information about Eyüp’s Ottoman monuments between the 1930s and the 1960s. In addition to those two primary archives, I also worked at the Prime Minister’s Ottoman Archives (to look for documents on Eyüp’s early 20th
century history), ISAM (whose collection of old periodicals was invaluable), the Istanbul Library (where I was able to survey a handful of out-of-print pamphlets), Atatürk Library (whose collection of maps proved to be especially helpful), the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library (where Süheyl Ünver’s notebooks about Eyüp are stored), the National Library in Ankara, and the Prime Minister’s Republican Archives in Ankara. Last but not least, I have also greatly benefited from the rapidly expanding online archive maintained by SALT Research, a research center opened in 2011 by Garanti Bank. Their digitization of Ali Saim Ülgen’s papers added a crucial dimension to my research on Eyüp’s transformations in the 1940s and 50s. In listing these archives, I want to call attention both to the widely scattered character of Eyüp’s archival traces and to what Antoinette Burton has called “the task of re-materializing the multiple contingencies of history writing.” Each of these archives has their own materiality, their own architectures of access and absence. Working between these archives has not produced a seamless text – in fact, it’s just the opposite. In a very real and tangible way, working between these archives is both the product and the cause of Eyüp’s patchwork character.

**Mapping the Dissertation**

This dissertation develops an archivally and ethnographically grounded analysis of the connections articulated through Eyüp’s built environment that have shaped the district’s religious identity. It shows how and why different groups have had different stakes in how Eyüp is connected – materially, imaginatively, administratively, religiously, socially – to the world around it and how Eyüp comes to be—and to be Muslim—through these connections. Eyüp’s religious identity – its status as one of Istanbul’s most important Muslim shrine centers – is and

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has been relational, which is to say that making Eyüp a Muslim place has involved establishing a range of connections that produce understandings of equivalence and difference. Each chapter focuses on a different sort of connection enacted in and by means of Eyüp’s built environment. Ranging from road construction that connected Eyüp to the city around it to restoration projects that demarcated between ‘historic’ buildings and their surroundings to the everyday practices of visitation and inhabitation woven through Eyüp’s social fabric, these connections have taken (and continue to take) multiple forms. I thus set out to help show some of the ways that the meanings of Islam, urban belonging, and national identity are made and remade in this district through diverse mediums of belief.

Chapter 1, “Making Eyüp Modern,” explores how the ‘modern’ was made in this district during the 1940s and 50s through new material, discursive, and administrative connections. It begins from a mutually exclusive opposition frequently referenced in the history of 20th Turkey: the opposition between ‘old’ ways of life – often identified with Islam – and the ‘modern’ ways of life that took their place. The built environment serves as an index of the relative relationship. Making Eyüp modern could be told as a story of neglect for ‘Islamic’ monuments in preference for the factories, apartment buildings, and places of assembly that formed a new nation. The reality, I argue, was considerably more complicated. Rather than ask how the modern replaced Islam during the 1940s and 50s, I explore the multiple ways that Eyüp’s modern was articulated in relation to Islam. Focusing on three sites – the Eyüp Halkevi (People’s House), the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa, and Eyüp’s new roads – I show how new connections were articulated between residents, visitors, government officials, the built environment in which they lived, and the diverse histories and social worlds of which Eyüp was imagined to be a part.
Chapter 2, “Making Eyüp Ottoman,” begins from an apparently counterintuitive question: How could a district like Eyüp – one of Istanbul’s oldest and most well-preserved examples of Ottoman architecture – be made Ottoman? I argue that making Eyüp Ottoman involved two linked projects: the telling of new public histories, and the restoration and redevelopment of the district’s historic core. These projects both depended upon and helped to strengthen a range of connections: the political movement of Necmettin Erbakan and the Welfare Party; the role of heritage boards; administrative and institutional linkages between the Eyüp Municipality, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, and the government in Ankara; the publics organized through new media outlets; and the social and economic relationships at work in Eyüp. At the same time, other connections were lost, as Eyüp’s material landscape (and the economic relations it supported) was radically reconfigured by projects of restoration and development. Collectively, these new connections – connections that made Eyüp Ottoman – transformed Eyüp from a peripheral varoş district into a new spiritual and religious center for Istanbul, Turkey, and the Muslim world. That shift has had far-reaching consequences in Eyüp, helping both to solidify the politics success of the Welfare Party (and its successors) and to spur the commodification of Eyüp’s material landscapes.

Chapters 3 and 4 are set in the ethnographic present, where I explore the religious, political, and social meanings that are generated by connection. Chapter 3, “The Geographies of Ramadan in Eyüp,” zeroes in on an episode that took place in Eyüp during Ramadan in 2013: the Eyüp Municipality’s decision to construct a set of fiberglass arcades in the district’s main square. Exploring why the arcades were built and the range of responses their construction generated, this chapter sheds light on the complex geographies of Ramadan in Istanbul. Although Ramadan is frequently understood as a temporal period of heightened religious observance, less attention
has been paid to the spatial transformations that make the month tangible within Istanbul’s contemporary landscape. I show how the arcades were entangled in broader discussions about religious consumption, the management of public space, and the sincerity of visible expressions of worship. Although the complex produced a tangible form of Islam that helped to mark the month of Ramadan as distinct, the municipality’s project also set in motion a series of debates that raised critiques not only about local municipality politics but the broader stakes of using Islam as a guide for public behavior in Istanbul today.

Finally, Chapter 4, “Out of Place in Eyüp Sultan?,” returns to the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan, focusing on the rules of place that shape how people visit and experience the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan. These rules of place establish certain permissible and impermissible acts in given locations in the mosque; help visitors signal their religious identity and their purpose in visiting; and identify visitors as ‘local’ or ‘foreign.’ Collectively, these rules of place help to constitute the physical space of the mosque as a sacred place, invested with religious and social significance. Although it is tempting to understand these rules as rooted in place – the product of an essential and unchanging essence – I argue that these rules are far more flexible and incomplete than is frequently understood. I argue that the primary marker of division today is not between Muslims and non-Muslims – a division that was in place at the end of the 19th century – but between different forms of being Muslim. Even though the overwhelming majority of visitors to the mosque of Eyüp Sultan are Turkish-speaking, Muslim citizens of Turkey, there are deep disagreements about how one should move through, worship within, and engage with others within the mosque. Focusing on three groups on the margins of normative rules (foreigners, Turkish tourists, and women), this chapter explores the spatially and temporally variable experience of place in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan.
I close with a brief Conclusion, in which I return briefly to the main arguments of this dissertation, offer a few observations about how Eyüp and Turkey have changed since I finished my fieldwork in 2013, and sketch out some of the directions for further research that this dissertation has opened up.

Figure 8: View from near the Pierre Loti Cafe, looking east across the Golden Horn. Timur Hammond, 2012.
CHAPTER 1: MAKING EYÜP MODERN

Eyüp, 1954: The “So-Called Modern”

In May 1954, a writer and newspaper columnist named Nahid Sırrı Örik visited the Istanbul district of Eyüp after several years’ absence. Born in Istanbul in 1895, Örik was part of a generation that was beginning to pass away in the 1940s and 50s. His generation had witnessed the Balkan Wars, World War I, the occupation of Istanbul, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and the declaration of the Turkish Republic.\(^{48}\) In the process, Istanbul had changed from imperial capital to the second city of a new nation to a rapidly growing and industrializing metropolis. That May day, walking from the ferry to the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, Örik picked his way through some of the rubble of that transformation: New roads, old graves pushed to one side. “Shouldn’t we be protecting with great care,” he mused, “Eyüp’s tens of thousands of old graves and countless tombs (türbe)?”\(^ {49}\)

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\(^{48}\) The Balkan Wars (1912-13) ended with the Ottoman Empire losing what remained of its Balkan territories. The Empire sided with Germany during World War I (1914-18). In the aftermath of the Ottoman surrender in 1918, Istanbul was occupied by French, British, and Italian forces, a situation that continued until 1923. Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation: 1918-1923* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 1999).

He moved through the courtyard of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan before continuing out and away from the water, toward the outlying districts of Taşlılarla. The roads were crowded with people, and he described the view that he saw: “A few beautiful old houses and quite a number of new apartment buildings (apartman) though one or two already in need of repair… So called ‘modern’ style apartment buildings, spoiling Eyüp’s spiritual landscape (ruhani manzara).”

Eventually, he found a bookshop run by an old acquaintance of his:

When, seeing the quantity and variety of French cinema and fashion magazines in the display window, I expressed my surprise, [the bookshop owner] said that was what he sold the most. In this old and impoverished Istanbul district, what do these young women buying these French, English, and German cinema and fashion magazines and returning to their ruined houses learn from them?

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50 “Bir kaç güzel eski ev ve bir hayli yeni, fakat bir ikisi şimdiden tamire muhtaç görünen apartman… Eyüp’ün ruhani manzarasını bozan, güya modern üsluplu apartmanlar.” Ibid., 156.

51 “Camekânındaki Frenkçe sinema ve moda mecmualarının çoğuluunu ve çeşitlerini görmek hayret izhar ettiği zaman da, en çok bunları sattığını söyledi. Bu eski ve fakir İstanbul semtinde bu Fransızca,
Örik’s retelling of the conversation was part of a longer article published in the magazine *Büyük Doğu (Majestic East)*, an article that ends with this declaration: “Just as everything else has taken flight and gone, Eyüp’s meaning – along with that of old Istanbul – has taken flight and gone… In its place nothing more than a few traces and blotches.” Örik’s article gives us one evocative account of a district in flux, a place in which old meanings – above all, a religious importance that stretched back centuries – had “taken flight and gone,” leaving in their place only a few crumbling houses and “so-called ‘modern’ (güya modern)” apartment buildings.

**Introduction**

At first glance, Örik’s article might be read as an example of a frequently cited tension in the history of 20th century Turkey: The tension between ‘old’ meanings – usually though not always associated with Islam – and the ‘modern’ ways of life that took their place. More than anything else, the built environment has been the central site through which this tension has been understood. The repurposing, neglect or even outright destruction of Turkey’s mosques, medreses, tombs, and cemeteries (to name only a few) alongside the articulation of an avowedly modernizing and secularizing state has been widely understood as the self-evident proof of the tension between the ‘old’ (Islam) and the ‘modern’ (West). Were this chapter to follow that line of analysis in studying how Eyüp was made modern, it might tell a story in which Eyüp’s essential Islamic identity (materialized in the form of the built environment) was deliberately neglected (if not outright destroyed) by the ‘modern’ projects of a secular Republican establishment.

İngilizce ve Almanca sinema dergileri, moda mecmualarını alıp harap evlerine giden taze bayanlar bunlardan neler öğreniyor?” Ibid.  

52 “Her şey uçtuğu ve gittiği gibi, eski İstanbul’a beraber Eyüp’ün de manası uçmuş ve gitmiş… Yerinde bir takım izler ve lekelerden başka bir şey yok.” Ibid., 157.
While such a reading might draw our attention to the ways that state-centered projects of secularization and modernization deliberately and sometimes violently limited the practice of Islam throughout the 20th century, it would be limited in three important ways. First, using the state of the built environment as an index of the relative balance between ‘Islam’ and the ‘modern’ fails to account for the multiple ways that buildings come to be woven into the social life of their surroundings. Just as mosques and other religious buildings can stage ‘non-religious’ activity, so too can ‘modern’ urban landscapes shelter ‘Islam.’

Second, both the meaning and content of the ‘modern’ and ‘Islam’ are not fixed but relational, defined through comparisons with communities, objects, and ways of life defined as ‘non-modern’ and ‘non-Islamic.’ Importantly, these comparisons do not happen solely in the imaginative frame of the present. Rather, they frequently involve comparisons to multiple pasts and futures. Likewise, these comparisons also connect places at multiple scales. In the case of Örik’s article, the gap of the ‘güya modern’ lies precisely in the disconnect that he perceived between the “ruined houses” of Eyüp and the cinemas of France, Germany, and England, a disconnect that might well not have been shared by the “young women” he imagines reading the magazines. Rather than ask whether Islam was or was not modern in the 1950s, it is more useful to ask what comparisons/connections across time and space constituted the categories of modern and Islam, what discourses and institutions reproduced and transformed those categories, and how different groups of people encountered them. During these two decades, Islam came to be closely linked with objects of the ‘past,’ and thus enmeshed in a broader debate about the politics of heritage in a rapidly growing city.

Such a relational analysis of both categories suggests a third point: Just as the encounter of Islam and the modern have changed over time (in Turkey and elsewhere), the exact form of that encounter has changed from place to place. Despite the fact that the secularizing reforms of the Turkish Republic were enacted as a national project, the implementation of those reforms was contingent on a host of differences between cities, including relative political importance, varying economic conditions, existing social networks, and the presence of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. More importantly – and as the case of Istanbul provides a particularly good example – the encounter between Islam and the modern changed even from district to district. As with intercity variation, that encounter changed according to economic conditions, political exigencies, social networks, and the presence of minorities, but new forms of urban mobility in Istanbul also reshaped the boundaries between Islam and the modern.

Making Eyüp modern, in other words, was not a homogenous top-down project of secularization that wiped clean an existing social and material landscape. Rather, it involved the articulation of new connections between people – residents, visitors, government officials – and the built environment of the district in which they lived. The ‘modern’ that emerged in Eyüp during the 1940s and 50s was thus simultaneously linked to the broader political and cultural trends of Turkey during this period and deeply enmeshed within the layered histories of people and belief that were found in the district. It was a modern in which new government buildings, schools, and factories, built of concrete and right angles, stood in close proximity to an older landscape of wooden houses, mosques, and graveyards filled with carved stone.

54 For a similar account, see Hakan Kaynar, Projesiz Modernleşme: Cumhuriyet İstanbulu’ndan Gündelik Fragmanlar (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2012).
To capture the plural dimension of how Eyüp was made modern, this chapter tells the history of three different material landscapes that were transformed during this period: The Halkevi (People’s House) built by the then-ruling Republican People’s Party in the mid-1940s; the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa, first occupied by the military and then restored as part of the 1950s official reclaiming of the Ottoman past; and the square (meydan) opened in front of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan in the late 1950s. These three sites share three important characteristics. First and foremost, all three sites are located in or near the center of Eyüp; at a relaxed walk, it takes 10 minutes to pass from site to site. As a result, their transformation had an impact on the district’s social and material landscapes. Second, all three sites were either described or understood as being ‘modern.’ Whether through the Halkevi’s provision of ‘modern’ city sociability, Zal Mahmut’s status as an example of ‘modern’ urban planning, or the vision of a ‘modern’ city presented by the wide boulevards that followed the square’s construction, these three sites shared a common orientation: making Eyüp modern. Finally, these sites were all imagined as sites that could potentially shape the social lives of the people who used them. Changing Eyüp’s material fabric – its buildings, streets, factories, and homes – was a way to change the district’s social fabric – either by producing new forms or preserving old ones.

At the same time, these sites cannot be understood as outcomes of the same single project. Each site was the product of a distinct set of cultural, political, economic, and even legal conditions. Even though they were spatially close to each other, these sites existed within different institutional and imagined universes, differences that shaped the various ways that these sites were built, restored, and reconfigured during these two decades. Even as these histories
connect this one peripheral district to other neighborhoods, cities, and nations, this is an unfinished history, one woven of “loose ends and missing links.”

This chapter opens with an overview of the state-sponsored reforms of the 1920s and 30s, reforms that were broadly oriented toward the goal of producing a ‘modern’ nation. The 1940s and 50s were both a continuation of those reforms and, as the country transitioned to a multiparty political system and a more open public arena, a period of intense debate about the effects of those changes. One institution at the center of those debates was the Halkevi (People’s House), a story I explore in detail in this chapter’s second section. Following the arguments for and against building a Halkevi in Eyüp in the 1940s, I show how this ‘modern’ institution was embedded within a complex web of relationships that connected political parties, local social networks, and differing imaginations of Eyüp’s religious and cultural significance.

Yet if the building of the Eyüp Halkevi could be understood as an intrusion of the modern into Eyüp’s Islamic landscape, this chapter’s next section turns to an example in which Islam was defined not in opposition to the modern but as one possible example for it: the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa. Tracing the shifting politics and practices that coalesced in the complex’s 1950s restoration, this section shows how Eyüp’s religious landscape retained the ability to serve as a vehicles for engaging with what it meant to be modern in the 1940s and 50s.

Finally, I focus on the expansion of Eyüp’s road network during this period, an expansion that culminated in the destruction of the buildings beside the mosque of Eyüp Sultan in 1957 in order to open up a new wide boulevard and a large square (meydan) in Eyüp’s center. The expansion of Eyüp’s road network was not an isolated event; rather, it was one part of the broader urban interventions now known as the Menderes Operations, interventions that relied on

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the construction of wide boulevards for automobiles as the key means to ‘modernize’ Istanbul. Even the Menderes Operations, however, were only one moment in a much longer history linking visions of the modern city with the expansion of Istanbul’s road network. Focusing on Eyüp, this section calls our attention to the literal and imagined obstacles to these road building projects and outlines some of the consequences of these projects. Expansion of the road network was also an expansion of the scale of the urban – the city coming to be connected together in new ways. Across these three sites, residents, visitors, and government representatives at a variety of institutions came to articulate new connections between themselves and the urban landscape in which they found themselves. Establishing and maintaining these connections – and the comparisons that these connections required – were central to making Eyüp modern.

Setting the Stage: Reform and Resistance in ‘Modern’ Turkey, 1923-1940

In many respects, the debates about being modern in the 1940s and 50s were closely connected to state-sponsored projects during the 1920s and 30s that aggressively sought to secularize, modernize, and nationalize the country’s material and social landscapes in order to consolidate the authority and legitimacy of the regime led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). Two of the most important ways that the Kemalist regime established and maintained its political authority were the production of ‘modern’ cityscapes and the regulation of everyday social activities including language, dress, and cultural consumption. Although articulations of modernity predated the 1923 establishment of the Turkish Republic, the self-conscious performance of being modern during the 1920s and 30s was distinct in the way that it was inextricable from the politics of the regime.56

56 On Ottoman modernity, see for example Zeynep Çelik, The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986). Empire,
The ‘modern’ cityscape was produced at multiple scales through a variety of sites and practices. For example, the Kemalist state used urban planning as a key means to materialize a ‘modern’ identity. Built of reinforced concrete, steel, and glass and planned with wide boulevards and a rational city plan, the new capital of Ankara materialized a self-consciously national version of the Turkish modern.\textsuperscript{57} Across Turkey, new urban centers – organized along straight lines and often directly tied to Ankara – established a new geography of the modern nation.\textsuperscript{58} Even as these urban vistas were reshaped, so too were the more intimate spaces of the home: new domestic architectures set out to to translate the modern into the spaces of the home.\textsuperscript{59}

At the same time, the modern cityscape was also produced through acts of temporal and spatial separation: ‘new’ was separated from the ‘old’ and the ‘modern’ was separated from the religious. The most visible example of this separation was the relocation of the capital to Ankara from Istanbul, a move that helped to establish the new Kemalist regime as distinct from the preceding Ottoman regime. But the separation was also effected in other ways, including the closure of thousands of buildings connected to the practice of Islam. In addition to drastically limiting public access to mosques, the Kemalist state also closed down nearly all \textit{türbes} (tombs),


medreses (religious schools), and tekkes/zaviyes (Sufi lodges) across Turkey.\(^{60}\) Within a very short period of time, much of the country’s religious landscape was classified as ‘antiquities,’ a shift that simultaneously helped to remove worship from everyday social practice and further established the ‘modern’ cityscape as something spatially and temporally distinct from the ‘religious’ past.

One of the most visible examples of this separation – though far from the only one – was the conversion of the Aya Sofya Mosque into a museum in 1928, thus proscribing any religious use of the mosque and placing it within a new historical and cultural imaginary. Alongside the changed function of the Aya Sofya, the monument’s surroundings were bulldozed, producing a new building in splendid isolation, divided from its spatial and social context.\(^{61}\) Closing down the physical sites of worship – be they mosques, tekkes, zaviyes, medreses, or türbes – was a key way to reconfigure the social relationships and modes of civic association that had once been constituted through those sites.

State authorities also set out to reform everyday social practices in a way that linked a national identity (being ‘Turk’) with self-defined modern and secular activities. One of the most important parts of that transformation was the language reform. State development projects of the 1920s stipulated that Turkish would be the only acceptable language of public discourse, a

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\(^{60}\) Medreses were closed in 1924 under the terms of Law no. 430, widely referred to as the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu [Law for the Unification of Education]). Tekke, zaviye, and türbe were closed in 1925 under the terms of Law no. 677. “Tekkeler ve zaviyeler... kamilen seddeldiştir.... [T]ürbeler mesdut ve türbedarlık mülgadır.”

definition designed to compel minority populations to become good national citizens. The Language Reform of 1928 replaced the modified Arabic script of Ottoman Turkish with the modified Latin script of ‘modern’ Turkish, banning any further public use of Ottoman. At the same time, the newly established Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu) systematically set about replacing ‘foreign’ Arabic and Persian loan words with neologisms ostensibly derived from ‘authentic’ Turkish roots.

62 In Eastern Anatolia, this was targeted especially at Kurdish-speaking populations (what remained of Armenian-speaking populations had largely disappeared following the massacres of 1915-16). Christopher Houston, "Provocations of the Built Environment: Animating Cities in Turkey as Kemalist," Political Geography 24, no. 1 (2005): 104. In Istanbul, Greek, Jewish, and Levantine populations were particular targets of the language reform. See, among others, Marc Baer, "Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the Dönme in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul," Journal of World History 18, no. 2 (2008).

Figure 10: Family graves in Eyüp Cemetery marking the language reform. Some are written in Ottoman Turkish, some in modern Turkish. Timur Hammond, 2012.

In addition to the language reform, the government also regulated the ways that people could dress in public. One of the key targets of this reform was ‘religious’ dress: items such as robes (cübbe) and headgear (takke, sarık, serpuş, etc.) could only be worn within the space of the mosque, and even then, only during assigned prayer times. The 1925 Hat Law banned the wearing of the fez in public, forcing male citizens to wear hats with brims.64 Alongside language and dress, the Kemalist regime also regulated other forms of public Muslim worship, changing the language of the ezan (call to prayer) from Arabic to Turkish, sponsoring the translation (and

64 Ironically, the fez itself was one of the symbols of 19th century Ottoman modernity. Wearing brimmed hats impeded the practice of prayer, because men were not able to place their foreheads all the way down to the ground.
publication) of the Qur’an from Arabic to Turkish, and controlling public celebrations of Ramadan.\textsuperscript{65}

The cumulative result of these reforms was a new ground for political belonging: a citizen of Turkey could only be ‘Turk,’ a new identity in which “sameness… meant belonging to the nation” and “[religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic] difference… was equated with foreignness.”\textsuperscript{66} Within this new political environment, the Republican People’s Party played two simultaneous roles: First, it was the only authorized party through which citizens could become recognized political agents the state; second – and as I explain at greater lengths below – it provided the key vehicle through which the Kemalist state tried to produce a new form of ‘modern’ civic life. Through their dress, their language, their everyday cultural consumption, and even their homes, the model citizens of the new Turkish Republic helped to represent the nation to itself.\textsuperscript{67}

Even though Kemalist authorities used the reforms of the 1920s and 30s in order to establish a ‘modern’ nation, the everyday effects of these reforms differed widely across Turkey, both as a result of different political and socioeconomic contexts and of different levels of state violence. For example, responses to the 1925 Hat Law (which banned the wearing of the fez in public) varied widely across Turkey, depending on factors like including economic livelihoods


\textsuperscript{67} For one example of this self-representation, see Yasemin Gencer, "We Are Family: The Child and Modern Nationhood in Early Turkish Republican Cartoons (1923–28)," \textit{Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East} 32, no. 2 (2012).
(producers of the fez, for example, were against the new law), social custom, and cultural and political allegiances. Likewise, the idea of belonging to the ‘nation’ emerged in dialogue with an overlapping set of previous identities, themselves the product of earlier histories of migration, economy, and ethnicity. Certain parts of Turkey – and certain segments of the population within those places – were more amenable to the nationalizing, secularizing, and modernizing reforms of the Kemalist regime. Rather than spread across the country evenly (as water fills a glass), these reforms were channeled by and thus helped to reproduce an already existing geography (as a river carves its path through stone).

The uneven geographies of Kemalist reforms were especially evident in the city of Istanbul. Beginning in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul had been radically transformed by three wars (the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the War of Independence), population transfers and expulsions, and multiple projects of urban redevelopment and modernization. With the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Istanbul had also ceded its position as political and administrative center to Ankara. Despite all of that, Istanbul remained the country’s preeminent cultural and economic center. Many of its residents and much of its cultural life were acutely conscious of the continuities between their new Republican present and the very recent past. New forms of Kemalist modernity emerged in Istanbul alongside and sometimes in direct tension with the presence of Islam, minority communities, and other

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69 “Popular identification with the nation therefore did not emerge exclusive of all other identities; rather, national identity came to be incorporated within a preexisting repertoire of popular identities, among the most important of which were those associated with Islam.” Gavin Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 3.
reservoirs of political legitimacy. Eyüp was one key place in which these tensions were articulated and debated. Making Eyüp modern during the 1940s and 50s was a project that both extended and challenged the reforms of the 1920s and 30s, but it was also a project shaped by the very particular contours of Eyüp’s social and material landscapes. That is the history – or histories – to which I turn below.

Building a Halkevi (People’s House): Bringing the City to Eyüp

In April 1943, Behçet Uz, the president of the Istanbul branch of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), traveled to the district of Eyüp in order to visit the local branch of the party. In the report that he prepared for central party authorities in Ankara, he praised the local organization’s efforts but highlighted the major reason that the CHP was struggling to achieve their goals in Eyüp: A lack of space. Because they were “squeezed into a wooden building (ahşap bir bina içinde sıkışan),” he wrote, the Eyüp branch of the CHP was “unable to get the product they desired (istenilen randumanı alamadıklar).” His report was intended to solicit the financial and political support from central party authorities to build a new Halkevi (People’s House) in Eyüp, thus providing the local party organization with a building that would help them achieve their

70 Political parties in Turkey are organized according to a spatially nested hierarchy: National party headquarters are located in Ankara. Every province (il/vilayet) has its own party organization, ultimately responsible to central party authorities. Each province might also have separate district-level (ilçe) party structures. Uz was the President of the İstanbul province-level organization at the time; he was visiting Eyüp’s district (ilçe) organization, either at the request of local party officials or acting on his authority to supervise local party activities for central authorities in Ankara.

71 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti/Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (TC/BCA) 490.01/1722.1002.1. Report from CHP İstanbul Vilayet İdare Heyeti Reisi Behçet Uz to CHP General Secretariat. No. 939. April 5, 1943. Uz’s word choice is itself a remarkable index of the language reform: the word randuman (or randiman) is actually a cognate of the French rendement, with a range of meanings that stress agricultural production and yield.
goals. Implicit in Uz’s argument for the building of a Halkevi in Eyüp was the assumption that the building itself would be a key mechanism for the production of the CHP’s goals.

In both form and function, the building would be similar to the nearly 400 other People’s Houses that had been built by the CHP around Turkey. These Houses functioned as key sites of social activity, translating the modernizing reforms of the ruling party in Ankara to every corner of Turkey in an effort to create a new national form of social life. These Halkevis were imagined as a venue for new social rituals; in Eyüp, the building would bring the resources of the “city” to what Behçet Uz described in April 1943 as little more than an unattended town (*kasaba*). The story of the Eyüp Halkevi – the debates its construction provoked, the ways that this self-consciously modern institution was positioned within Eyüp’s landscape of mosques, tombs, and cemeteries, and its eventual demise amidst Turkey’s transition from a one-party state to a multiparty democracy – provides one opportunity to examine the shifting connections that linked this district to the city and nation beyond, connections that helped make Eyüp’s modern.

**The Halkevi: A Site for Producing Modern Subjects**

The first People’s Houses were established in 1932 to accomplish two linked tasks: first, to bring civil society organizations under the direct control of the state; and second, to represent the state materially in the everyday lives of people across Turkey. In some respects, the

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72 According to CHP records, 394 Halkevleri (of a total of 478) had been built by 1943, meaning that Eyüp’s Halkevi is built relatively late during the process. Alexandros Lamprou, *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and the Citizen* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 41.

73 Behçet Uz. “Yaptığım tetkikatta, Eyüp kasabası hakikaten bakımsız kalmıştır.”


75 John Agnew draws on Michael Billig’s conceptualization of ‘banal nationalism’ to make this point. Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, 38.
People’s Houses were a continuation of earlier societies and associations that sought to educate the public in topics like civilization, hygiene, and scientific progress.76 However, the People’s Houses differed from previous organizations in being directly owned by the CHP and closely supervised by central party authorities. Along with the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) and the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu), the People’s Houses served as one of the primary ways that state authorities tried to produce a common, shared sense of Turkishness.77 Even though they were ostensibly “places of gathering and work” for all citizens regardless of party membership, the People’s Houses were in fact tightly controlled party institutions.78 Some scholars have gone so far as to argue that the People’s Houses were intended as “a modern and secular institutional replacement” for the ‘traditional’ social role of the mosque.79 Regardless, their construction in new urban centers across Turkey testified to the belief that the reconfiguration of the built environment could be a means to reconfigure the social life of their environs.

**Building the Halkevi: Bridging the Distance Between Eyüp and Istanbul**

Although Behçet Uz did not describe how he reached Eyüp in April 1943, he likely arrived in one of two ways: by ferry, a journey that would have departed from the Galata Bridge,  

76 The key institution was the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları), originally established in 1911-12 as part of the then-ruling Committee of Union and Progress’ goal of modernizing and governing the Ottoman Empire. Lamprou, *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and the Citizen*, 25-29.


78 Lamprou, *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and the Citizen*, 33.

stopping at a number of shabby neighborhoods on either side of the Golden Horn before arriving at Eyüp’s small rickety pier; or by car, a trip that would have forced him to pass through the old Byzantine walls at the gate known as Edirnekapı before winding his way down through the narrow steep streets of Nişancı, passing old wooden houses, unkempt graveyards, and green gardens. Regardless of how he arrived in Eyüp, Uz was not impressed with the district that he found. Even though Eyüp was administratively connected to Istanbul, Uz found a place that seemed be distant from the city:

In the investigation that I undertook, the town of Eyüp (Eyüp kasabası) has truly been left unattended. Whichever way one looks are cemeteries and gravestones that strike a person’s eye. Life is quite backwards. The distance with the city and the lack of transportation does not provide the opportunity for the youth and the people to benefit from the other districts (diğer kazalar).80

The Halkevi for which Uz and Eyüp party officials advocated would be a new and striking building within that landscape of “cemeteries and gravestones” and would provide the youth of Eyüp with the social resources that they lacked because of the distance from the city. Crucially, the distance of which Uz spoke was physical – measurable on a map – and embodied – registered through the perceptions of difference between the “unattended (bakımsız)” Eyüp and the implied city of Istanbul. Indeed, the two major arguments for building a Halkevi in Eyüp were distance and the lack of social venues for local residents.

Uz stressed that in a second report addressed to the CHP’s General Secretariat in Ankara. Given Eyüp’s “distance from the city (şehirden uzaklık),” he wrote, the Halkevi would serve an

important social function for a town (kasaba) of 27,000. The building Uz described would have a salon for up to 600 people, an equally large room for gymnastics, and a second, smaller salon for weddings and other social engagements. It would also include rooms designated for the use of the Halkevi’s administrative staff, a special section for Party officials, and a library. Two things are notable in Uz’s plan. The first is the blurred line between social and political life. Across Turkey, People’s Houses functioned by designating the CHP as the only political vehicle through which ‘society’ could represent itself; by the same token, that ‘society’ was constituted in the image of the CHP: modern, secular, and nationalist. The second is the scale of the building: Eyüp’s Halkevi would be a large, monumental building. Although its proposed location was not in the immediate vicinity of Eyüp’s central mosques, the building would mark a major form of state intervention in a landscape of mosques, medreses, and tekkes – the very buildings that had been closed down by the secularizing reforms of the 1920s.

In a petition three years later – with the Halkevi’s construction still mired in debate – Şahap Efe, the President of the Eyüp branch of the CHP, highlighted the same issues of distance, connection, and the lack of social venues. He wrote, “Our environs – on the periphery of Istanbul (İstanbul’un kenarında) and whose connection to the city disappears at night – have a desperate need for a Halkevi.” Eyüp, he continued, had no space for weddings or family meetings. Moreover, the “ruined (harap)” wooden building that the party had been using was literally collapsing, making it impossible to organize public meetings. The Halkevi would bring the ‘city’ – and particularly the mixed-gender large social spaces that were equated with it – into a new,
concrete building. Yet given the perceived urgent need for the building, why did its construction take so long and provoke such debates within local and national party organizations?

**Two Problems: Location and Political Context**

There were two primary factors that worked against the completion of the Eyüp Halkevi. The first was location. Although Eyüp was not as densely settled as other parts of Istanbul, it was not an empty landscape upon which new buildings could be simply added. The district’s center was a tightly woven fabric of homes, shops, and cafes, to say nothing of the looming presence of Eyüp’s religious landscape – its mosques, tombs, tekkes, and graveyards, many of which had themselves been the target of closures and restrictions during the 1920s and 30s. The first proposed location of the Halkevi was on the margins of this dense center, in a garden that had been owned previously by two Greeks but now belonged to the state.  

The location had an added advantage in that part of the property had already been designated for public use as a new stadium run by the Ministry of Physical Education (Beden Terbiyesi), making it simpler to transfer the title for the Halkevi to the CHP.

As was its practice, CHP authorities in Ankara dispatched Seyfi Sonad, the party’s chief architect to survey the proposed location. Although Sonad’s initial report does not exist in party

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83 TC/BCA 490.01/1722.1002.1. Report from CHP Istanbul Vilayet İdare Heyeti Reisi Behçet Uz to CHP General Secretariat. April 10, 1944. The report states that 1,212 m2 were bought from a man named Raif Baysal. The other 5,482 m2 belonged to two Greeks and the National Property: “Yarı ve Dimitri ile Milli Emlâke aid olan…” See also Report from CHP İstanbul İlli İdare Kurulu Başkanı Fikret Silay to CHP Genel Sekreterliği. No. 3686. July 24, 1944.

84 Some of this land might have been acquired from the Kargı family, who headed the Ummi Sinan Tekkesi. That tekke was one of the only ones permitted to stay open after 1925, likely because of the services of Yahya Galip Kargı to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The takeaway point is that property in Eyüp – especially central Eyüp – is caught up in so many different family histories, a richness that I can only gesture at. Çoskun Şen, "Yahya Galip Kargı Ve EyuP Spor," *Haber Eyüp*, January 14 2014.
archives, it is clear from the ensuring correspondence that he had two major objections. The first was social. Citing the opinion of an “old Eyüp resident (eski bir Eyüplü),” Sonad said that nobody would go. Even though the building was spatially proximate to the center of Eyüp, Sonad argued that it was socially distant and unlikely to impact the district’s social life. The second was a problem of topography: The proposed location was one of the lowest in Eyüp and prone to frequent flooding during heavy rains. As Sonad argued in his report, “The fact that not even a gardener’s shed is found in this depression (çukur arazı) is – from the perspective of urban planning (şehirçilik) – a crucial dimension to keep in mind.” Instead of the garden, Sonad suggested a location on the shore of the Golden Horn, where the building could be of greater benefit to the social life of the district. Istanbul and Eyüp party officials strongly contested Sonad’s report.

Their rebuttals provide a fascinating window on the complicated micropolitics of Eyüp’s landscape in the 1940s. A shoreline location, supporters wrote, would be more expensive because it would require expropriating land from the adjacent factories. Because of increased sediment in the streams that drained into the Golden Horn – an increase likely tied to informal urbanization in nearby districts – the waterway was turning into a swamp (bataklık). It would be vulnerable to the north wind that blew during the winter, exactly the period when the Halkevi was busiest. Moreover, the Halkevi would also be vulnerable to the smells and effluence

85 TC/BCA 490.01/1722.1002.1. Report from Seyfi Sonad, Chief Architect of the CHP. June 29, 1946.

86 Seyfi Sonad. “Bu çukur arazisinin içerisinde bir bahçivan kulübesinin bile bulunmayışı şehircilik bakımdan gözönünde tutulacak mühim bir cihettir.”

produced by the slaughterhouse located on the opposite shore in Sütlüce. All of these changes – the factories, the increased sediment flow, and the slaughterhouse – were relatively recent changes, products of Istanbul’s growth during the 1920s and 30s.

But the most interesting aspect of the rebuttals to Sonad’s report was their elision of Eyüp’s religious significance. In all of the correspondence between Eyüp, Istanbul, and Ankara-based party officials, Islam was never mentioned, even though the physical markers of Islam – mosques, türbes, medreses, and graveyards – were all around. In this case, the rebuttals stressed that because a shoreline location would obscure the “historic works (tarihi eserler),” the Istanbul Municipality would likely not authorize the construction of a two-story building. Constructing a Halkevi – a large structure used by the CHP as a site for the production of a new, modern citizenry – on the shore would have obscured the silhouette of the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan. The Halkevi would have marked a radical intervention into Eyüp’s religious landscape.

To be sure, the radical character of that intervention is never mentioned in the communication between these various offices, but it seems clear that party officials were at least sensitive to the visual impact of obscuring ‘old’ – i.e., religious – buildings with a ‘new’ Halkevi. Despite Seyfi Sonad’s strenuous objections, central party authorities in Ankara eventually approved the garden location for the Halkevi sometime in late 1946 or early 1947. The takeaway point is that the Halkevi’s location was not simply an abstract point on the map; its location meant something in relation to Eyüp’s already existing social and material topography.

It was during this period, however, that the Eyüp Halkevi ran into the second major obstacle: The emergence of multiparty democracy in 1946, a change that radically reshaped how the Republican People’s Party (CHP) leveraged its control of the state to finance its political
agenda. From 1923 until 1946, Turkey was governed as an authoritarian one-party state.\textsuperscript{88} Although the CHP and the government were ostensibly different organizations, there was in practice almost no separation between the activity of the party and the activity of the state. In many respects, the Halkevis were the exemplary form of this interrelationship: Their property deeds were owned by the CHP, but they were almost always financed by the state itself; they were in theory open to all members of the \textit{halk} (people), but they often functioned exclusively for the benefit of CHP members.

With the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938, figures within the CHP increasingly began agitating for the formation of opposition parties. While the declaration of martial law and Turkey’s full-scale mobilization during World War Two slowed that process, a group of CHP Parliamentary deputies broke away in January 1946 to form the opposition Democrat Party (\textit{Demokrat Parti}, DP). Although the DP lost early elections in July 1946, the party quickly began to organize across Turkey. One of the ways that the DP campaigned against the CHP was by making use of the built environment. In the case of Eyüp, local DP supporters used the half-finished condition of the Halkevi in 1946 as a potent symbol of the CHP’s failure to deliver its promised reforms.\textsuperscript{89}

The beginning of multiparty democracy led to heated debates about the boundary between state and party that had been proscribed during the one-party period. In a more tangible sense, multiparty politics limited the ability of the CHP to draw upon state resources to fund

\textsuperscript{88} There were brief experiments with opposition parties (the Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası in 1930 and the Milli Kalkınma Partisi in 1945), but the Democrat Party was the first opposition to (1) remain open and (2) actually win in free elections.

\textsuperscript{89} TC/BCA 490.01/1722.1002.1. Report from CHP Eyüp İlçe İdare Kurulu Başkanı Şahap Efe. No. 284. September 24, 1946.
party activities. Furthermore, print culture flourished in the aftermath of World War II, greatly expanding the space for political debate. The result was a situation in which the CHP was not able to fund its Halkevis as they had been between 1932 (when the first Halkevi was opened) and 1946 (when the DP organized). There simply was not money to finish all of the Halkevis.

Instead of serving as a building that demonstrated the CHP’s ability to produce a form of modern citizenship, the Halkevi’s half-finished state served as an indictment of the party. *Demokrat Eyüp*, a local newspaper published by Democrat Party supporters in 1950, provides a clear picture of these critiques. In that newspaper’s critique of the CHP, the Halkevi was a repeated target. Its apparent emptiness – something that seems to confirm Seyfi Sonad’s reference to an “old Eyüp live” – became a useful metaphor for the DP to criticize the emptiness of the CHP’s political program. The Eyüp Halkevi was also hampered by accusations that local party officials had misappropriated funds for their personal use.

Following the Democrat Party’s May 1950 electoral victory, the legal status of People’s Houses around the country was thrown into question once more. Although the CHP owned the title to all of the property, those properties had almost always been purchased with state funds. When it proved impossible to reach a compromise between the DP and the CHP about the future of the Halkevi, the government closed down all of the People’s Houses and People’s Rooms in 1951. The ownership of those buildings was then transferred back to the state.

90 Brockett, How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity, 83-112.

91 The newspaper is first published on March 3, 1950, in the lead-up to the national election of May 1950. Its first issue quotes from the resignation letter of a former CHP party member: “CHP Eyüp ilçe idare kurulu başkanının muhit atmosferini hiç bir zaman düşünmeden Halkevi, kültü ve cemiyet işine keyfi ve bir kaç çıbbası lehine daime müdahaleleri, şimdiye kadar beni üzmüş… Maddi fedakârlıkla bir kaç menfaat perestin, partinin tüzük ve nizamlarını hiç sayarak derebeylik zamanından kalma bir otorite ile her şeye malik olmak hususunda gösterdikleri gayrete… hiç bir sebep bulamamaktayım.”
As for the building that once housed the Eyüp Halkevi, it is no longer there. When I first found these documents in 2013, I shared them with Şener Türkmenoğlu, an author and photographer who has spent much of the past two decades compiling a massive collection of Eyüp history. He looked at the photograph of the Halkevi and said immediately, “It’s the government mansion (hükümet konağı).” This suggests that, following the closure of the Halkevi, the building was reconfigured as a government building, likely housing representatives of the central state including the kaymakam and the police.

It is tempting to interpret the story of the Eyüp Halkevi as an example of the limits of the Kemalist project, a project that sought to remake civil society in the image of a top-down modernizing state through reforms that flowed from Ankara to every corner of the country. As the CHP’s Chief Architect Seyfi Sonad complained in a bitter 1948 memorandum, the Eyüp Halkevi should have been built according to “the principles applied with great care and attention even to the smallest corners of the nation.”92 The failure of the Halkevi could be described as a ‘local’ district – one in which Islam was an inescapable material presence – resisting the secularizing and modernizing reforms of the Kemalist state. That would be wrong for two crucial reasons.

First, there was absolutely local support for building a Halkevi in Eyüp. Although Eyüp CHP officials were criticized in the run-up to the 1950 election for not living in Eyüp, many of them simultaneously claimed deep historical roots in Eyüp and wholeheartedly supported the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the CHP. Rather than see the Halkevi as a top-down intervention, it is more useful to see it as product of coordination between multiple actors

working at multiple scales. Second, and more importantly, the Halkevi’s story cannot be understood as the triumph of the ‘traditional,’ the ‘religious,’ or the ‘past,’ over the ‘modern.’ The Halkevi helped to materialize a particular form of modern life, but it was not the only form of the modern that emerged in Eyüp.

I turn now to a different story that coalesces in the 1950s: The restoration of the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa, an act made possible in part because of the enthusiastic support of the then-ruling Democrat Party. This mosque’s reuse in the 1950s – a story that has to be understood in relation to its specific trajectory of neglect and occupation – shows how Islam came to be seen not as a rejection of modern life but as one important part of it. This was particularly important in Eyüp, a district in which the density of religious monuments marked an apparent site of continuity. Where the debate about the Halkevi involved questions about inserting a new building into Eyüp’s landscape, the debates surrounding Zal Mahmut Paşa involved the pressing question of what do with ‘old’ buildings.

Zal Mahmut Paşa: A Mosque for the Modern

Introduction

In March 1949, Aziz Oğan, the director of the Istanbul Archaeology Museum (İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesi) and the president of the Council for the Protection of Antiquities (Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni), addressed a brief memorandum to the Ministry of Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı).93 Writing in reference to the mosque and medrese complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa in

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Eyüp, a complex not being used for religious purposes but instead “under military occupation
(askeri işgal altında)” and whose state of ruination (haraplığı) was therefore increasing, Öğan
requested the Ministry of Education’s intervention in removing the mosque complex from
military use.

A decade later, in contrast, the well-known architect Ali Saim Ülgen described the same
mosque complex in different terms. Remembering a complex that had been rescued from its
“extremely forlorn and ruined landscape (pek perişan ve harap bir manazara),” Ülgen insisted
that the mosque complex was not simply valuable as a distant object of the past; rather, the
mosque of Zal Mahmut Paşa and its surrounding buildings provided a still relevant example of
urban planning. As he wrote, “It is known that Turkish Architecture has provided a number of
rather beautiful examples of urban organization (şehircilik tanzimleri). Our great masterpieces
provide multiple examples related to the establishment of these complexes (manzume) that
accord with a modern understanding.”

94 How did this mosque complex change from being a
forgotten site – little more than a military depot – into a monument that materialized a form of
‘modern’ urban planning?

(Müze-i Hümayun). With the end of the Ottoman Empire, the museum lost its imperial moniker although
much of the staff continued in their positions. The Council for the Preservation of Antiquities was
founded in 1913 and was later brought within the institutional structure of the museum. See Wendy Shaw,
"Museums and Narratives of Display from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic,"
in *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1785-1914*, ed. Zainab Bahrani,
Zeynep Çelik, and Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: SALT, 2011); Nur Altınıyıldız, "The Architectural Heritage of
Meanings of Architectural Preservation in Early Republican Istanbul (1923-1950)," *Journal of the
Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1, no. 1-2 (2014).

94 SALT. Ali Saim Ülgen Archives. TASUDOC0467135 “Bu Mimarî guruğ Zal Mahmut Paşa camii
cıvarında toplanmış bulunmaktadır. Türk Mimarlık sanatının şehircilik tanzimlerine gayet güzel örnekler
verdiği malumdur. Büyük Şaheserlerimiz bu manzumelerin modern anlayışa göre kuruluşa ait nice
örnekler vermektedir.”
The answer involves the reconfiguration of political and cultural relationships that made Turkey’s Ottoman past visible in a new way. Set amidst broader processes of large-scale migration, rapid industrialization, and largely unplanned urbanization, the country’s Ottoman landscape also came to be embedded within a new social and institutional context. In the process, these mosques, medreses, graveyards, tekkes, and tombs – “Our great masterpieces,” as Ülgen described them – became particularly charged sites for the articulation of ‘modern’ identities. One of the places where this was most apparent was Eyüp, a district whose dense cluster of Ottoman-era monuments made it one center of this renewed engagement with the Ottoman past.

Making Eyüp modern was not simply about building new buildings. It also involved decisions about how to use ‘old’ buildings such as Eyüp’s mosques, tombs, religious schools, and libraries, buildings whose functions had radically shifted in the new social, political, and administrative environment of Republican Turkey. Focusing on the mosque-medrese-tomb complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa – the second largest mosque in Eyüp after the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – this section traces the shifting configuration of actors, institutions, and ideologies at work in making the Ottoman modern.95

**Zal Mahmut Paşa: 1571-1949**

Designed by Mimar Sinan, the preeminent Ottoman architect of the 16th century, the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa was completed in 1571. Its size and prominence reflects

the wealth and power of Zal Mahmut Paşa, one of Sultan Süleyman’s chief ministers (and also infamous for strangling the sultan’s son Mustafa). After the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan, Zal Mahmut is one of Eyüp’s largest mosques. Positioned between what were once the two main boulevards leading between central Eyüp and Istanbul proper, the complex occupies a prominent place in the district’s landscape. Organized in two levels to negotiate the uneven ground, the complex includes the mosque proper, a medrese arranged on two levels, and a tomb for Zal Mahmut Paşa and his wife. Like all mosque complexes throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Zal Mahmut complex was supported by a vakиф (pious foundation) that used rents derived from other properties to support the charitable activities of the mosque.

By the early 20th century, however, reforms to the vakиф system had drastically reduced the amount of money available for the upkeep of the mosque. Moreover, Ottoman territorial losses during the Balkan War (1912-13) led to an influx of refugees into Istanbul, following already rapid population growth during the 19th century. At the same time, repeated fires had devastated much of Istanbul’s wooden housing stock, leading to an acute housing shortage. One way to alleviate that shortage was by settling into semi-abandoned religious complexes around Istanbul. A British observer in 1913, for example, found several hundred people – refugees from the Balkan War – living in the mosque of Zal Mahmut Paşa for lack of any other refuge. As a result of reduced financial support from the vakиф system and the pressures of newly arriving


refugees, the mosque of Zal Mahmut Paşa fell into a state of increasing disrepair in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire.

While complexes like that of Zal Mahmut Paşa had come to exist within a new social and administrative landscape during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the 1923 founding of the Turkish Republic led to a number of key changes as the new state set out to establish its legitimacy by means of the control of Islam. This happened in multiple ways, including the banning of the caliphate in 1924, the promulgation of a new civil legal code, restricting the use of ‘religious’ clothing in public, and controlling religious holidays like Ramadan.

Limiting access to religious buildings including mosques, medreses (religious schools), türbes (tombs), and tekke, dergah, and zaviye (Sufi lodges) was another crucial part of asserting state control over Islam. In 1924, and as part of the secularizing reforms of the Republic, the Unification of Education Law (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) closed all religious schools (medrese) and placed them under the control of the recently established Ministry of Education. The 1925 Foundations Law (Vakıflar Kanunu) claimed all religious properties for the state, while Law no. 677 closed all tombs (türbe) and Sufi lodges (tekke, dergah, and zaviye). The cumulative effect of these reforms was to close off centers of social life from their immediate environs.

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99 Although Andrew Davison argues that these reforms are better described as ‘laicist’ and not ‘secular,’ insofar as these reforms did not remove religion from the state so much as they defined a new “operative institutional matrix” in which religious life was directly supervised by the state. Andrew Davison, "Turkey, a ‘Secular’ State? The Challenge of Description," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (2003): 337.


101 Kezer, "Familiar Things in Strange Places: Ankara's Ethnography Museum and the Legacy of Islam in Republican Turkey," 110. While Kezer is correct in asserting the importance of the laws of 1924 and
These reforms also created a new legal, administrative, and financial context within which mosques and medreses were managed. Because of the secularizing reforms of the state, medreses had entirely lost their social function as schools for Islamic education. Because of closures and state pressure, much of the social life that had been organized through mosques shifted to other venues. These buildings became monuments, now valued chiefly for their historic value (and not, by contrast, for their religious functions). But because these monuments were almost always products of the Ottoman past, they occupied an ambivalent space in a political moment where the ‘Ottoman’ was politically and culturally suspect. The religious importance of mosques and medreses and the continuing social relationships articulated through them made these complex complexes dangerous sites of potential resistance for Kemalist authorities. Yet at the same time, Ottoman mosques were also reclassified as markers of an ostensibly pure Turkish essence. Some writers – including some figures who worked with Aziz Öğan on Council for the Protection of Antiquities – even found continuities between Ottoman mosques and Turkish modernism of the 1920s and 30s.¹⁰²

Beginning in the late 1920s and continuing throughout the 1930s, these two trends – the secularizing project of the state and the production of heritage information – intersected in a

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national project of registering and classifying mosques. Government representatives traveled the country visiting mosques large and small. Mosques were evaluated in terms of the number of worshippers who visited regularly, their architectural, historical, and aesthetic value, their physical condition, and other possible uses to which they could be put. When mosques were deemed to be superfluous, they were classified as being “outside the cadre” (kadro dışı) and thus available for sale, destruction, or reuse as something other than a mosque.

This was the context for a terse January 1933 request from the Istanbul office of the Ministry of Education to the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities, asking whether the mosque of “Zalmehmet Paşa” had any sort of architectural or historical value. At this point, the management of nearly all of Turkey’s religious landscape had passed into the purview of the Ministry of Education, and it is very likely that this request was part of the ongoing project of establishing which buildings should be preserved and which were superfluous. The request from the Ministry of Education was thus part of that broader process whereby ostensibly purposeless buildings were being reclassified and transformed as part of a modernizing (and self-consciously modern) state. Responding to the Ministry’s request, the Council dispatched two men to assess the status of the mosque. Their terse reply stated in absolute terms that the mosque was a peerless historical monument. A selection of photographs taken between January 1933 and December 1935 suggest both that the Council returned on multiple occasions to document the mosque’s


104 KTVKK/EEKE GN 375. No. 641/370. 31 Kanunisani 1933 [January 31, 1933]. The misspelling of the mosque’s name – ‘Zalmehmet Paşa’ instead of ‘Zalmahmut Paşa’ could indicate the lack of familiarity of Ministry of Education figures with the mosques in question.

condition and that many parts of the mosque complex were in an advanced state of decay by this period.

A second, more comprehensive report was prepared in November 1938. While the mosque is recorded as being in working condition (mamur), the description of its recent history demonstrates that the mosque’s care and upkeep were the result of private efforts and not those of the state.

This mosque was ruined and closed and stayed this way until the General Directorate of Foundations placed it in the category of mosques in the classification that they conducted; and they appointed someone from its staff caretaker until its repair. With an appropriation of up to 3,000 lira for its repair… university student Bay Yahya, son of Haci Necdi Bey, the former director of the Darülfünun and the Mekteb-i Mülkiye, appealed to the Museum and the situation was communicated to the Foundation’s Chief Directorate, the repair was completed by an advisory committee with cooperation of the vakf, and the mosque was opened.106

The ruination of the mosque was likely a result of several factors: The nationalization of the vakıf system (continuing its earlier centralization under the Ottoman state) had led to a general reduction in funds for mosque maintenance; refugees arriving in Istanbul following the Balkan Wars and World War I sought shelter on the premises; and the secularizing reforms of the 1920s had further marginalized mosques and medreses as sites of ongoing social life. There is no further mention of Bay Yahya and Haci Necdi Bey, but the story of Zal Mahmut Paşa seems to echo other stories about mosques during this period: Only through the efforts of private individuals was it possible to repair and maintain these complexes on an ad hoc basis.

The outbreak of World War II led to a general mobilization in Turkey, and the military was granted expanded powers to requisition buildings for national defense. Somewhere around that time, the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut must have been claimed for military use. Two pieces of evidence support this claim. First, the complex was only a short distance from the Golden Horn, suggesting that the complex made a useful staging ground for goods delivered by water to a nearby dock. Second, the records of several nearby mosque and medrese complexes also mention military use during this period. As former residents of the neighborhood remember, the military used the medrese as a depot to store material that would be later transported up the

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107 Ilhan Tekeli references this in his history of municipal administration. *Cumhuriyetin Belediyecilik Öyküsü*. His further point is that this legal situation continues well after the end of the war – as late as 1960? See also Esen, "Tek Parti Dönemi Cami Kapatma/Satma Uygulamaları."
hill to the nearby barracks of Rami and Davutpaşa. The military’s use of mosques and other religious buildings during the 1930s and 40s continues to serve as a reference point for contemporary Islamist critiques of the early Kemalist state.

This was the background that led to Aziz Öğan’s urgent series of memoranda between 1949 and 1950. In keeping with a broader shift that classified mosques not as active sites of worship but ‘historic’ monuments, the Ministry of Education administered the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut. Its use as a military depot was the result of multiple factors, including the reclassification of mosques and the general mobilization of World War II. Despite pleas to “save this historic complex (külliye) from complete ruination,” it was not until December 1951 that the Council received notice that the military had vacated the premises and that the building’s administration had been returned to the General Directorate of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü, VGM).

**Ali Saim Ülgen, the VGM: Preserving the Past in 1950s Turkey**

The 1950 electoral victory of the Democrat Party led to a number of changes that modified the laicist reforms of the 1920s and 30s. These included expanding the number of

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108 I had discussed this document with a former Eyüp resident born in the 1950s. She had been struck by the use of the word işgal (occupation) and spoke with her mother about the military’s activities. According to her mother, the military had used the medrese, but I was advised not to describe that use as an “occupation,” as the word işgal was usually used to describe when foreign powers violated Turkish sovereignty.


religious schools that would train imams (*imam hatip liseleri*), authorizing the delivery of the call to prayer in Arabic (instead of Turkish), and opening a small number of tombs for public visitation. More broadly, the Ottoman past came to rehabilitated in this moment, no longer seen as a threat to the legitimacy of the state but as a possible resource for the articulation of a Muslim national identity. The physical condition of Turkey’s Ottoman landscape thus became an important index of a broader social relationship to the past. One part of that rehabilitation was a law in 1951 that established a new legal framework for the management of ‘historic’ monuments and created a new institution – the Supreme Council for Monuments and Antiquities (*Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Antlar Yüksek Kurulu*) – to supervise them. This council worked in partnership with a second institution – the General Directorate of Foundations – and together the two groups began to take a much more active role in the care of many of Turkey’s Ottoman-era monuments.

The General Directorate of Foundations was a curious institution. It had been formed in 1924, replacing the Ministry of Foundations (*Evkaf Nezareti*) that had managed the *vakıf* system under the Ottoman Empire. Although the VGM was a new institution, its objects of governance were anything but: *Vakıf* properties – including nearly all of Turkey’s religious buildings as well as a huge number of non-religious buildings and properties – were the product

111 One of the best examples of this were the celebrations organized in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Gavin Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and Its Contribution to World History," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (2014): 412-20.

112 Between 1920-24, the *vakıf* system was managed by the short-lived Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments. In 1924, that management was split – with religious affairs being handled by Diyanet (the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and property being managed by the newly established VGM. Amy Singer, "The Persistence of Philanthropy," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 3 (2011): 563. Altınyıldız, "The Architectural Heritage of Istanbul and the Ideology of Preservation," 288.
of five centuries of charitable endowments. As a result, the VGM had an incredibly complicated set of responsibilities, including supporting public welfare institutions (such as soup kitchens and orphanages), managing agricultural holdings (whose rents had once gone to support mosques and other religious buildings), renting vacant properties, and selling off other properties to municipalities for public use.

One of the key figures in the VGM’s restoration program was a man named Ali Saim Ülgen.¹¹³ Born in 1913, Ülgen was born in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire but came of age as the Kemalist reforms began to take effect. Trained as an architect and an architectural historian, Ülgen moved to Ankara in 1944 to work on the staff of the Division of Monuments (Anıtlar Şubesi). In 1953, after nine years in the Division of Monuments, Ülgen assumed the position of “special adviser” (uzman danışman/mütehassıs müşavir) in the Office for Monument and Building Affairs (Abide ve Yapı İşleri Dairesi), from where he supervised – or at least consulted on – the restoration of up to several hundred buildings managed by the VGM.

It was in that capacity that Ülgen participated in the restoration of Eyüp’s two most prominent mosque complexes: The mosque-tomb complex of Eyüp Sultan, and the mosque-medrese-tomb complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa. In the notes for a speech delivered sometime in the late 1950s, he described the complex’s state when the VGM recovered control of the building from the Ministry of Defense as presenting an “extremely forlorn and ruined landscape (pek perişan ve harap bir manazara).”¹¹⁴ Much of the lead that had once protected the roof had been


¹¹⁴ SALT. Ali Saim Ülgen Archives. TASUDOC0467124 “Üç yıl önce onarımalar için program hazırlanmak üzere tetkik edildikleri vakit Zal Mahmut paşa mimarı manzumesi ve çevresindeki âbideler, Eyüp Sultandaki emsali gibi pek perişan ve harap bir manzara arz ediyordu. Camii kademeli avlusunun
stolen, the courtyards had been filled with dirt and debree, and the various rooms of the medrese had been filled in with gecekondu.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Gecekondu (literally “placed by night”) now refers to the informal and unauthorized housing that sprang up on the margins of major Turkish cities beginning in the 1940s. Ülgen’s use is more specific – the use of rooms in the medrese without permission, likely by poor urban residents.
Ülgen argued that the physical decay of the mosque complex was partly the function of the buildings having lost their function. Buildings such as the medrese, the darülkura (a building for teaching the reading of the Qur’an), and the sibyan mektebi (a primary school) – whose importance had been lost with the secularizing education reforms of the 1920s – should instead be used as social welfare institutions (içtimai yardım müessesesi). Only by making these buildings
responsive to their 1950s context, he insisted, could these buildings be preserved for future
generations.\footnote{SALT. Ali Saim Ülgen Archives. TASUDOC04671. “Bu gün için fonksiyonunu kaybetmiş olan
medrese, darülkura, mektebisübyan gibi diğer eserler de birer içtimai‘yardım müessesesi halinde
kullanılmak suretiyle mahalli ihtiyaçlara cevap verebilecek şeyle sokulmaktadır. Bu suretle Eyüp ve
civarı süsleyen âbidatımızın tamiri yapıldığı gibi, korunması ve gelecek nesillere intikali de mümkün
olacaktır.”}

Ülgen’s description of Zal Mahmut and its surroundings was also striking because of the
way he described the complex as an example of Turkish urban planning. Echoing similar
statements of his colleagues Celal Esad Arseven, Behçet Ünsal, and Sedad Hakkı Eldem, Ülgen
argued that Zal Mahmut Paşa wasn’t simply a ‘religious’ monument.\footnote{Sibel Bozdoğan, "Reading Ottoman Architecture through Modernist Lenses: Nationalist
Historiography and the "New Architecture" in the Early Republic," \textit{Muqarnas} 24 (2007).} Instead, the building was
an expression of the greatness of ‘Turkish Architecture,’ one whose “great masterpieces provide
multiple examples related to the establishment of these complexes (\textit{manzume}) that accord with a
modern understanding [of urban planning].”\footnote{SALT. Ali Saim Ülgen Archives. TASUDOC0467135 “Bu Mimarî gurup Zal Mahmut Paşa camii
civarında toplanmış bulunan türk mimarî sanatının şehircilik tanzimlerine gayet güzel örnekler
verdiği malumdur. Büyük Şaheserlerimiz bu manzumelerin modern anlayışa göre kuruluş'a ait nice
örnekler vermektedir.”} In contrast to the 1930s and 40s – in which the
Ottoman past had marked the antithesis of the modern – buildings like that of Zal Mahmut Paşa
came to be understood in a new way in the 1950s. Positioned relative to political shifts (from
one-party state to multi-party democracy), legal changes (new laws on heritage), and a
transformed cultural landscape (in which the Ottoman past was rehabilitated), the mosque
complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa provides one window onto the changing place of Eyüp’s religious
landscape during the 1950s.
At the same time, these restoration projects were not neutral. They involved assumptions about the ways that these buildings should be used, the values that these buildings carried (or did not carry) for the largely working-class residents who lived in their vicinity, and the sorts of futures that these buildings might have. Even as the Ottoman past assumed a more durable form, that past came to be increasingly separate from the lived social life of Eyüp. Families were moving away, young people had only known the Turkish Republic, and this mosque complex – the social relationships once organized through it – came to be a monument of the past in a modern present.

I now turn to a third way that Eyüp was made modern: the building of new roads. As I show, building roads in Istanbul was entangled in a longer history of urban planning and self-conscious ‘modernization.’ In a moment when influxes of rural migrants to Eyüp and surrounding districts created new problems of traffic and circulation, the building of roads quite literally encountered the past. How did road-building projects come to ground in Eyüp and what were the effects of these new modes of transportation?

**Boulevards and Squares: Routes of Modern Life**

In May 1954, Nahid Sırlı Örik arrived in Eyüp as many visitors from outside the district did: By ferry. As he walked from the ferry dock inland to the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, he moved along a road that was being widened. For centuries, Eyüp had been one of Istanbul’s major graveyards, and in many cases, those graves pushed right up to the edge of the road. Now, however, the Istanbul Municipality was expanding the road, a project that required moving the
carved stone headstones that marked the graves. “Shouldn’t we be protecting with great care,” he wondered, “Eyüp’s tens of thousands of old graves and its countless türbes?”119

Alongside the building of new structures and the restoration of old ones, the construction of new roads and squares during the 1940s and 50s was a key part of making the city modern. More than anything else, ‘opening up’ the city by means of straight, wide boulevards became the urban intervention through which Istanbul was remade. More than simply open the city up, these roads connected the city in new way, making outlying districts like Eyüp accessible in a whole new way and helping to make the city as a whole legible as a modern city. Yet as Örik’s opening reflection makes clear, the construction of new boulevards in a old city came at tremendous material cost. This section follows some of the tensions generated by the construction of modern roads in a much older city.

**Histories of Roads in Istanbul**

Beginning in the 19th century, the expansion and the regularization of Istanbul’s road network was a key goal of municipal authorities. Nearly every municipal development project – both those that were actually implemented and the many others that remained upon the drawing board – stressed the importance of widening the city’s streets, roads, and boulevards.120 Municipal authorities frequently seized upon major fires as an opportunity to straighten and broaden the city’s streets; they also prepared a number of surveys that mapped possible future


expansions. Up until the 1930s, road widening in Eyüp was relatively limited in scope. Following several fires in the late 19th century, municipal officials visited Eyüp to straighten and widen several roads in the immediate vicinity of the Eyüp Sultan mosque complex. Other plans show, for example, the proposed expropriations for road-widening projects along the Toymakers’ Market (Oyuncakçılar Çarşısı) and the central Kalenderhane Caddesi.121

During the 1930s, two important changes helped to further reshape Istanbul’s road network. The first was the Building and Roads Law (Yaptı ve Yollar Kanunu) of 1933, which mandated that all historical monuments be surrounded with a buffer space of 10 meters.122 The law ended the long tradition of constructing smaller buildings (usually made of wood) immediately adjacent to mosques and medrese (usually made of stone). These wooden buildings might have served as shops whose rents helped to support mosque activities or as homes for the employees of the mosques. In effect, the law dramatically reconfigured how ‘monuments’ were visible within a modernizing city.123 Instead of being almost lost within a larger urban fabric, monuments were placed within an architectural void, a separation that served to emphasize these buildings’ value as markers of a ‘past’ and removed them from the social fabric of which they had been a part.

121 For Kalenderhane Caddesi, one map was prepared in 1913 (and revised in 1917). Atatürk Kitaplığı, HRT_4480. For the Oyuncakçılar Çarşısı, plans are extant from 1900 (HRT_7148) and 1911/1915 (HRT_7149).


123 Although the process was not directly connected to the 1933 law, one of the most important examples in Istanbul was the clearing of buildings around the Hagia Sophia. As Robert Nelson argues, “the clearing of structures... isolated it from the city and made it something to see rather than use.” In the process, the building became a work of art “valued more for its age, art, and historical value than for its practical or religious use.” Nelson, Hagia Sophia, 1850-1950: Holy Wisdom, Modern Monument, xvii.
The second key change was the 1936 appointment of the French planner Henri Prost as the chief planner for the Istanbul Municipality. Prost’s planning efforts were based upon six goals: removing buildings from the immediate vicinity of Istanbul’s major monuments; improving the existing street network and opening several major arterial boulevards; creating new hygienic recreational and residential areas; preserving Istanbul’s natural and architectural beauty; and preserving Istanbul’s silhouette by limiting the height of buildings on the city’s historic peninsula. Significantly, Prost’s planning was accomplished by means of maps and aerial photography. The logic of his ‘modern’ city had only a tenuous connection to the experience of moving through and living in the city.

This was especially apparent in the debates that erupted between Prost’s office and the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities (discussed above), in which the latter office objects to Prost’s plans on the grounds that they failed to respect the integrity of Istanbul’s historic fabric. There is some ambiguity about Eyüp’s place within Prost’s city plans. Some argue that Prost intended to preserve Eyüp as a protected area, a picturesque landscape of the past in a

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125 Gül, *The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City*, 98.

126 There are interesting parallels to the remaking of Paris and attempts there to make the city legible. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.

127 Açıkgöz, "On the Uses and Meanings of Architectural Preservation in Early Republican Istanbul (1923-1950)."
modernizing city. However, the Eyüp office of the CHP mentioned Prost’s plans for Eyüp’s development to buttress their case for the building of a Halkevi. Furthermore, a series of plans located in the Atatürk Library suggest that Eyüp’s wholesale redevelopment had at least been proposed during the 1930s. Regardless of whether Eyüp’s redevelopment was part of Prost’s planning efforts, these plans were never actually enacted. I turn now to a brief survey of how Eyüp’s road network was organized prior to the 1950s and the particular problems posed by Eyüp’s narrow roads.

**Eyüp’s Road Network Before the 1950s**

Eyüp’s road network was organized around two main avenues (cadde) that ran in parallel through the district’s center and connected Eyüp to the city of Istanbul. The one closest to the shore – known variously as Feshane Caddesi, Defterdar Caddesi, and Yavedud Caddesi (depending on the closest landmark) – functioned as the major artery connecting Eyüp to other districts such as Ayyansaray, Balat, Fener, and Unkapanı that occupied the Golden Horn’s southern shore. The inner avenue – referred to variously as Kalenderhane Caddesi and Zal Paşa Caddesi – eventually turned away from the water and led up in the direction of Eğrikapı and

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129 Four smaller – and undated – maps located in the Atatürk Library form a plan titled “Eyüp Cami Cıvarı Spor Sahası ve Çarşı Yeri Tadilat Planı (Plan for the Redevelopment of Sports Field and Marketplace in the Vicinity of Eyüp Mosque).” Atatürk Kitaplığı, HRT_5726; HRT_5727; HRT_5915; HRT_5916. A later series of news reports in 1941 again refer to Prost’s plans for Eyüp. According to the reports, a shoreline boulevard would connect Eyüp to outlying suburbs, several ‘Oriental’ cafés would be constructed for visitors, and a park space would be opened up. See reports in March 1, 1941 issues of *Tan, Cumhuriyet*, and *Yeni Sabah*. News clippings are now found in KTVKK/EEKE GN 62 Eyüp Semti İmarı (Development of Eyüp).
Edirnekapı, two of the closest gates through the Byzantine walls that marked the beginning of Istanbul proper. From the center of Eyüp – the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – one could also travel toward Istanbul’s other outlying districts. Avenues led up to the 19th century neighborhoods of Topçular and Rami, located on the hills immediately above Eyüp. Another avenue followed a streambed in the direction of İslambey. Leaving from the center of Eyüp, a last boulevard followed the shoreline of the Golden Horn in the direction of Alibeyköy, Silahtarağa, and Kağıthane, three districts at the upper reaches of the waterway. A web of smaller streets and alleys were woven around these avenues in a pattern shaped by successive histories of mosque building, vakıf land, and the vagaries of Eyüp’s topography.¹³⁰ Eyüp’s roads were frequently narrow and sometimes unpaved. Beginning in the 1940s but especially in the 1950s, rapid population growth and the massive expansion of automobile traffic turned Eyüp into a key bottleneck for traffic moving between Istanbul and the rapidly growing informal districts of Alibeyköy, Gaziosmanpaşa, and Taşlıtarla. It’s worth remembering that one of the major justifications for building a Halkevi in Eyüp’s connection to the city of Istanbul was tenuous at best and disappeared at night. According to the arguments of its supporters, the Halkevi would have brought forms of urban social life to a district that was disconnected from the city.

**Opening Eyüp: Road Building Projects of the 1950s**

If Eyüp had been relatively peripheral to the road building projects of the 1930s and 40s, that situation changed dramatically during the 1950s. By the end of the decade, central Eyüp had been reshaped by successive road projects in ways that would have lasting consequences for the residents.

¹³⁰ Vakıf land was legally inalienable and could not be bought or sold. While new migrants to Istanbul in the 1950s would sometimes squat on vakıf land (building informal housing known as gecekondu), that land’s status as vakıf continued to be an obstacle to development because residents could never actually buy the land upon which their houses stood.
district’s social and economic life. There were four primary factors leading to this change. First, the end of wartime rationing and Turkey’s greater incorporation into an American-oriented economic network by means of Marshall Plan Aid and Turkey’s joining of the IMF resulted in a rapidly growing economy.\footnote{Erik Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: A Modern History}, 3rd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 215-16.} In turn, that made more money available for government development projects. Second, the Democrat Party’s May 1950 electoral victory was in part predicated upon the support of peripheral districts of Istanbul like Eyüp. In return, the Democrat Party helped to spur urban investment in those districts, primarily through road-building projects. Finally, there was a decisive shift in government attitudes about Istanbul. Involving both the rebuilding of Istanbul’s ‘Ottoman’ identity and the rapid construction of a ‘modern’ infrastructure, the redevelopment of Istanbul (\textit{İstanbul’un imarı}) was a key goal of new Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his Democrat Party government.\footnote{Gül, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City}, 133. See also Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and Its Contribution to World History," 412-20.} Finally, the Golden Horn was officially designated as an industrial zone during this period, drastically speeding up the process of infill and construction along both shores of the waterway and contributing to increasing pressures on central Eyüp.\footnote{Turgut Cansever blames the Danışmanlar Heyeti (Council of Advisers) for this (wrong) decision. The Council included Kemal Ahmet Aru, Mukbil Gökdoğan, Cevat Erbel, Mehmet Ali Handan, and Mithat Yenen. Turgut Cansever, "İstanbul'un Tahribi Ve Çöküşü İçinde Eyüp Sultan Ve Geleceği," \textit{İstanbul Araştırmaları} 1, no. 1 (1997): 10.}

In Eyüp, the first trace of these new urban development projects comes in a series of brief news articles published in August 1953. As they normally did, newspapers posted a photograph of recently begun demolition operations, accompanied only by a brief caption: “The
surroundings of the Eyüp Mosque are being opened.”134 A few days after the news was published, Efdalettin Tekiner, the president of the Istanbul Council for the Protection of Antiquities, addressed a petition to the Ministry of Education asking for them to immediately intercede and stop the Istanbul Municipality from continuing. In the ensuing correspondence that passed between the Council, the Ministry of Education, and the Istanbul Municipality’s Bureau of Development (İmar Müdürlüğü), the Istanbul Municipality insisted that all of their demolition work would respect the integrity of all antiquities and cemeteries.135

As part of their correspondence, the Istanbul Municipality also shared the plans for their demolition project. Although Eyüp’s current road network has almost nothing to do with this plan, the plan is noteworthy for two reasons. First, its practice of naming demonstrates the very different rubric under which monuments and ‘civil’ architecture were understood as objects of value. All of the monuments are marked: camii (mosque), türbe (tomb), çeşme (fountain), tekke (Sufi lodge). In contrast, the shops that filled the rest of Eyüp’s center were unnamed and therefore disposable. The pharmacy, bakeries, barbershops, butchers, and cafes that once filled this square were not considered to be worthy of preservation or protection. The plan’s second striking feature is the way that the planned road network was literally traced over an older material landscape. In the process, the map – as a material object circulated between different bureaucracies to authorize or contest projects of urban development – stands as one reminder of

134 See news reports in Yeni Sabah and Cumhuriyet, August 14, 1953.

the ongoing process whereby the modern came to ground differently in relation to an already existing urban fabric.

On the whole, however, the first part of the decade was marked more by rhetoric than by concrete action. That changed in September 1956 when Prime Minister Adnan Menderes announced a major redevelopment initiative under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister’s Office.\textsuperscript{136} At first, public reactions to Menderes’ initiative were largely positive, with most major newspapers publishing positive appraisals of the ongoing demolition projects and the city that would emerge in those demolitions’ wake. As a February 1957 news article declared in its headline, “İstanbul Will Be a European City.”\textsuperscript{137} In contrast to previous development projects that had been limited to specific districts of the city, Prime Minister Menderes promised that his interventions would include the entire city, a promise in keeping with the Democrat Party’s continuing insistence that it represented all citizens of Turkey and not the limited elite of the Republican People’s Party. Furthermore, as the article explained, along with the opening of arterial roads connecting the entire city, new squares (meydan) would be created in front of monuments and places of worship in keeping with their historic importance. In the process, Istanbul would become a “European City.”\textsuperscript{138}

The “Menderes Operations,” as they are now known, were fundamentally an exercise in large-scale road building enabled by the Prime Minister’s coordination of the Directorate of Highways (\textit{Karayolları Teşkilati}), the Istanbul Municipality, and government pension funds

\textsuperscript{136} Gül, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City}, 146-48.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Tan}, “İstanbul Bir Avrupa Şehri Olacak.” February 14, 1957.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Tan}, “İstanbul Bir Avrupa Şehri Olacak.” February 14, 1957. “Abide ve ibadet yerlerinin tarihi ehemmiyetine göre meydana çıkarılmasna önem verilmekte şehre, aynı zamanda bir ‘Avrupa Şehri’ hüviyeti verilmesi üzerinde durulmaktadır.”
(who provided the funds for expropriation).\textsuperscript{139} Some of the most well known boulevards in Istanbul were built during these operations, including the massive boulevards of Vatan and Millet Caddesi in central Istanbul, Barbaros Bulvarı in Beşiktaş, and the littoral road (now renamed Kennedy Caddesi) that ran between Istanbul’s historic peninsula and the Sea of Marmara. These roads were massive, built on a scale not previously seen in Istanbul. With three lanes of traffic running in each direction and a wide landscaped median, these new boulevards marked a new form of the modern in Istanbul’s urban landscape.

Somewhat surprisingly, there is very little contemporary news coverage of Menderes’ roadwork in Eyüp. Instead, we are left with only the material trace of the boulevard itself and a handful of later observations. Completed in 1957, the Eyüp Bulvarı connected Edirnekapı and the center of Eyüp. In its original form the boulevard was supposed to extend all the way down from Edirnekapı into the center of Eyüp, in the process destroying a number of major monuments, including the türbe and medrese complex of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa. Although a public outcry forced the Directorate of Highways to scale back their plans, they still completed the main portion of the boulevard from Edirnekapı to Eyüp’s central square. From there, the road was widened as it led toward the shore, an act that destroyed half of the Toymakers’ Market. In the process, the square in front of the Eyüp Sultan Mosque – itself only opened in 1953 – became a key transportation hub for people passing between central Istanbul and the outlying \textit{gecekondu} districts. While the wide boulevard did become a key transportation link, its size also far outstripped the rest of Eyüp’s roads. Looking back from the 1990s and early 2000s, several people criticized the road-building project for being out of keeping with Eyüp’s urban fabric and

\textsuperscript{139} When Menderes was tried following Turkey’s 1960 military coup, his alleged misuse of government pension funds contributed to accusations of corruption. Gül, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City}, 150-51.
for contributing to the decline of Eyüp’s Ottoman-era architecture. The well-known architect and urban planner Turgut Cansever called the boulevard “a barbarous road opening project” while the local historian and author Nidayi Sevim called it knife stabbed into Eyüp’s historic center.¹⁴⁰

**Legacies of Road Building**

The construction of new roads in Eyüp during the 1940s and especially during the 1950s had a lasting influence on Eyüp’s material landscape. If road building in Istanbul has always been connected to changing understandings of what it meant to be ‘modern’ (and what it meant to live in a ‘modern’ city), that debate was especially acute in the 1940s and 50s. More than any other project – be it the building of the Eyüp Halkevi or the restoration of Eyüp’s monuments – the construction of new roads in Eyüp had a profound impact on Eyüp’s material landscape. Building new roads in Eyüp required the destruction of older structures. As the correspondence between the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities and the Istanbul Municipality demonstrated, deciding how to destroy Eyüp’s landscape produced a division between ‘historic’ buildings and everything else. In the process, new lines were drawn – both physically, in the form of roads, and imaginatively, as the Ottoman past became increasingly distant from the Turkish present – between Eyüp’s ‘Ottoman’ identity and its ongoing status as a working class district on the margins of Istanbul. For some, such as Nahid Sırri Örik, the destruction of Eyüp’s graveyards and türbes provoked an intense feeling of ambivalence. For others, these new roads were part of Istanbul’s becoming a “European City.” Regardless, the act of building roads was a key (and contested) practice through which the modern came to ground in Eyüp.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that Turkey’s 20th century history is frequently narrated in terms of the tension between two categories: The ‘old’ (or ‘traditional’) – a category usually associated with Islam – and the ‘modern’ ways of life that took their place. In turn, this binary opposition is frequently spatialized as the opposition between ‘East’ and ‘West.’ The built environment almost always stands at the center of this analysis; its condition (whether ruined or well-maintained) serves as a material index of the opposition between the traditional East and the modern West. While such analyses have merit, I argued that they are radically incomplete for three reasons.

First, the built environment is not a straightforward index of the relationship between the ‘old’ and the ‘modern’ (and much less for the balance between ‘Islam’ and the ‘modern’). Rather than assuming that indexical relationship, it is more useful to explore the ongoing social and spatial relationships that tie particular buildings in the formation of Islam and the modern. Second, the external forms, social practices, and cultural meanings of the modern and Islam are not fixed but relational, defined through comparisons with other people, things, and practices defined as ‘non-modern’ and ‘un-Islamic.’ Finally, just as the definitions of Islam and the modern have shifted over time, so too have those definitions varied from city to city, and even within cities.

Making Eyüp modern, in other words, was not a homogenous top-down project of secularization that wiped clean an existing social and material landscape. Rather, it involved the articulation of new connections between people – residents, visitors, government officials – and the district in which they lived. These new connections were simultaneously relationships between actors defined as ‘modern’ and ‘non-modern.’ As a consequence, the ‘modern’ that
emerged in Eyüp during the 1940s and 50s was linked to the broader political and cultural trends of Turkey during this period and deeply enmeshed within the layered histories of people and belief that were found in the district. It was a modern in which new government buildings, schools, and factories, built of concrete and right angles, stood in close proximity to an older landscape of wooden houses, mosques, and graveyards filled with carved stone. By tracing three different ways that Eyüp’s ‘modern’ was materialized, this chapter has tried to complicate our understanding of how the modern comes to be made.

There are two reasons that exploring this process is valuable. First, the transformations of the 1940s and 50s continue to shape Eyüp’s topographies in the present. Most obviously – and most tangibly – all of the public activities that now fill the square in front of Eyüp Sultan (something I explore in Chapter 3) would not be possible with the urban interventions of the 1950s. More generally, Eyüp’s religious landscape is in many ways the product of restoration projects that took place during this period, making it necessary to narrate the Ottoman landscape not simply in relation to a distant past but also a relatively recent one.

There are also striking continuities between the 1940s-50s and the 1990s, such as the repeated negative evaluation of Eyüp as a kasaba (town). During this period, the city emerged as the key site through and in which new forms of modern life were being articulated; to be a kasaba in that moment was to be judged as lacking the material and social forms that constituted the modern. Even though the political context of the two moments differed – a secular CHP critique in the 1940s and a religious Welfare Party critique in the 1990s – they shared a common perception that Eyüp was not wholly urban. Doreen Massey has called our attention to the ways that the story of modernity is frequently imagined as “a narrative of progress emanating from
Europe,” in which “spatial differences are reconvened as temporal sequence.” To describe Eyüp as a *kasaba* was also to place it temporally *behind* the rest of the nation, reminding us that even Turkey’s modernization claimed to link the nation, it actually produced even more uneven spatio-temporal landscapes.

Moreover, these decades are very rarely included as part of Eyüp’s history, as though the district’s history ended with the Ottoman Empire before being resuscitated in the 1990s (a resuscitation that I explore in Chapter 2). At the same time, some of my interlocutors – all long-time residents – often evaluated contemporary Eyüp in reference to precisely this period. “Eyüp,” they said, “used to be more modern.” More than simply being a general ‘nostalgia for the modern,’” their nostalgia was a very geographically specific one, grounded in the specific textures of Eyüp’s social and material landscapes.

Second, the story of making Eyüp modern – a story of partial and overlapping projects – develops what Ananya Roy called the “uneven historical geography” of contemporary cities. Following these three projects – and not a single totalizing ‘modernizing’ impulse – was an attempt to show these overlapping projects that produced a complicated formation of modern Eyüp. Eyüp’s built environment – its government buildings, its mosques, its road networks – came to function as a new index of connection during these two decades, pointing at once to an ambivalent past and an uncertain future.


142 For another example, see Kezer, "Spatializing Difference: The Making of an Internal Border in Early Republican Elazığ, Turkey."


CHAPTER 2: MAKING EYÜP OTTOMAN

Opening Scene: A Curious Fountain

On a warm April Saturday, visitors from all corners of Istanbul fill Eyüp. Most make a point to visit the mosque of Eyüp Sultan to pray in front of the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd and – if there’s space – many participate in the midday prayers on Saturday. But other people come to Eyüp simply to enjoy the atmosphere, posing for photographs in front of the fountain beside the mosque and walking in small groups through the square. Regardless of whether or not visitors pass through the mosque itself, many of them make their way up to the top of the hill. There they might stand on the wide platform built by the Istanbul Municipality, from which they can take in a spectacular panorama of Istanbul. Some might pass from there to the nearby café, named Pierre Loti after the French writer and traveler who, the stories say, spent time here at the end of the 19th century.

From the center of Eyüp, the hilltop is reached in one of two ways: Either by waiting for the funicular that ferries visitors above the graves of Eyüp’s cemetery or by walking along the original path that rises immediately behind the mosque of Eyüp Sultan. A fountain stands at the beginning of that path. It is roughly square in shape, its carved white marble rising high above the passersby.

At the top of the fountain, flanked by roundels of the Turkish flag and the Ottoman coat of arms, there is a simple phrase etched into the marble and gilded in gold: “Ebedi Eyüpsultanlılar (The Eternal Eyüpsultanlıs).” Below, in neatly lettered columns that flank the water spigot, the names of a seemingly arbitrary group of individuals have been etched into the marble, along with their dates of birth and death. A moment’s reflection and it becomes clear: These are the famous people who are buried in Eyüp. In the way that someone from the city of
Ankara would be *Ankaralı*, someone from Trabzon *Trabzonlu*, and someone from Istanbul an *İstanbullu*, these figures have been marked as natives of Eyüp Sultan.

![Image of the fountain](image)

**Figure 13: Detail of "Ebedi Eyüpsultanlılar" Fountain. Timur Hammond, 2012.**

At the center of the fountain is a second, smaller inscription. In contrast to the rest of the inscriptions on the fountain, this smaller inscription is written in Ottoman Turkish using a modified Arabic script. Its public use outlawed in 1928, the inscription is today illegible to nearly everyone who passes by. “Is that Arabic?” visitors sometimes ask each other. If their companions know, they will reply, “No, it’s Ottoman.” Regardless, the illegibility of the script seems to mark the fountain as something older, a reminder of the past.

But reading the inscription more closely tells a curious story. It reads:

Müzeyyen bir çeşme kıldı duası müstecab olsun  
Delili Hazret-i Allah, şehişi Mustafa olsun  
Bir içen bir daha içsin, içene şifa olsun  
Reis Ahmet Genç’ten Eyüp Sultan’a hediye olsun.  
(He built an adorned fountain, may his prayer be answered
May its proof be Allah, its benevolence Mustafa
May a drinker drink once more, may it bring them health
May it be a gift to Eyüp Sultan from Mayor Ahmet Genç.)

Below, the inscription adds the date: May 29, 2002. Amidst a landscape of tombs, mosques, and graveyards spanning centuries, this fountain marks a relatively recent figure of the past. How did this fountain come to be here? Why does it juxtapose markers of the Ottoman past with a decidedly contemporary present? And more broadly, what might this fountain tell us about the politics of the built environment in contemporary Istanbul?

**Introduction**

The fountain is one product of the broader project that this chapter explores: How Eyüp was made Ottoman. For anyone familiar with Eyüp, focusing on the project that made Eyüp Ottoman might seem slightly counterintuitive. After all, part of the reason that Eyüp is so well known today is the density of Ottoman-era monuments in the district’s center. Beginning with the miraculous rediscovery of Halid bin Zeyd’s when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul in 1453, Eyüp played a central place within the rituals and narratives that shaped the Ottoman Empire. The persistence – even the durability – of the Ottoman past seems so self-evident that one might ask: How can you make Eyüp Ottoman if it has always been so?

This is why the fountain is such a productive starting place. On the one hand, its decoration – especially the inscription written in Ottoman Turkish – is deliberately designed to appear in harmony with the Ottoman-era objects that surround it. On the other hand – and as the inscription itself documents – the fountain is the product of a far more recent conjunction of people, politics, and the material landscape. Beginning with the 1994 municipal electoral victory of the Refah (Welfare) Party, Eyüp was remade as an ‘authentic’ Ottoman neighborhood. This project was accomplished in two principal ways: (1) The telling of new public histories about
Eyüp; and (2) the systematic restoration and redevelopment of the urban landscape in Eyüp’s central neighborhoods.

The key actor in this project was the local municipality – and two figures in particular, Mayor Ahmet Genç and İrfan Çalışan, the Eyüp Municipality’s Director of Culture and Tourism (Kültür ve Turizm Müdürü). But this project was in dialogue with both residents of and visitors to the district, some who supported the changes and others who spoke out against them. The project of making Eyüp Ottoman was fundamentally a project of establishing new forms of connection between political institutions, government bodies, district residents (both new and old), and visitors to Eyüp.

Collectively, these new forms of connection helped to make Eyüp a new kind of place. Formerly a peripheral district within Istanbul’s social geography, Eyüp was recast and reimagined as Istanbul’s religious and cultural center through the reclamation of the Ottoman past. Yet as this chapter shows, the reconstruction of Turkey’s Ottoman past through the telling of Eyüp’s history and the transformation of Eyüp’s landscape created uneven, inconsistent, and even contradictory effects. These effects included new – but not necessarily shared – visions of history and heritage, economic relationships that rechanneled flows of money and influence, and conflicts about how the district’s history and importance should be understood. The fountain – partly illegible, partly historic, partly new – that now sits at the entrance to Eyüp’s cemetery encapsulates precisely those uneven and contradictory effects.

This chapter opens with a brief section setting the stage for the transformations of the 1990s. I then turn to the project of making Eyüp Ottoman, highlighting the two key parts of that project: The telling of new public histories and the transformation of Eyüp’s built environment. This chapter closes by returning to the fountain built by Mayor Genç and making three broader
points about the invention of tradition, the geographies of nostalgia, and the interrelationships between history, memory, and place.

**Setting the Stage**

Eyüp’s transformations during the 1990s need to be understood in relation to three major shifts that took place following Turkey’s 1980 military coup. The first was the political and economic reorganization directly enabled by the coup that included the reorganization of the municipality system and the wholesale rapid deindustrialization of the Golden Horn. The second was the rise of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), an openly Islamist party that challenged the political and cultural underpinnings of the Turkish state and whose victory in the 1994 municipal elections set in motion Eyüp’s redevelopment. The third was the rethinking of the Ottoman past. Although closely connected to the political rise of the Welfare Party, the rethinking of the Ottoman past was also entangled with post Cold War geopolitics, the rise of new ‘cosmopolitan’ identities, and the emerging awareness of strong continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Making Eyüp Ottoman was enabled by these three shifts.

**Breaking Old Connections, Building New Ones**

On September 12, 1980, following a decade of politically motivated violence, the seeming inability of the country’s political parties to govern the country, and an ongoing economic crisis, Turkey’s military declared martial law and dissolved the Constitution and all political parties. The government was reorganized under the supervision of a newly established National Security Council, who took the lead in liberalizing Turkey’s economy, writing a new constitution in 1982, and reorganizing Turkey’s system of municipal governance.

Prior to the coup, there had been an increasing awareness that municipal institutions (*belediye*) were unable to deliver municipal services like trash, water, asphalt roads, and
electricity equally to all municipal residents. This was especially true in Turkey’s major urban agglomerations such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, the population and size of which had increased exponentially since the 1950s. In the case of Istanbul, the boundaries of the Istanbul Municipality (İstanbul Belediyesi) covered only a portion of the broader urban fabric. Many of the informal settlements that had sprung up on the city’s margins were governed as separate municipalities, with their own politics and access to resources. The system was at once too centralized (dependent on Ankara for planning and financing) and too dispersed (the multiple municipalities mushrooming on the boundaries of urban centers) to function effectively.

The solution was the formation of a two-tier system of municipal governance. Istanbul was declared a “metropolitan municipality” (büyük belediye), while a number of “district municipalities” (ilçe belediyeleri) nested within it. The goal of the system was to shift authority for planning and development from central authorities to local municipalities that would – in theory – be more responsive to their residents. In practice, the system created a number of problems, including establishing how money would flow between the central government and local district municipalities and determining municipal jurisdiction in matters of planning and development. In 1983, the Eyüp Municipality (Eyüp Belediyesi) was one of more than 20 district municipalities created within the new political structure of this two-tier municipal system. It’s crucial – if frequently overlooked – that it would not have been possible for the Welfare Party to win the 1994 election without this two-tier municipal system.

145 This new system of metropolitan governance also created a situation in which local municipalities were competing with each other to attract investment and capital, something not entirely dissimilar from what the shift from ‘managerialism’ to ‘entrepreneurialism.’ David Harvey. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation of Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography 71, no. 1 (1989).
In 1985, Bedrettin Dalan, the newly elected mayor of the recently established Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, authorized the wholesale demolition of the dense fabric of workshops, factories, and warehouses that filled both shores of the Golden Horn in central Istanbul. Almost overnight, both sides of the Golden Horn were bulldozed and expropriated for municipal use. While many of the formerly state-owned factories located along the waterway had already been sold as part of Turkey’s economic liberalization between 1980 and 1984, Dalan’s urban interventions spelled the end of whatever workshops had survived. As he later described the waterway’s redevelopment, “The Golden Horn wasn’t a project, it was a war zone. Demolishing 622 factories and relocating [a further] 6,000 homes was an act of great bravery.”

Deindustrialization had a massive effect on Eyüp, which to that point had been a largely working class district in which residents lived in relatively close proximity to their places of work. One consequence of this shift was an increased emphasis on developing Eyüp’s potential as a tourist destination.

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The Rise of the Welfare Party

Beginning in the 1970s, a politician named Necmettin Erbakan first began articulating a political platform that would become known as the Milli Görüş (National Outlook). The political parties and civil society organizations associated with Erbakan – the Milli Görüş Hareketi (National Outlook Movement) – initially played a relatively minor role within a political establishment dominated by the conflict between the center-right Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) and the center-left Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi). However, Erbakan was able to capitalize on the political fragmentation of the 1970s, joining several coalition governments as a junior partner. Following the 1980 coup, and like several other leading politicians of the time, Erbakan was initially banned from political life. Following Erbakan’s
rehabilitation in 1987, he assumed leadership of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), which increased its vote share in every election between 1987 and 1994.  

All of this changed in the municipal elections of 1994, when the Welfare Party came to power in Istanbul by winning a plurality of votes. There were a number of factors that led to the Welfare Party’s unexpected success. The sudden death of Prime Minister Turgut Özal in 1993 had opened a political vacuum, municipal scandals in Istanbul had solidified opposition against the incumbent Social Democratic People’s Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti*), and ongoing political fragmentation split votes between older center-left and center-right parties. All of this made it possible for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to become the Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality with only 26% of the total vote. At the district municipality level, the Welfare Party’s vote share was almost exactly the same. Ahmet Genç, a long-time resident of the district, was elected as Mayor of the Eyüp Municipality in 1994.

Genç was a *mahalle çocuğu* – a neighborhood kid – who had moved up through the local organization of the Welfare Party. In many ways, he was typical of the Welfare Party’s success in promoting locals for political office. But Genç was not actually born in Eyüp – along with

147 One of the key political reforms of the 1980 Constitution was a 10% electoral threshold. Ostensibly designed to prevent the fragmentation of party politics, it has also functioned to marginalize a range of political actors. In the first national election that they contest in 1987, the Welfare Party wins 7.2% of the vote (but no seats in Parliament). They average 9.8% in the 1989 municipal elections A temporary political alliance in the national elections in 1991 wins them 16.2%. Despite that alliance breaking down, they average 19.7% of the electorate in municipal elections in March 1994. In the national elections of 1995, they emerge as the largest party with 21.4% of the vote.

148 ANAP finishes second with 20.3%; SHP (Ecevit) is third with 19.6%, DSP and DYP both have ~15%. Davut Dursun, "Eyüp'te Mahalli İdarele Seçimleri Ve Seçmen Tercihlerinde Son on Yılda Ortaya Çıkan Genel Eğilimler (1994-2004)," in *Tarihi, Kültürü Ve Sanatıyla Eyüpsultan Sempozyumu Ix. Tebligler*, ed. Osman Sak (Istanbul: Eyüp Belediyesi, 2005).

his parents, he had migrated to Eyüp in the 1950s from the Black Sea, which made him one of the millions of people who swelled Istanbul’s population between the 1950s and the 1990s. These people were part of the large-scale migration to urban centers like Istanbul and Ankara that reshaped cities’ landscapes (through the growth of informal gecekondu settlements) and their social and political life (through the articulation of contested forms of urban belonging).  

In one important respect, however, Eyüp differed from peripheral migrant districts such as Ümraniye and Sultanbeyli. Eyüp’s built environment – and its identity as a place with its own history – predated the large-scale migration of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. As I explain below, this made the politics of the Ottoman past particularly intense in Eyüp. In part, the success of the Welfare Party in the 1994 election was predicated upon their claim to represent peripheral neighborhoods that had been ‘neglected’ by an entrenched (and central) political establishment.

In addition to their skill in organizing local political associations and their claim to represent previously disenfranchised votes, the Welfare Party’s 1994 municipal campaign was also remarkable for its use of the Ottoman past. They drew explicit parallels between the 1453 Ottoman Conquest of Istanbul and their political campaigns, promising that their victory would be like a second Conquest of Istanbul. This enabled two important things: First, they were able to portray themselves as outsiders set on redeeming the fallen city of Istanbul and returning it to its


Ottoman Muslim glory. Second, because they framed themselves as “Ottomans,” Welfare Party supporters were able to mount a powerful claim for belonging in Istanbul. Even though they were often from migrant families, claims upon the Ottoman past helped the Welfare Party simultaneously position itself as very new and very old.

Rethinking the Ottoman Past

The Welfare Party’s rethinking of the Ottoman past was the most visible part of a much broader reevaluation of Ottoman identity in the 1980s and 1990s. When the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, its legitimacy and authority as a nation state was in part based upon an explicit division from the Ottoman past. That division was established in a number of ways – through a new civil legal code, through restrictions on religious dress and worship in public, through new forms of architecture and urban planning, through new calendars, and through a language reform that replaced the modified Arabic script of Ottoman Turkish with the modified Latin script of ‘modern’ Turkish.

One of the first signs of changing state attitudes toward the Ottoman past emerged in the 1980s, when then Prime Minister Turgut Özal mobilized the Ottoman past – and particularly a geopolitical imaginary that placed Turkey not on the margins of Europe but as the center of a civilization – in order to negotiate Turkey’s changing international relationships. Emphasizing the Ottoman Empire’s experience (and ostensible success) governing different ethnic groups, the Ottoman past came to be imagined as an exceptional example of pluralism and multiculturalism.152 Simultaneously – and paradoxically – the Ottoman past also came to have a

152 Lerna Yanık, "Constructing Turkish “Exceptionalism”: Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy," *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 5-8; Yılmaz Çolak, "Ottomanism Vs. Kemalism: Collective Memory and Cultural Pluralism in 1990s Turkey," *Middle
powerfully ethnic dimension. The Ottoman Empire, imagined as a Turkish-Islamic state par excellence, provided a particular geopolitical template for Turkey in the 1990s.\footnote{M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism," \textit{Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies} 7, no. 12 (1998): 23.}

A series of events helped to drive those competing visions of the Ottoman past further apart. First, the rejection of Turkey’s application to the European Union in 1989 delivered a serious blow to a secular establishment that had long aspired to ‘join’ Europe. The Ottoman Empire – imagined as separate and distinct from Europe -- came to serve as a cultural, political, and economic alternative.\footnote{Turkey had first applied for membership in 1967, but it was their 1987 application that was rejected in 1989, ostensibly on the grounds of Europe’s concern for an authoritarian political system and Turkey’s economic underdevelopment. However, some EU countries rejected Turkey’s membership on explicitly religio-cultural grounds. The rapid expansion of the EU to former Warsaw Pact countries in 1997 served as further confirmation of some Turkish sceptics’ view of the EU as a crypto-Christian project. Ibid., 35-37.} Second, the violence that followed Yugoslavia’s dissolution and the perception that Europe’s slow response to ethnically and religiously motivated massacres was tacit encouragement of Christian massacres of Muslim populations provided further support for Ottoman imaginaries.\footnote{One of the sad ironies of this period is that the Turkish state was simultaneously engaged in trying to suppress a Kurdish insurgency/separatist movement in the Southeast.} It was during this moment that many in Turkey across the political spectrum came to empathize with the plight of Bosnians not only as coreligionists but also as people who shared a common historical – i.e., Ottoman – experience. Third, Turkey’s rapid (though uneven) economic growth during this period and the parallel emergence of new cultural and social organizations outside of the purview of the secular establishment made the Ottoman past an attractive landscape. Rather than draw on existing symbols and landscapes of the

Kemalist state, these new actors articulated a range of new positions, often drawing on ‘Ottoman’ references to construct a new cultural and social vocabulary.

The entry of the Ottoman (Turkish-Islamic) past into the public sphere coincided with a new attitude about Turkey’s Republican history. Much of the secular establishment came to view the first decades of the Republic as a bygone era, one often glossed as the ‘early Republic.’

At the same time, many of the formerly public symbols of that period – and images of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in particular – entered into private spaces in new ways, part of an affective relationship that Esra Özyürek has described as a ‘nostalgia for the modern.’

For the Welfare Party and its supporters, the ‘Ottoman’ functioned as an explicit critique of Turkey’s Republican legacy, a point to which I return at greater length below.

Eyüp was greatly affected by all three of these shifts. The deindustrialization of the Golden Horn in the 1980s had quite literally wiped out the district’s economic base. Even as the newly formed Eyüp Municipality set about trying to provide municipal services to the district, it struggled with a lack of money and frequent political battles with other institutions. With its conservative religious message and well-coordinated local political activity, the Welfare Party found a great deal of success in the district, culminating in Mayor Ahmet Genç’s election in 1994. All of this was happening in a moment in which the Ottoman past was being reconfigured as an object with new political, cultural, and social force. Even before the transformations of the 1990s, Eyüp was already known as one of the best preserved Ottoman landscapes left in Istanbul.

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156 Bülent Batuman, ““Early Republican Ankara”: Struggle over Historical Representation and the Politics of Urban Historiography,” *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 5 (2011).


The project of making Eyüp Ottoman invested these landscapes with a range of new meanings. It
was the interplay between new meanings and a seemingly old landscape that made Eyüp such a
key site within the political and cultural transformations of this moment.

**Making Eyüp Ottoman**

In June 2013, I was speaking with a group of young women and men who had all grown
up in Eyüp. All of us were born in the 1980s, which would mean that their childhoods had in
many ways tracked the district’s transformation, and that they had been teenagers when the
Welfare Party came to power in Istanbul and in Eyüp. All three were positive about the changes
that they had witnessed, and Ali (pseudonym) used a story from his childhood to explain how
Eyüp had changed for the better:

> In 1990, when I was in 3rd grade… I remember going to get my teeth looked at in the
> Çapa Medical Faculty [one of the largest and oldest medical schools in Istanbul, located
> within the city walls]. I’ll never forget this, the doctor asked me, Where do you live? I
> like in Eyüp, I said. Allah Allah, the doctor said, is there really somewhere like that in
> Istanbul? It rubbed me the wrong way (Çok garibime gitmiştim) because Eyüpsultan,
> Alibeyköy [the adjacent neighborhood] were always looked down on as slums, bad, filthy
> neighborhoods (varoş, kötü, pis semt diye geçiyordu).

In 2013, by contrast, Eyüp was not that kind of place. “Following the redoing of the Golden
Horn,” Ali added, “and Eyüpsultan’s promotion (tanıtılması), people began to say here was an a
second Kâbe, a second Mecca (insanlar şöyle bir söz olmaya başladı, burası ikinci Kâbe, ikinci
Mekke demeye başladılar).” Ali’s citation of ‘varoş’ connects to a broader social geography of
Istanbul in which Eyüp marked one “urban location of a set of characteristics - poverty, rural
origin, Muslim lifestyling, veiling, patriarchy - that function[ed] as an inverting mirror, reflecting
back a Turkish modernity characterized by middle-class, urban values and lifestyle, secular
clothing, and the autonomous Cartesian individual.”159

The project of making Eyüp Ottoman involved multiple parts: a broader reengagement with the Ottoman past, a political and cultural critique of Turkey’s 20th century, and the articulation of new forms of Muslim life that connected Turkey to the broader Muslim world. But Ali’s story also draws our attention to another equally important consequence of making Eyüp Ottoman: It reconfigured Istanbul’s social and cultural topography, turning a formerly marginal district into a place from which new actors could articulate powerful claims for belonging in Turkey and – more immediately – in Istanbul. Producing that transformation – one neatly captured by Eyüp’s shift from being varoṣ to being a religious center comparable to Mecca – was a key goal of making Eyüp Ottoman.

The Eyüp Municipality was the central figure in reshaping Eyüp during this period, but they were embedded within a far more complicated network of central government institutions, local and metropolitan municipalities, and civil society organizations. These included the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and its various offices, the Council for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage in Istanbul and Ankara, the General Directorate of Foundations, and the Prime Minister’s Office in Ankara. The analysis below focuses on the work of the Eyüp Municipality, but the local municipality’s projects also required the conjunction of a far wider array of actors and interests. By the same token, the Eyüp Municipality was also not a homogenous institution.

The project of making Eyüp Ottoman involved two primary parts: telling new public histories, and transforming Eyüp’s material landscape through projects of restoration and

160 Anna Secor and Christ Houston both describe the ways that the built environment functioned to socially and spatially marginalize Kurdish migrants. The situation here was slightly different, insofar as the people who felt marginal were primarily pious and conservative. Secor, ""There Is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me": Citizenship, Space and Identity in the City."; Houston, "Provocations of the Built Environment: Animating Cities in Turkey as Kemalist."
redevelopment. Taken as a whole, the telling of new histories and the transformations of Eyüp’s landscape helped to establish new social, cultural, and political connections that shifted Eyüp from a poor, peripheral district to one at the physical and imagined center of Istanbul today.

**Telling New Public Histories**

In August 1995, İrfan Çalışır, the Eyüp Municipality’s Director of Culture and Tourism (Kültür ve Turizm Müdürü), sat down with Erdal Şimşek, a reporter from the conservative newspaper *Akit*. In their interview, Şimşek turned their conversation to the topic of Pierre Loti. The name referred (and still refers) both to the actual French writer who visited Istanbul at the end of the 19th century and to the café overlooking central Eyüp and the Golden Horn that was one of the district’s most well-known tourist destinations. Şimşek framed his question as part of a broader discussion of the legacy of the Ottoman past and began by referencing the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923:

> The new regime established in Ankara completely disregarded the riches belonging to our history and our culture and tried to invent new things. It intentionally left Eyüp to die. And embraced the Pierre Loti in Eyüp… How do you evaluate this new system’s – built upon a Rejection of Heritage (*Redd-i Miras*) – embrace of something (Pierre Loti) that still belonged to the Ottomans?\(^{161}\)

Şimşek’s question drew upon a contested topography of heritage that his audience would have been aware of. Eyüp – a place thick with religious meanings – was replaced in the Republican era by the café of Pierre Loti – an ‘exotic’ place associated with a French Orientalist. Although

Eyüp retained its ‘historic’ character, that character was produced by absenting Eyüp’s religious (and Ottoman) significance.

In his reply, İrfan Bey agreed with Şimşek: Pierre Loti was a part of the Ottoman, a past that was by definition religious and authentic to Eyüp. Because the Municipality thought of Eyüp “as a whole (bir bütün olarak),” İrfan Bey continued, Pierre Loti was not a replacement of the Ottoman but “a part of a [that] whole (bir bütünün parçası).” Rather than see Pierre Loti as something distinct from a rejected Ottoman identity, İrfan Bey insisted that Loti – both the 19th century writer and the café being redeveloped in the 1990s – had to be understood as being connected to and subsumed under the broader religious whole of Eyüp.

This one brief exchange condenses three interrelated parts of the new public history told by the Eyüp Municipality in the late 1990s: First, a rethinking of the Ottoman legacy that simultaneously critiqued Republic projects of Westernization and modernization; the role of conservative religious media in sharing those histories; and the construction of a new physical infrastructure of and for Eyüp’s history. In turn, the telling of this new public history played a key role in making Eyüp Ottoman. As the 1995 interview’s title implied, Eyüp was no longer varoş – its true identity was ‘a land of aristocrats’ (aristokrat diyari).

**Histories of Republican Neglect and Ottoman Authenticity**

Within months of assuming office following the March 1994 elections, the Eyüp Municipality began to articulate a new way of telling Eyüp’s history that emphasized two things. First, this new history presented itself as a corrective to previous – i.e., more ‘secular’ – ways of understanding the Ottoman past. Previous understandings had neglected (consciously or unconsciously) Turkey’s Ottoman heritage. At the same time, this new way of telling history also stressed Eyüp’s essential ‘Ottoman’ identity. Within a city fundamentally shaped by the long
intersection of cultures, languages, and religions, Eyüp’s importance stemmed not from mixing but from purity, the district’s uniquely Muslim Ottoman character. One of the first articulations of this new history came in the opening pages of a pamphlet produced by the Eyüp Municipality to document their municipal achievements:

What a shame that throughout the history of the Republic our boorish attitude towards Ottoman history was also reflected in Eyüp and has been able to bring only a few of these elegant works [referencing the wooden mansions and palaces that once lined the shores of the Golden Horn] to the present day.

The village of Eyüp Sultan, created from nothing outside of Istanbul’s walls, is completely the product of the Ottoman understanding of urbanism. Despite the passage of centuries since the city’s founding and especially being wrapped in a veil of neglect for the past 70 years, Eyüp Sultan has not changed its character as an authentic example of Ottoman urbanism.162

In the Eyüp Municipality’s 3rd Year Bulletin, Mayor Genç sharpened his critique of the Kemalist state’s rejection of the Ottoman past in favor of ‘Westernization’: “In place of enslaving ourselves to the West for years in the name of Westernization and being imitators, [we have] now, with local administration, taken the step to becoming a leading country.”163

Mayor Genç criticized the ‘neglect’ of the Ottoman past and the ‘imitation’ of the West in the Preface to Mehmet Nermi Haskan’s Eyüp Sultan History, republished by the Eyüp Municipality:

However, for the last 70 years, an administration that has not known what to do and has had neither goal nor ideal has shown itself with its talent for degrading the city as with

162 This is quoted in 1. Yıl Bülteni. (İstanbul: Eyüpsultan Belediyesi, 1995), 4; 2. Yıl Bülteni. (İstanbul: Eyüpsultan Belediyesi, 1996), 8-9. “Ne yazik ki Cumhuriyet tarihi boyunca Osmanlı tarihine olan hoyrat tavrımız Eyüp’e de yansıৎ ve bu nefis eserlerden günümüze pek azı intikal edebildiştir…. İstanbul surlarının dışında hicret varedilmiş olan Eyüpsultan kasabası, tamamıyla Osmanlı şehircilik anlayışının ürünüdür. Şehrin kuruluşından bu yana asırlar geçmesine, ve özellikle de son 70 yılındaki ihmal perdesine sarılmış olması rağmen; Eyüpsultan Osmanlı şehirciliğinin özgün bir örneği olma vasfını değiştirmemiştir.”

people…. Societies should know their histories well such that they might claim the values in their possession. Otherwise they will never know what to do and blindly imitate others.164

In critiquing the legacy of Republican reforms and holding up the Ottoman past as the true and authentic ideal of Turkey’s cultural identity, the Eyüp Municipality’s new public history echoed a wider Islamist critique of the Republic.165 What made it different, however, was the way that this history was tangibly grounded in Eyüp. The material degradation of Eyüp’s tombs, houses, cemeteries, and Sufi lodges was taken as evidence of intentional neglect; following 1994, these buildings’ restoration and redevelopment became proof of a new respect for an authentic cultural identity. Crucially, this authentic cultural identity was articulated in and by means of one particular place: Eyüp. The Eyüp Municipality grounded its claims for new forms of urban, national, and transnational identities in the new public history that it told.

Creating Public Culture Through New Media

In some respects, the way of telling Eyüp’s history that emerged during the 1990s was not new. From the very first decades of the Turkish Republic, a range of writers had contested the rejection of the Ottoman past. Writers like Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, and Refik Halit Karay were acutely aware of how the telling of history could function as a potent political and social critique. By the same token, Eyüp’s history was not unknown. In the 1950s, Eyüp’s history was a frequent topic of newspaper serials, with columnists detailing the district’s


165 Özyürek, "Public Memory as Political Battleground: Islamist Subversions of Republican Nostalgia."
various – and almost always vanished – Ottoman wonders. What changed in the 1990s were the coordination and the scale of this history telling. For the first time, the Eyüp Municipality explicitly positioned itself as the authorized ‘protector’ of Eyüp’s history. This history – positioned in contrast to 70 years of Republican history and grounded in an ‘authentic’ Ottoman past – helped establish the local municipality as a key political actor. Likewise, while Eyüp’s history had been an occasional newspaper topic, Eyüp’s transformations became a regular subject in newspapers like Vakit, Milli Gazete, Yeni Şafak, Akit, Yeni Asya, and Zaman. Marketed to a more conservative and religious audience, these newspapers helped to produce a broader public religious awareness about Eyüp and Islam that was neither the “taken for granted” Islam of the Turkish state nor the everyday Islam “embedded in the fabric of social existence and reproduced through communal practice.”

As a selection of articles published in 1994 and 1995 (the first two years following the Welfare Party’s electoral victory), the district’s transformation was a regular news item. Usually published as full-page spreads that combined text, photographs of Eyüp, and photographs of Mayor Genç and Director Çalışır, newspaper articles closely echoed – if not outright copied – the history told by the municipality in municipal publications. “Eyüp is now a ‘Sultan,’” declared one boldface headline in Milli Gazette in 1994. The article itself focused on the changes in Eyüp’s built environment: “The tombs, fountains, historic homes, and Sufi lodges of Eyüp

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167 “Yıllar yıla manevi değeri ve turistik öneminin ihmal edilmesi sonucu bir kasaba görünümü alan Eyüp Sultan’ın türbeleri, çeşmeler, tarihi evleri, tekke ve zaviyeleriyle birlikte yeniden hayatiyet kazandırmak[tadır].”
Sultan, which as a consequence of years of neglect of its spiritual importance and its touristic importance had come to look like a village, [are coming to life once more].” An August 1994 published in *Vakit* declared, “Return to Origins in Eyüp.” Photographs accompanying the article’s text juxtaposed the ruins of small mosque in Eyüp with images of workers repairing mosque walls and restoring Ottoman inscriptions. The article began by referencing a prior history of the state using mosques as storehouses and stables as part of Turkey’s state-led secularization: “Mosques and historic monuments once used as stables and depots are now embracing their previous identities.” A May 1995 *Yeni Şafak* article closely echoed the municipality’s own history: “Despite its complete neglect for the past 70 years… the holy and historic city (*belde*) of Eyüpsultan is trying to preserve its character as an authentic example of Ottoman urbanism (*şehircilik*).”

Alongside the newspaper campaign, the Eyüp Municipality also embarked upon an ambitious program of assembling an archive of Eyüp’s history and supporting the publication of histories about Eyüp. This was something new for Istanbul’s district municipalities. One of the first books they published was Mehmet Nermi Haskan’s *Eyüp Tarihi*, originally published in [1993] by the Turkey Touring and Tourism Administration Foundation, republished in 1995 as the *Eyüpsultan Tarihi.* They also published Haci Cemal Öğüt’s out-of-print and poorly known


book titled *Eyyüb Sultan*, originally published in 1955.\textsuperscript{171} Their goal in doing so was two-fold: first, to recognize Eyüp as a place with a history of ‘its own’; and then to transmit that history to the future. These books, frequently distributed as ‘prestige volumes’ to civil society organizations, individuals, libraries, and other municipalities, helped connect the administrative responsibilities to a broader political-cultural project.

In addition to republishing (and thus claiming for the municipality) out-of-print volumes, the municipality also organized an annual symposium. Beginning in 1997, a wide variety of individuals presented papers on all manner of topics relating to Eyüp and its history. Despite the breadth of the papers, now published in the 10 volumes of *The Eyüpsultan Symposium With Its History, Culture, and Art* (Tarihi, Kültürü ve Sanatlarıyla Eyüpsultan Sempozyumu), only a fraction of papers addressed Eyüp’s Republican history. Those that did address Eyüp’s more recent history tended to focus on the various restoration projects located within the district. On the topic of the district history in the 1950s, 60s, or 70s, however, there was almost nothing.

Finally, the municipality also opened a number of new spaces for the consumption of the Ottoman past. As İrfan Bey described in an August 1995 interview, one of their first goals as a municipality was the gathering of documents and knowledge about Eyüp. Finding very little, they set out acquiring whatever materials they could and establishing an archive and library under the direction sponsorship of the Eyüp Municipality.\textsuperscript{172} In addition to this archive and library, they turned restored Ottoman monuments into public educational centers, a city museum, and municipal offices. Significantly, these spaces were open to a broader range of Eyüp’s

\textsuperscript{171} Cemal Öğüt, *Eyyüb Sultan: Hz. Halid Ebu Eyyüb El-Ensari* (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait Matbaası, 1955); *Eyyüb Sultan* (İstanbul: Eyüp Belediyesi, 1997).

\textsuperscript{172} Şimşek, "Eyüp Belediyesi Kültür Ve Turizm Müdürü İrfan Çalışır İle... Aristokrat Diyarı: Eyüp."
population. In contrast to the ostensibly ‘elite’ nature of cultural venues in other districts, municipal publications from this period repeatedly stressed their openness to the ‘people’ (halk). This orientation was closely connected to the Welfare Party’s broader populist appeal during this period, and shows one way that they were able to produce a new form of urban citizenship that was ostensibly more inclusive than previous iterations. The Ottoman past was imagined and presented as an authentic past in which not only Eyüp’s residents but also a broader pious public were encouraged to participate.

**Rescaling Eyüp’s History**

In 2013, I met with İrfan Bey in his office on the top floor of the Eyüp Municipality. Tall bookshelves lined many of the walls of his office, overflowing with books about Ottoman history, culture, art, architecture, and poetry. Behind his desk was a long credenza, topped with an elegantly bound collection of books whose covers spelled *Eyüpsultan Külliyatı* (The Collected Works of Eyüp Sultan). Included among those books were Mehmet Nermi Haskan’s history of Eyüp, Haci Cemal Öğüt’s 2-volume biography and commentary on Halid bin Zeyd Ebu Eyüp el-Ensari, and the reprinted proceedings of *The Eyüpsultan Symposium*. Expecting that he would list the many changes in Eyüp’s material landscape, I asked him a general question about how Eyüp had transformed during the 1990s. I was surprised when he opened instead with a discussion of scale:

It’s necessary to evaluate [these changes] at both the micro- and macro-scale (*küçük ölçekli ve büyük ölçekli*). When we say macro-scale, how is this center (*merkez*) known as Eyüp accepted within the world of Islam, what kinds of viewpoints are there, what kinds of recognitions are there, we have to look at that. How is Eyüp evaluated within the scale of Turkey and how is Eyüp evaluated within the scale of Istanbul. When this is
considered in that way — it’s only when considered within these scales that the projects undertaken during the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s can be properly understood.\footnote{Interview, Mar 28, 2013. During our first conversation, Irfan Bey asked me where I had found the seminar books. He was quite satisfied when I told him that I had found some in libraries in the United States.}

One of the reasons that the Welfare Party and its successors the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) and the currently ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) have been so politically successful is their ability to organize at the local level, mobilizing a form of ‘vernacular politics’ grounded in local cultural and social traditions.\footnote{Ahmet Genç, "Takdim," in Tarihi, Kültürü Ve Sanatıyla Eyüp Sultan Sempozyumu Ii. Tebliğler, ed. Osman Sak (İstanbul: Eyüp Belediyesi, 1998), 7. “Çok hızlı bir değişim ve dönüşüm geçiren dünyamız, adeta küçük bir köy halini aldı. Herkes herşeyden az veya çok haberdar. Buna rağmen büyük bir bilgi fukaralığının yaşadığı bir dönemdeyiz. "Bilgi" asıl niteliklerinden ve gerçek konumundan uzak. Ne yazık ki cahilane bir yanlışla ile malumat, bilginin yerine aday!"} At the same time — and as İrfan Bey’s insistence on attending to the ‘micro- and macro-scale’ demonstrates — the Welfare Party’s understanding of the local (yerel or yerli) was articulated in relation to the ‘global.’ The retelling of Eyüp’s history during this period was a scale-making project that connected Eyüp imaginatively and institutionally to other local, national, and global actors.

One site in which those connections were particularly apparent was Mayor Genç’s opening address at the annual Eyüp Sultan Symposium. In 1998, for example, Mayor Genç drew on the familiar trope of the world as a ‘global village’ to contextualize the importance of the symposium:

> Our world, undergoing a very rapid change and transformation, has become a sort of small village. Everyone knows a little about some things, a lot about others. Despite that we’re in a period that is experiencing a great impoverishment of knowledge. Far from the real qualities and true topics of ‘knowledge.’\footnote{White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics.}
As he framed it, the municipality’s symposium had not only local significance but contributed to the global project of establishing real and true knowledge. Mayor Genç made that connection even more explicitly in his opening address in 2000, “Our own cultural values, acquiring universal dimensions, are obligated to surpass locality (yerellik) and become world property.”

In one of the last symposia the Eyüp Municipality organized, Mayor Genç returned to a set of familiar themes. Even though the municipality’s efforts had in many respects taken firm root by 2005, Mayor Genç returned to a familiar set of themes in the 9th Eyüpsultan Symposium. His introduction to the symposium provides a compelling reminder of the fact that making Eyüp was not simply a project of local belonging, national history-making, or even global forms of worship – it was all three, both grounded in and helping to reshape this district of Istanbul:

There are three fundamental pillars that make it possible for a society to intervene in history as a subject: religion, culture, and civilization. Religion is the only source of a society’s spirit of emergence, existence, and mastery over situations under any circumstance. In this country – despite everything – the thing that has formed society’s map of meaning is being Muslim (Müslümanlık) and another thing, another doctrine, another project can never replace the local (yerli) mentality and attitude that simultaneously surround and render meaningful a person’s internal and external world.

Although Eyüp Municipality publications published in the decade prior to the Welfare Party’s 1994 election occasionally alluded to national and global events, they rarely framed local municipal governance in terms broader than Eyüp itself. What changed in 1994 – and this was

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key to the project of making Eyüp Ottoman – was a self-conscious and sustained project of placing Eyüp (and not Istanbul) on a global map. It was successful in part because Eyüp was home to the mosque and tomb complex of Eyüp Sultan. Eyüp, the story ran, had always been a holy site of global significance, but the Eyüp Municipality took it upon itself to transform Eyüp into a form of “world property.” In addition to telling of new public histories, the municipality also accomplished this through the restoration and redevelopment of Eyüp’s historic core.

**Restoration and Redevelopment**

In the lead-up to the March 1994 election, *Eyüp Haber*, a local newspaper that supported the Welfare Party and was edited by Genç himself, published a number of articles in which they highlighted the dilapidated state of Eyüp’s historic built environment. Framing Eyüp’s ruinous state as symptomatic of both the current municipality’s ineffective governance and the broader antipathy of the secular Kemalist establishment towards any trace of the Ottoman past, these articles promised that an Eyüp under Welfare Party administration would be a very different place.

True to his word, Mayor Genç took immediate steps in April 1994 to transform Eyüp’s material landscape. Official municipality publications always included a section on the restoration and reconstruction projects that had been conducted. Making liberal use of ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos, these publications set out to demonstrate the municipality’s success. As one title of the municipality’s 3rd *Year Bulletin* (image below) phrased it, “Eyüpsultan has made peace with its history.”

The second part of making Eyüp Ottoman was the restoration and redevelopment of Eyüp’s built environment. The Eyüp Municipality played a key role in these transformations, but they were only possible because of coordination between multiple actors and institutions.
operating at the municipal and national level. Moreover, Eyüp was not transformed evenly – because of the different legal and economic status of different buildings, Eyüp’s redevelopment was haphazard and patchwork. In order to capture that diversity, this section is organized in terms of a set of material sites or infrastructures: Eyüp’s water infrastructure; the central square in front of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan; the conference center and fair complex known as Feshane (the Fez Factory); and the fountain built by Ahmet Genç. As I explain below, making Eyüp Ottoman was in fact the conjunction of many overlapping histories.

Figure 15: Markers of 1990s restoration projects, highlighting partnership of Eyüp Municipality and a man named Şerif Dilber. Timur Hammond, 2013.
The Broader Project of Municipal Development and Haliç (1984-2005)

Although I focus on restoration below, the project of making Eyüp Ottoman was embedded within a context of urban redevelopment and infrastructural expansion. In Eyüp, for example, the Eyüp Municipality worked with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality to expand the network of drainage and sewer lines. Situated at the confluence of several valleys, central Eyüp and the nearby neighborhood of Alibeyköy had long been subject to periodic flooding, a condition that exacerbated during the 1960s and 70s as the surrounding hillsides were built over. Throughout the Eyüp Municipality, the Welfare Party administration set about paving roads with new layers of asphalt, adding parks and gardens throughout the municipality, and introducing better street lighting. In conversations with many longtime residents of central Eyüp, they frequently mentioned the illumination of the central cemetery in Eyüp as one of the significant changes of this period.
But perhaps the largest change of the 1990s and early 2000s was the coordinated project of cleaning the Golden Horn. Originally, the waterway was fed by two streams that drained into the upper reaches of the Golden Horn. Those streams dried up in the context of Istanbul’s unplanned urbanization, diminishing the flow that flushed the waters of the Golden Horn into the Bosphorus. At the same time, many of the factories lining the Golden Horn would dump their effluence into the waterway. Growing settlement in the area also led to increased flows of silt into the Golden Horn, further clogging the gulf. By the 1980s, the Golden Horn was little more than a stinking swamp. Although many workers stayed in the area because of the proximity between work and home, the deindustrialization of the Golden Horn also sparked an exodus of long-time residents to other expanding districts of Istanbul.\textsuperscript{178}

Those who stayed remember a smell so bad that they sometimes could not open their windows. Although previous municipal administrations had tried to address the problem – in the 1980s, Mayor Bedrettin Dalan had famously claimed he’d turn the waters of the Golden Horn as blue as his eyes – they had been hampered by a lack of funds and a lack of coordination between the multiple institutions involved. The political alignment of the late 1990s – the Eyüp Municipality, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, and the government in Ankara – helped to finally realize the plans of a decade before. Sewer lines were rerouted to treatment plants on the shores of the Sea of Marmara and tunnels were built between the Bosphorus and the upper reaches of the Golden Horn in order to increase the flow of water through the body. Although the

\textsuperscript{178} This story is similar to what happened in the neighboring districts of Fener and Balat. Although those districts were already run down, the deindustrialization of the Golden Horn coupled with the persistent smell drove out most of the remaining ‘old’ residents. Memories of that smell continue to negatively impact non-residents’ perception of the area. Dikmen Bezméz, "The Politics of Urban Waterfront Regeneration: The Case of Haliç (the Golden Horn), Istanbul," \textit{International Journal of Urban and Regional Research} 32, no. 4 (2008): 834.
Golden Horn will sometimes smell after a heavy rainstorm clears out the surrounding drains, one of the chief infrastructural successes of this period was the dramatic improvement of water quality in the area.


Soon after the unexpected 1994 electoral triumph of Refah in Istanbul’s local elections, the daily newspaper _Cumhuriyet_ published a critique written by the well-known architect Oktay Ekinci that addressed some of the changes that had begun to take place in Eyüp.¹⁷⁹ Readers of _Cumhuriyet_, a long-time bastion of the laïcist, Kemalist, and well-educated political and social establishment, would have been familiar with many of the terms that Ekinci mobilized, words like ‘religious’ (_dinsel_), ‘religiosity’ (_dinselli̇k_), and his distinction of ‘history’ (_tarih_) from the ‘history of Islam’ (_İslam tarihi_) because of the heated cultural and political debates precipitated by the 1990s emergence of the Welfare Party. They also would have been aware of the central role that Istanbul’s material landscapes played in those debates.¹⁸⁰ These debates were not simply about the kinds of uses and activities that these landscapes would host in the present and in the future; they were also about the kinds of stories, histories, and narratives that were told about these landscapes and derived their force from them.¹⁸¹ The fact that Ekinci’s essay appeared in a national paper with readership well beyond this one district reminds us that these seemingly minor interviews and interventions into the built environment circulated within a much broader

¹⁷⁹ Ekinci was a practicing architect and a former President of the Chamber of Architects (Mimarlar Odası) who died in 2013. Eyüp’s built environment had been an occasional topic of his newspaper columns even before 1994.


reading public. Just as the Municipality’s interviews in conservative religious newspapers like Akit and Yeni Şafak addressed a pious readership, Ekinci’s article in Cumhuriyet was addressed to a readership that generally identified itself as secular.

Referencing the newly elected Mayor Ahmet Genç’s widely publicized restoration projects, Ekinci phrased a rhetorical question:

Mayor Ahmet Genç’s emphasis upon those works ‘connected to a religious lifestyle’ within such a rich ‘mosaic of cultural heritage’—such as his taking ownership of ‘türbe and dergah’ along with tomb stones—while at the same time never mentioning the old Eyüp houses and streets that are at least as valuable [as the türbe and dergah] and also found in need of protection might mean what?  

A few paragraphs below, he answers his own question:

These questions’ response doubtless lies both in an understanding of ‘historical works’ only as related to ‘religious culture’ and, more importantly, in the protection of the richness of civil architecture creating a situation that openly ‘impedes urban rents (kentsel rantları)’ in our present moment.

Ekinci’s critique highlighted two issues fundamental to the politics and practice of restoration during the 1990s: (1) What sorts of buildings were designated as ‘historical’? And (2) how should the preservation of the built environment be balanced against the desire to maximize the rents generated by particular properties? Civil architecture – and Eyüp’s historic center in particular – occupied a particularly interesting place within these debates.

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182 Oktay Ekinci, "Eyüp’te Tarih, Kültür Ve ‘Dinsellik’ [History, Culture, and 'Religiosity' in Eyüp],” Cumhuriyet 1994. Likely published in August 1994 because it makes direct reference to Mayor Genç’s August 5, 1994 interview. In Turkish, “Belediye Başkanı Ahmet Genç’in, böylesine zengin bir ‘kültür mirası mozaiği’ içerisinde özellikle ‘dinsel yaşamla ilgili’ eserleri öne çıkarması, örneğin mezar taşlarıyla birlikte ‘türbelere ve dergahlara’ da sahip çıarken, en az onlar kadar değerli ve ‘korunmaya muhtıç’ durumdaki eski Eyüp evlerinden ve sokaklarından hiç söz etmemesi, acaba ne anlam geliyor?” ‘Dergah’ is one form of a Sufi lodge; legally, they were closed down in 1924 as part of the young state’s secularizing reforms.

183 “Bu soruların yanıtı, hiç kuskusuz hem ‘tarihi eser’ anlayışının sadece ‘din kültürune’ bağlanmış olmasında hem de asıl önelemisi, sivil mimari zenginliğin korunması için günümüze açıkça ‘kentsel rantları engelleyen’ bir sonuc yaratmasında yatıyor.”
Figure 17: View of restaurants lining one side of Eyüp's central square. Many of these restaurants have been opened since the 1990s to cater to increasing numbers of visitors. Timur Hammond, 2012.

Until the 1970s, ‘historical works’ were almost always understood as monumental structures such as palaces and mosques. Even that understanding generated heated debates about the importance of a mosque – were mosques important as expressions of architectural mastery or as sites of ongoing religious practice? (See Chapter 1 for one discussion of this issue in the 1950s context of Ali Saim Ülgen and the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa.) Following the 1968 Venice Charter, in which ‘civil architecture’ came to be designated a worthy object of preservation in its own right, both the administrative practices and the objects of conservation in Turkey began to change.\(^{184}\) A new antiquities law in 1973 (Law no. 1710) established the category of the ‘protected area’ (sit alam) in order to protect monuments within a broader urban

context. However, because the infrastructures – maps, experts, technical standards – needed to enforce this law were not sufficient and faced opposition from municipal officials, it was difficult to actually establish effective ‘protected areas.’

One of the first ‘protected areas’ to be established in Istanbul was Eyüp. In 1977, reviewing a development plan prepared by the Istanbul Municipality and submitted for their approval, the Council declared central Eyüp and its surroundings a sit alanı.\textsuperscript{186} While many of Eyüp’s major mosques, tombs, and medrese had been registered previously, the establishment of the sit alanı was important for two reasons: First, it greatly expanded the range of objects designated as ‘historical’; not simply major mosques, tombs, and monuments, these register of buildings included houses, trees, cemeteries, and fountains. Second, and in line with that expanded designation, the object of heritage thus came to be seen not just as a single (usually monumental) object but the urban fabric (kent dokusu) itself.

Two years later, the Council prepared a 1/500 scale conservation plan for Eyüp that formed the basis for much of the work that would follow in the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{187} Among the plan’s regulations included mandating that pedestrian roads be paved with stone, not asphalt (in order to preserve their historic appearance); that efforts be undertaken to maintain Eyüp’s level of greenery (a product of its relatively low population density and the number of cemeteries in

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\textsuperscript{185} Iclal Dinçer et al., \textit{İstanbul'da Tarihi Ve Doğal Miras Değerleri: Potansiyeller, Riskler Ve Koruma Sorunları} (İstanbul: Bilgi Universitesi Yayınları, 2011), 25.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 28. This is Decision no. 9591 (January 15, 1977) from the Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Anıtlar Kurulu. The original designation applied to 420.33 hectacre of Eyüp. The conservation plan developed below – at a much smaller scale – applied only to 107 hectacre. See the Imar Planı Raporu, section 2.1.8. The sit alanı is reduced in size in November 1989 (decision no. 1509). See Imar Planı Raporu, section 2.1.12

\textsuperscript{187} I did not find this plan, though it is cited in the Eyüp Koruma Amaçlı Revizyon Nazım İmar Planı Raporu, section 2.1.7-8.

130
the district); and, most significantly, that the Council become a central legal and administrative body shaping the district’s urban development.

In the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, the network of heritage actors was further complicated. Two new municipal actors – the metropolitan (büyük belediye) and district (ilçe belediyesi) municipality – came to agitate for projects of restoration and conservation under their supervision. During the same moment, Turkey’s heritage sites came to be increasingly oriented towards global audiences in terms of ‘World Heritage’, a shift best exemplified by the choice of Turkey’s first World Heritage sites: Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, sites that fit easily into the narrative of a ‘universal’ heritage. Interestingly, and despite its status as a sit alanı, Eyüp was not nominated as a World Heritage site during this period. Second, the formation of a new supervisory body changed the institutional landscape of restoration: the Councils for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage were placed under the supervision of the Ministry for Culture and Tourism. Restoration thus came to be wedded to (and occasionally in tension with) a project of tourism.

This was the context in which Ekinci was critiquing the Eyüp Municipality’s restoration projects. He worried that the newly elected Welfare Party would only find ‘religious’ architecture – Islam in particular – worthy of preservation. In part, this choice would be a result of the Welfare Party’s commitment to Islam, but Ekinci was also highlighting the very real tension between preserving civil architecture and profiting from the redevelopment of Eyüp’s urban landscape. One of the places that that tension emerged was in the redevelopment of Eyüp’s central square.
The Restoration and Redevelopment of the Square (1994-1997)

Since the Menderes Operations of the 1950s (see Chapter 1), Eyüp’s central square had been a major transportation and social hub for the district. Many of the major routes to Istanbul’s peripheral districts like Gaziosmanpaşa and Alibeyköy passed through central Eyüp. There were bus stops and taxi stands, repair shops and barbers, cafes and greengrocers. In short, there was a neighborhood ecology that catered to neighborhood residents, many of whom worked in the factories that lined the Golden Horn and lived in the vicinity of the central square. At the same time, the density of life in this square posed particular challenges for the mosque and its surrounding monuments. Pollution, noise, and the wear and tear automobile traffic passing through Eyüp’s center harmed the physical fabric of the mosque and limited the square’s use for religious purposes.

Almost as soon as the Eyüp Municipality was established in 1984, its planners developed a series of plans to reroute traffic around the historic core and thus pedestrianize the immediate vicinity of the mosque. Because this project would require coordination with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (responsible for major arterial roads), the General Directorate of Foundations (who managed some of the property in the district’s center), the Councils for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage, and others, the plans were never realized. The election of the Welfare Party at both the district level (the Eyüp Municipality) and the metropolitan level (the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) set in motion the rapid execution of existing plans.

Nezih Eldem, a widely respected architect and urban planner who had come to work for the Eyüp Municipality in 1985, was in charge of designing what would fill the newly renovated square. As Eldem explained in a 1997 presentation, the center of their plans involved the
construction of an ‘Arasta Palace’ (Arasta Kasrı) that would address two issues: First, it would provide for the functional needs of pilgrims and tourists, offering bathrooms and other opportunities for rest; second, it would occupy much of the space of the square, filling in the architectural void – what he called an “embarrassment of development (imar ayıbı)” – that was left by road construction in 1957. Eldem’s plans were never fully realized. However, it is possible to see the fragments of Eldem’s designs in several buildings arrayed around the edge of the square today.

One of the buildings and businesses destroyed by this redevelopment was a small café known as the Şark Kahvesi (Orient Café). It had been run by Metin Heper, a long time resident whose family went back several generations in Eyüp. The municipality invoked eminent domain in order to redevelop Heper’s café. Heper went to court and lost. His former one-story café was turned into a two-story complex including a restaurant – now one of Eyüp’s most expensive – on the 2nd floor and several shops on the ground floor. This is one case in which Ekinci’s critique about civil architecture and urban rents rings true. The businesses around Eyüp’s central square now cater almost entirely to visitors from outside of the district. Because of the high rents for these properties, they have to sell items with high margins and rapid turnover – food and religious paraphernalia.

In 2000, an Eyüp Municipality publication looked back on the recent past to describe a positive change:

Not many but only 6 years previous, the area immediate across from Eyüp Sultan Camii, among the most important pilgrimage centers of the Islamic world, had been abandoned to scrap men and repair shops (hurdaçı ve tamirci). The historical works and wooden buildings that are found in these environs had been left to disappear… The visitation

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space (ziyaret alanı) of those coming to Eyüp from outside the district had been reduced to only the Eyüp Sultan Camii.¹⁸⁹

Eyüp’s central square today is almost entirely given over to religious uses, primarily by people who visit from outside of the immediate vicinity of the mosque. In part, this is the consequence of Eyüp’s emergence as an accessible public space for religiously conservative visitors who either feel unwelcome or uninterested in visiting more ‘secular’ public spaces in Istanbul such as Taksim or Kadıköy.

One afternoon in 2013, I was sitting to lunch with a longtime resident of Eyüp in the restaurant that sat above where Metin Heper’s Şark Kahvesi used to be. “Eyüp is gone,” she said, “Eyüp yok olmuş.” Her point was that the social relationships that once constituted the neighborhood for her – relationships often articulated through businesses that used to line the square – no longer exist. Eyüp today is more popular than it has ever been, and the square serves as a key open space for hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. But in the process of creating a space for visitors, the Eyüp Municipality has also helped to fundamentally reshape the social networks that once existed in this district. The debates that surround the transformation of another building in Eyüp – Feshane – help shed light on a different (but connected) story of public space, heritage, and shared cultural identities.

The Story of Feshane (1999-2013)

In June 1993 – 9 months before the municipal elections that would bring the Welfare Party to power – the local newspaper Eyüp Haber published a front-page photo of flags flying in front of the building known as Feshane. The newspaper was edited by Ahmet Genç – who would become Eyüp’s mayor – and functioned as the local press outlet of the Welfare Party. “The

flying of all the Zionist and imperialist countries’ flags—chief among them Israel and America—in the skies above Feshane and only the Republic of Turkey’s flag not being found is attention-grabbing.” The article accused the biennial of being party to an intentional plot to “erode” the district’s spiritual and religious importance. As three high school students were quoted, “Whose culture are you trying to sell to who?” As I explained (or will have explained in Chapter 2), the flags were flying as part of the 2nd Istanbul Biennial, a modern art show that was designed to inaugurate the complex’s future use as Istanbul’s first modern art museum. Eyüp Haber’s critique of the modern art biennial – and the proposed modern art museum to follow it – was that ‘modern art’ was foreign to the local grounded forms of belief and social life in Eyüp. It was an imposition from ‘outside’ designed to continue a legacy of Kemalist attempts to secularize and Westernize places like Eyüp.

Political disagreements and the victory of the Welfare Party in the March 1994 elections put an end to the modern art museum, but this created a new problem: An empty building. Feshane was famous for being one of the Ottoman Empire’s first state-owned factories, but the building also served as the center of an expansive and important textile production center up until the 1980s. It was only with the closure of the factory (as part of the economic liberalization of the 1980s) and the destruction of the surrounding urban fabric (as part of Mayor Bedrettin Dalan’s urban interventions) that Feshane came to exist as an isolated building on the shores of the Golden Horn.

Despite the building’s use as an art gallery, there were still several major structural issues, most notably a location on the shore that left it prone to flooding. In 1998, after four years of disrepair, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality began a restoration project in consultation with the Eyüp Municipality. The complex was reopened in 1999 as a new site in which the past
could be consumed. Newspaper articles reviewing the plans described what visitors would find:

“Among the interesting sections in the Living 19th Century Market is the historic barber. Gentleman can be shaved in the old style with a straight razor. Inside there’s also an old Turk coffeehouse named Kiraathane. Here it’s possible to smoke nargile, play backgammon, and read the paper.”

Furthermore, all of the handicrafts for sale – embossed copper, textiles, calligraphy – would be produced on site by local artisans.

In many respects, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality restoration plans followed the suggestions of the restorations planned to turn the building into modern art museum. There was, however, one striking and important difference: The main entrance that faced the Golden Horn. [See Figure 1: Feshane Changes.] When most traffic to Eyüp had passed by water – as it did until the middle of the 20th century – that entrance was the first place that visitors would see. In Feshane’s first configuration, this entrance was topped by the Ottoman coat of arms, a tuğra (imperial seal) of the Sultan, and two kitabe (inscriptions) to either side. With the de-Ottomanification of the Turkish Republic, all of these objects were removed when the factory complex was nationalized and reopened following 1923. In their place, factory directors built a control tower that could overlook the complex. The first restorations undertaken to transform the building into a modern art space did not replace the Ottoman emblems, choosing instead to highlight the building’s industrial heritage in ways that echoed the transformation and repurposing of the other repurposed factory spaces such as the Tate Modern in London.

contrast, the municipality’s restorations in 1998-99 returned the Ottoman insignia, a change in keeping with the broader ‘recovery’ of the Ottoman past under the Welfare Party municipal administration.

Despite the enthusiasm and publicity with which the complex was reopened, the nostalgic marketplace failed. Less than a year later, news coverage reported that 40 of the original 50 stores had closed, citing a combination of high rents and inconsistent customers.\(^{191}\) The company originally hired to plan events for the complex withdrew from their contract. Since 2000, the service company Beltur (ultimately owned by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) has managed Feshane as a multipurpose conference venue and fairground. It hosts everything from Ramadan festivities to municipal government functions to regional festivals to religious tourism festivals. Even though the complex’s status as an Ottoman marketplace was not successful, Feshane today is economically and socially accessible to a portion of Istanbul’s residents who do not feel comfortable visiting districts like Taksim, Beyoğlu, Şişli, or Kadıköy. Feshane is valuable precisely because it provides a place from which to partake in many of the rituals that have come to characterize an aspirational middle class life in Istanbul.

At the same time, Feshane’s current function continues to generate debate. As one entry posted in May 2010 on the online comment forum Eksi Sözlük quipped: “[Feshane’s] greatest misfortune is to be located inside the borders of Eyüp. Because of this it can’t handle any activity outside of Ramadan festivities and İSMEK exhibits. Had it been in any district with a more modern segment everyone would have seen how such a structure is valued.” In the commenter’s

\(^{191}\) “51 dükkandan 40’ı kapandı,” Hurriyet, January 31, 2000. Because of Turkey’s rapid inflation at the time, rent had been fixed in dollars and not lira, leading to major problems when the number of visitors dropped off outside of major festivals.
view, Eyüp lacked a ‘modern’ social environment that would properly appreciate the complex. Implicit in the statement is a divided cultural landscape in Istanbul.

A March 2013 interview with a tour guide and art historian helps explain the consequences of that division. Attila Bey (pseudonym) was born in the Aegean city of Izmir but had arrived in Istanbul in the 1970s for university. Trained as an art and architectural historian, he had worked in a variety of capacities for several universities and state-run museums. When we spoke, he was also working for a tour company [the same one as in Chapter 5], guiding upper middle class secular Turks through Istanbul’s historic neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, Eyüp figured prominently in that itinerary.

When asked to explain Eyüp’s transformation over the more than three decades in which he’d lived in Istanbul, he began by drawing a general contrast between ‘Turkish’ and ‘Arabic’ culture. Eyüp in general, he said, had been both socially and visually spoiled, transformed by an “‘Arabic’ culture” that had replaced and otherwise obscured the “Turk” culture that had once existed there. The problem, he continued, was that there were two cultures in Turkey, a top-down elite culture that had never been completely accepted and something that was its complete opposite. He sighed, “We can’t find something in the middle.” For him, Feshane’s transformation – first its failed place as an elite cultural institution (the modern art museum) and its current status as fairground – was symptomatic of that inability to find a common ground. “I look at Feshane,” he said. “It’s either seen as a place for the Istanbul Festival [i.e., the modern art biennial]… or it’s a garlic festival… Fine, there shouldn’t be an opera there but neither should there be a garlic festival. It should be something more acceptable. Elitist culture can’t go
everywhere, I understand that… but this,” referencing the building’s current uses, “this isn’t culture.”\footnote{192}

\textbf{The Fountain (2002-2003)}

Although the fountain with which I opened this chapter occupies a relatively prominent location within Eyüp, there was very little newspaper coverage of its opening. All we have is the date at the bottom of the four-line inscription that is illegible to nearly everyone who passes by: May 29, 2002. May 29 is the day on which Fatih Sultan Mehmet conquered Constantinople in 1453, and during the 1990s public reenactments of the Conquest on May 29\textsuperscript{th} were one way that the Welfare Party grounded its present political claims in the Ottoman past in opposition to a ruling ‘Republican’ elite. May 29\textsuperscript{th} continues to be celebrated in Istanbul; the only difference is that the once oppositional character of the Conquest celebrations has now become thoroughly institutionalized in municipal activities. The exact dating of the inscription suggests that the fountain was officially unveiled as part of those celebrations.

A year later, however, the daily newspaper 	extit{Milliyet} – likely tipped off by local opposition politicians – published an article about the fountain.\footnote{193} According to the article, Mayor Genç first professed ignorance of the fountain’s provenance but later admitted that he was indeed the patron of the fountain, that he had paid for it with his own money, but not wanting the inscription to be read, had asked that it be written in Ottoman.

Yet as the news report explained, the construction of the fountain and family grave complex at the entrance to the cemetry had a complicated legal history. Because of its long use, it is very difficult to find an open plot within the Eyüp Cemetery. Mayor Genç had purchased a

\footnote{192} Interview, March 6, 2013.

family plot in 1996 on the back hillside of the cemetery. Meanwhile, the entrance to the cemetery had been occupied by a mezarcı (gravemaker), a situation frequently found throughout Istanbul. The mezarcı owned $\frac{1}{4}$ of the property, with $\frac{3}{4}$ owned by another group of women. The Directorate of Cemeteries (Mezarlıklar Müdürlüğü, attached to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) tried to claim the property. The women sold their share in the property but the mezarcı refused, forcing a court case in which he lost his property. At that point, Mayor Genç petitioned the Directorate of Cemeteries to exchange his family plot at the back of the cemetery for the location at the front of the cemetery. Upon receiving approval, Mayor Genç erected the fountain beside a family plot. As of my last fieldwork in 2014, the only person buried there was Genç’s father, Efraim Genç.

At the beginning of this chapter, I opened with three questions that this fountain raises: (1) How did it come to be here? (2) Why is the fountain decorated in the way that it is? And (3) what might this fountain tell us about the politics of the built environment in contemporary Istanbul? The first question is straightforward enough to answer: Mayor Genç leveraged his authority and influence as mayor to petition the Istanbul Directorate of Cemeteries for the right to plot. This is why the newspaper article was (polemically) headlined “Ahiret Torpili.” Torpil are networks of patronage through which official work is accomplished$^{194}$; here, an ahiret torpili refers to those networks that produced a gravesite for Mayor Genç and his family. More broadly, building the fountain also required that Mayor Genç coordinate with the municipal water utility (İSKİ) to connect the fountain. As with so many other transformations in Eyüp during this period, the fountain required the conjunction of multiple institutions with diverse interests.

As I hope this chapter has made clear, the fountain’s decoration was a product of the reemergence of the Ottoman past in late 1990s Istanbul. The reemergence of this past was both the result and the cause of heated political and cultural debates about the history of the Turkish Republic and the legacy of secularizing and Westernizing reforms that divided ‘modern’ Turkey from its Ottoman past. Even though the fountain was new, it materialized an alternative form of the modern that “challenge[d] the secular-nationalist elites who had occupied positions of administrative authority” for much of Turkey’s history. Writing about the same engagements with the Ottoman past in the 1990s, Alev Çınar has pointed out the doubled dimension of history writing: “The national subject that declares itself into being through the writing of history presents itself as having an eternal presence that is validated by its historicity and hoariness; at the same time, it also performs itself as new and modern.”

But Çınar’s formulation can be further sharpened: What emerged in this moment was not just a new national subject but a new municipal one, one that articulated its newness relative to both the distant Ottoman past and its immediate predecessors. This is why it is crucial that the figures commemorated on the fountain were not İstanbulu – as one could reasonably argue based on the location in the broader city of Istanbul – but Eyüpsultanlı. This fountain materialized a new form of place – of locality – embedded within a shifting set of political, cultural, and economic relationships. This form of place – this Ottoman Eyüp – was at once illegible (like the inscription) and charged with a set of claims about Islam, heritage, and urban identity. This was what was at stake in making Eyüp Ottoman.


Conclusion

Eyüp’s transformation during the 1990s and 2000s grounded a new form of Ottoman identity in contemporary Istanbul. In the process, the district’s transformation generated heated debates about political and cultural identity. Among some long-time residents, Eyüp’s transformations also provoked deep anxieties as the social and economic relationships that once defined the district were swept away. In their place, a new public history stressed Eyüp’s Ottoman past even as the traces of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s faded away. But other long-time residents – and many visitors today – praise the transformation. Remembering decades when Eyüp was a varoş district on the peripheries of Istanbul, its air thick with the scent of sewage and factory waste, these people praise what Eyüp has become: Istanbul’s spiritual center.

Eyüp’s built environment continues to play a key role in this ongoing process. Buildings have political and cultural force because they make powerful claims to be rooted in place. Their seeming durability helps to stabilize contested discourses of identity, heritage, and belonging. Ahmet Genç’s fountain, for example, has helped to constitute a history of the eternal and unchanging Eyüp grounded in a continuous and unchanged Islamic and Ottoman identity. The ability to transform the built environment and tell new histories about and by means of that material landscape is a key part of establishing and maintaining political authority in the present.

In a broader sense, this chapter has helped to show how Islam came to matter as a part of urban life in Istanbul in the 1990s and 2000s. By means of new public histories and the redevelopment of Eyüp’s landscape, the Eyüp Municipality helped to link social rituals to the material landscape, helping to make Islam more visible and tangible in Eyüp (and Istanbul more broadly). This project – captured by the phrase “making Eyüp Ottoman” – was one key example of the changing forms of Islamic place making that I explore in this dissertation. But these
questions about belief and the built environment have relevance well beyond Eyüp in the 1990s. In particular, looking at Eyüp raises a set of interesting questions about place making, the role of the built environment, and the complicated topographies of tradition and heritage.

In a recent article, Michael Curry has argued not for fixed ontological divisions between ‘space’ and ‘place’ but instead for a more nuanced analysis of the different ways that knowledge about the world is produced, stored, and transmitted between people and over time. Places play a key role in organizing that knowledge. “In the topographic tradition,” he writes, “One creates a new place by acting, routinizing, narrating, and in the process creating an account of what constitutes a place, of what in a place is possible and what is not possible.”

To define a place is in some sense to define what can be known and conveyed in that place. The sharing (or not sharing) of these understandings of place – what Deborah Martin describes as ‘place framing’ – can play a key role in the articulation of political debates.

But how do understandings of place come to be shared? The new public history told by the Eyüp Municipality in the 1990s – a history critiquing 70 years of Republican reforms as imitative Westernization and holding up the Ottoman past as an authentic source of political, social, and cultural identity – was an attempt to reframe where Eyüp sat in relation to the city, country, and world around it. The municipality’s efforts to publicize that history – through newspaper coverage, through their own publications, and through the organization of symposia – was an attempt to create an audience that shared certain understandings of why Eyüp mattered.

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In addition to these public histories, however, there was a second, even more important medium in and through which ‘Eyüp’ was shared: the district’s material landscape of mosques, tombs, cemeteries, old houses, and more.

The built environment – as something so ostensibly manifest and common – makes it a particularly important site of intervention. The linked new histories of the 1990s and the restoration projects produced a complicated patchwork of what Takashi Fujitani has called ‘mnemonic sites,’ “material vehicles of meaning that either helped construct a memory of [a past]… or served as symbolic markers for commemorations of present national accomplishments and the possibilities of the future.”199 At the same time, Eyüp’s landscape remains a contested site, as some long-time resident narrate their histories in relation to but also in tension with the Ottoman past. As Karen Till has noted, “the affective materialities of a place… may surpass instrumental efforts to make selective pasts speak through them.”200

More than anything else, Eyüp’s transformation during the 1990s and 2000s should remind us how complicated the geographies of the past are. Eyüp’s landscape was and continues to be a patchwork of different objects, some fragile and some durable, bound together by seams: fences, roads, pathways, routes. The temporality of this textile is complicated – some objects old, some quite new – even as they exist within the same fabric. This chapter has tried to follow some of those seams and stitches that hold this place. In its way, belief and worship are also an act of stitching, tying people to this place of Islam.


CHAPTER 3: THE GEOGRAPHIES OF RAMADAN IN EYÜP

Opening Scene

One afternoon in early July 2013, I stood in front of a set of half-assembled fiberglass columns that had recently appeared in the central square of Eyüp. As I was photographing the construction, an older man on his way to visit the adjacent mosque asked me, “Do you know what these are going to be?” I shrugged my shoulders and responded by quoting a small paper sign that I had seen taped to one of the columns. “Some arcades (revaklar) are going to be built,” I said, “like the ones they have in Mecca.” Without looking at the columns again, the man bid me a good day before entering into the mosque itself. These fiberglass columns had appeared suddenly and without warning in the week before Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. Though it seemed clear that these objects had something to do with Ramadan, their specific function eluded many of those who passed through the square on a regular basis.

201 In Turkish, the month is spelled Ramazan. In this chapter, I use Ramadan, the spelling more familiar to English-language readers.
A few days later, the jumbled mess of fiberglass and scaffolding had resolved itself into an imposing complex filling the square in front of the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan. The largest
structure was a stage, flanked by two large video screens, looking out upon several hundred neatly arrayed white plastic chairs. Two raised platforms for live television broadcasts had also been constructed, positioned in such a way that the mosque could be neatly framed in the background of the shot. Finally, the fiberglass columns – no longer half-assembled – had been painted and linked with small arches. Fabric had been draped over the entire structure, and the newly shaded space below had been covered in carpets and furnished with cushions and books. For the entire month of Ramadan, these structures filled the square, playing an inescapable part of the way that residents and visitors alike experienced the holiest period of the year in the holiest district in Istanbul.

Figure 20: Ramadan arcades, painted, assembled, and nearly complete, July 10, 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013.

They did so in multiple ways: The stage was filled with nightly performances of religiously appropriate music, poetry, and lectures; the live television broadcasts – an evening
iftar show on the cable channel Samanyolu and an early morning sahur program on TRT – transmitted Eyüp’s spiritual atmosphere to the entire country; and the carpeted space under the fiberglass arcades hosted intimate lectures, musical performances, and provided a comfortable space for visitors to participate in the communal prayers led in the adjacent mosque of Eyüp Sultan. This transformation of the square was striking not for its character – because the square was frequently used in conjunction with the religious activities of the mosque – but for its permanence: Present for the entire month of Ramadan, this cluster of structures completely transformed many of the square’s typical rhythms and routines.

In one sense, these exceptional structures helped to mark the exceptional nature of Ramadan, a month in which many Muslims around the world increase their commitment to practices of fasting, prayer, and contemplation. But more than simply mark a temporal division, this Ramadan complex also produced a distinctive geography. Although the fasting that comes with Ramadan is ostensibly incumbent upon all Muslims – and therefore observed in all places – the geographies of Ramadan in Istanbul are anything but homogenous. Focusing on how and why the Eyüp Ramadan complex was built and on the divergent responses that the complex generated, this chapter explores the changing connections that produce an uneven geography of Ramadan in Istanbul. In the process, this chapter shows how the geography of religion is the product of contested connections between different individuals, different lifestyles shaped by morality, class, gender, and politics, and the overlapping material landscapes in which individuals and lifestyles are grounded.

**Introduction**

According to official statistics, Turkey is over 99% Muslim. For Muslims around the world, fasting during the month of Ramadan is considered to be one of the fundamental
components of being Muslim. One might then expect that the onset of Ramadan in Turkey produces changes everywhere as people begin to mark the fast. To a certain extent, this is true: Even for the most indifferent observer, the festivals, lights, advertisements, and performances that suddenly appear in the city are inescapable. Yet the geography of Ramadan is far from homogenous.

The complex geography of Ramadan in Istanbul – and the broader geography of observance of which Ramadan is a part – might be mapped in several different ways. One way is to look through the lens of politics. The metropolis of Istanbul is made up of 39 separate district municipalities (ilçe belediyeleri), some of which are controlled by the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) and some of which are controlled by the opposition Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). The two party’s different perspectives on Islam – the former proudly asserting the primacy of Sunni Islam in public space, the latter insisting that public space is secular space – find themselves mirrored in the city’s landscape. Municipalities controlled by the AKP organize Ramadan events, while municipalities controlled by the CHP do not. Working in this way reminds us that the public observance of Ramadan is closely connected to questions of politics and the control of urban space.

A second way to map the geography of Ramadan is to begin not from political municipal control but from Istanbul’s districts and neighborhoods and the urban lifestyles and identities for which they are known. Istanbul districts and neighborhoods such as Teşvikiye, Kuzguncuk, and Pera – long known for the presence of non-Muslim minorities and more secular self-described cosmopolitan lifestyles – are expected not to observe Ramadan like Istanbul’s more religious
spaces such as Eyüp, Fatih, and Üsküdar.\textsuperscript{202} Rather than be mapped at the scale of the municipality, this geography of Ramadan traces more closely to the underlying social mosaic of the city.

In one sense, the Ramadan structures that appeared in Eyüp’s central square might be understood as being connected to an AKP-affiliated municipality and a district widely assumed to be conservative and religious. While such an analysis has merit, it is incomplete because it fails to capture the multiple ways that people observe Ramadan and thus make it tangible in their bodies, homes, and the urban landscape. Those geographies of observance cannot be captured solely by reference to municipal politics or to a neighborhood’s assumed social identity.

This chapter thus pays attention to how everyday encounters in central Eyüp during Ramadan helped to reproduce and departed from municipal politics and homogenous social identity.\textsuperscript{203} Observing Ramadan in Eyüp connected specific embodied acts (fasting, praying, but also negotiating the crowds who thronged Eyüp’s central square) with particular sites (the mosque, but also surrounding mosques and tombs, local restaurants serving iftar and sahur, and the other districts of Istanbul from which visitors came), a linking that involved normative judgments about how people should worship, interact with their surroundings, and comport themselves in public. Making Ramadan tangible also connected Eyüp with Mecca, a connection given material shape and dimension by the fiberglass arcades that filled Eyüp’s central square.


\textsuperscript{203} Banu Gökarıksel, "The Intimate Politics of Secularism and the Headscarf: The Mall, the Neighborhood, and the Public Square in Istanbul," ibid.19, no. 1 (2012).
Rather than producing an exceptional sacred space, this chapter argues that the Ramadan in Eyüp emerged out of and helped to reproduce a contested geography of observance, a geography best understood in terms of the diverse mediums of connection that linked private and public space, internal piety with external observance, and this one district with the world around.

This chapter opens with a general discussion of the multiple ways that Ramadan is observed in contemporary Istanbul. Focusing on the spaces of the body, the home, and the public square, I argue that the geography of Ramadan’s observance must be understood in relation to all three spaces. The Ramadan arcades that were erected in 2013 were one attempt to bring those three spaces (and the scales they implied) into conjunction. I then turn to the key role of the Eyüp Municipality in organizing these events, showing how local district municipalities use events like these to demonstrate their own efficacy as a public institution. Finally, I turn to the diverse responses generated by the Ramadan festivities, showing how differently positioned actors used the arcades to make wide-ranging arguments about consumerism, the use of public space, and the social norms that ought to govern everyday life.

Spaces and Rhythms of Observance

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may ward off evil.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:183)

Even though fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam (and thus incumbent upon all observant Muslims), the observance of fasting during Ramadan – the precise way that individuals and communities come to observe Ramadan and mark it as something simultaneously tangible and sacred – differs widely from place to place, just as it its observance has changed over time. The observance of Ramadan takes an especially interesting form in Turkey today. On
the one hand, Turkey is a majority Muslim country, with more than 99% of its citizens registered as Muslims. Prominent Ramadan celebrations – organized both by government bodies at the municipal, provincial, and national level and by a variety of civil society actors – have become a regular part of Turkey’s public culture. At the same time, the administrative category of “Muslim” obscures often bitter and contested differences in the definition, practice, and observance of Islam. As a consequence, the transformations that mark Ramadan are neither spatially homogenous nor uncontested.

Consider fasting, the most intimate part of Ramadan. According to a 2013 news report, 32% of people living in Turkey tried to fast for the first day of Ramadan. In Istanbul, that percentage rose to roughly 40%. In the avowedly ‘secular’ city of Izmir, on the other hand, the percentage of people fasting was only 15%. Even within Istanbul, the geographies of observance vary widely alongside existing differences in social class, political identity, and the urban landscape. Alongside individual observance of the fast, there are other signs that mark the month of Ramadan, including television programs, advertising in grocery stores, and changes in the

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204 Religious identity in Turkey is an administrative category, recorded on your identity card. At the same time, this religious ‘identity’ obscures considerable differences, especially those Turkish citizens who identify as Alevi. See the following note.

205 One of the most important intra-Muslim differences is between the dominant Sunni tradition (in which people fast during Ramadan) and the minority Alevi tradition (in which people fast during Muharram). My analysis below is primarily focused on a Sunni interpretation. Kabir Tambar, "The Aesthetics of Public Visibility: Alevi Semah and the Paradoxes of Pluralism in Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 3 (2010); "Historical Critique and Political Voice after the Ottoman Empire," *History of the Present* 3, no. 2 (2013); Jeremy F. Walton, "Confessional Pluralism and the Civil Society Effect: Liberal Mediations of Islam and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey," *American Ethnologist* 40, no. 1 (2013).

cityscape. Below, I focus on three key mediums whose transformations make tangible the observance of Ramadan in contemporary Istanbul: bodies, homes, and public squares.

**Bodies**

If the defining feature of Ramadan is the daily fast, that fast is made most tangible and intimate through the bodies of those who fast. The fast begins with an individual declaration of *niyet* (intent). At the bare minimum, *niyet* may be expressed mentally, but it is better to say it out loud.\footnote{\textit{“Oruca kalben niyet etmek yani ertesi günü oruçlu geçireceği niyet ve bilincine sahip olmak yeterlidir. Niyeti dil ile ifade etmek ise mendup görülümüştür.” “Oruca Niyet Ne Zaman Ve Nasıl Yapılır?,” Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu Başkanlığı [Supreme Council for Religious Affairs], https://fetva.diyanet.gov.tr/Cevap-Ara/37179/oruca-niyet-ne-zaman-ve-nasil-yapilir-. One of my favorite moments during fieldwork was realizing that individuals observing the fasting will usually say, “Niyetliyim [I have intention]” instead of saying “Oruç tutuyorum [I’m keeping the fast].” It is a reminder of the proper aim of the fast: The intention of fasting for God (Allah rızası için). Also raises the issue of tangible displays of faith – saying niyet out loud is better than silence.} The fast begins at *imsak* – the predawn moment at which the sky is first judged to lighten on the horizon – and ends at the evening call to prayer (*aksam namazı*) that takes place at sunset.\footnote{Because Ramadan fell during the months of July and August in 2013, the fast was roughly 17 hours in length.} Between sunrise and sundown, individuals are enjoined to abstain from food, drink, and any other activity (cursing, sex) that might pollute a state of ritual purity.

Though the fast is an inescapably embodied experience, that experience is always in relation to one’s surroundings. For example, people who fast will live their daily life in relation to the timing of the fast’s beginning and ending. Even though that timing is marked through the call to prayer, the illumination of lights hung from minarets around the city, and announcements on television broadcasts and internet sites, one can sometimes overhear an urgently voiced question from someone fasting to passers-by: *Ezan geldi mi?* Has the call to prayer – marking the
end of the fast – come? While these temporal signposts are not unique to the month of Ramadan, they take on an added resonance during the month. In addition to the fast, individuals also observe Ramadan in other ways. These including performing teravih namazı, a supererogatory prayer that follows the night prayer (yatsı namazı), and reading all of the Qur’an in 30 sections (ciüz) over the month.

Yet what makes fasting different from other forms of religious observance is the fact that its outward signs are paradoxically less obvious than other forms of religious observance such as prayer or the wearing of religiously marked clothing. Amid the shifting rhythms of everyday urban life, it is not always obvious who is fasting and who is not. In some cases, those who fast sometimes try to mask their observance, perhaps because they work in an environment coded as secular. Conversely, individuals who don’t fast during Ramadan sometimes feel excluded in professional contexts where the owners or managers are fasting. The fasting body is always in relation to a shifting set of social, cultural, and political contexts.

Particularly for those fasting, Ramadan means a shift in people’s daily routines as they move through the city. Work schedules are sometimes affected, as people grapple with hunger-induced weariness. Those fasting frequently time their movements through the city to ensure they will be in a place to break their fast at iftar. Following the breaking of the fast, more people venture out into the city. This is particularly true on weekends, when large crowds gravitate to districts known as ‘traditional’ centers of Ramadan, including Sultanahmet, Eminönü, Beyazit, and Eyüp.

Homes

While Ramadan has increasingly become an opportunity for many families to tour the city as a group, the home remains a key site for the observance of Ramadan. This is both because
the family remains the first context in which many people learn about Islam and because the home is the primary place where the two meals that coincide with the beginning and end of the fast are eaten. *Sahur* is eaten immediately before *imsak* (the dawn prayer), and usually consists of a small assortment of cheese, fruit, and eggs that can be eaten quickly before one prays and returns to bed. It is usually eaten as a family. *İftar*, on the other hand, is more social, often bringing together family and friends. The meal can be more elaborate and labor intensive, involving an assortment of vegetable and meat dishes. Women generally prepare both meals, a reminder that the spheres of activity that emerge during Ramadan continue to be highly gendered. Domestic routines also form a key part of advertising during Ramadan, such as when idealized images of family iftars circulate through television commercials for real estate and soft drinks. Iftar arrangements vary widely by age and social class. University students living far away from their families, for example, might gather together in single-sex groups to prepare iftar meals. Wealthy pious businessmen might meet in a ritzy hotel in one of Istanbul’s posh districts.

Yet the space of the home is becoming increasingly porous. At sahur and iftar, television shows broadcast live programs hosted in venues like Eyüp, Süleymaniye, and Sultanahmet. The outside landscape of the Istanbul thus enters into the domestic space of households across Turkey. At the same time, and as I explain in greater detail below, some families have also moved their Ramadan meals outside, turning some parks and public squares into picnic grounds for iftar and sahur. Finally, Ramadan-themed meals have turned into a lucrative business for many restaurants that seek to cater to affluent religiously observant Muslim consumers, both domestic and international.

The expanded visibility of these meals has generated a number of tensions. First, ‘secular’ individuals sometimes object to the spread of ‘religious’ lifestyles into ‘their’ spaces.
More generally, and as I explain at greater length below, the visibility of iftars today is critiqued by those who describe an earlier ‘simpler’ form of Ramadan in which it was primarily lived and observed in the home. The financial cost of elaborate public iftars has also generated strong critiques, as people point out that the socioeconomic stratification is counter to the message of equality before God found in the Qur’an. The increasingly public nature of eating during Ramadan continues to provoke complicated debates about class, gender, and the norms of religious observance.

**Public squares and boulevards**

Even if one were totally indifferent to the Muslim calendar in one’s private and domestic life, it is impossible to miss the transformations of buildings and public spaces across Istanbul that signal the arrival of Ramadan. The key site of transformation is the mosque. Although mosques are always important as sites of prayer and material expressions of faith, they become more so during Ramadan. Mosques are where the ezan is delivered (thus marking the breaking of the fast). Communal prayers (both the Friday congregational prayer and the supererogatory **teravih namazı**) are conducted in the mosque. Lights hung from the minaret signal the beginning of the daily fast. Most visibly, strands of light known as **mahya** are hung from all mosques with at least two minarets. These strands of light are arranged to spell out messages visible to the city emphasizing the ‘spirit’ of the month, such as “Welcome the Month of Ramadan! (**Hoş geldin ey şehr-i Ramazan**),” “Believers are Brothers (**Müminler Kardeşir**),” and “Fast and Find Health (**Oruç tut sıhhat bul**).” Mosques thus function as key mediums that make Ramadan tangible.
Alongside with transformations in the many mosques of Istanbul, a variety of temporary structures emerge across the public spaces of the city. These structures include open-air tents and tables for the hosting of free public iftar dinners, small kiosks that house cafes, temporary teahouses, and souvenir shops, books fairs, and large stages that welcome a variety of performances and lectures. In many cases, local municipalities construct these structures, but political parties and civil society organizations often organize other smaller venues. The size and decoration of these temporary structures closely mirror the financial and administrative resources available. As I explain in greater detail below, municipal Ramadan celebrations function as one key medium through which municipalities display their ‘achievements.’

People’s public routines are also transformed during Ramadan. In some instances, this is intentional, as people seek out particular districts of Istanbul such as Eyüp to partake of Ramadan
festivities. Closer to home, people might make a habit of visiting their local mosques more frequently for supererogatory prayers. The drummers who wander the streets during Ramadan are another example of the sorts of spatial transformations that mark this month. However, Ramadan can also affect people’s routines in a negative sense, limiting their possibilities of action. This is particularly true for those who identify as non-observant, Alevi, or non-Muslim, who complain about the spectacular and exaggerated celebrations that have come to mark some Ramadan performances. At stake in these complaints are competing understandings of the terms upon which people should be required to share the sensory experience of the city.

“Bir Başka Güzel”: Eyüp as a Place of Distinction

The arrival of Ramadan marks an intensification of religious observance throughout Turkey – indeed, for Muslims all over the world. But the arrival of Ramadan also reconfigures the geography of observance, in which specific Muslim pilgrimage sites become even more important. This is especially true in Eyüp. Even though the central mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan and the district of Eyüp in general are destinations for pilgrimage and tourism throughout the year, the month of Ramadan is exceptional, a period in which the normal crowds double and triple in size. Those crowds reach they maximum on the Night of Power (Tr., Kadir Gecesi, Ar. Laila al-Qadr), the night upon which the Qur’an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. On that night, people crowd mosques large and small, motivated by the belief that their prayers are more effective on that night, a belief derived from a verse in the Qur’an that describes the night – and thus prayers made on it – as “better than a thousand months.” However, it is not

209 In Yufus Ali’s translation, the Surah al-Qadr (97) reads in full: “We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power/And what will explain to thee what the night of power is?/ The Night of Power is better than a thousand months./ Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:/ Peace!...This until the rise of morn!”
simply that Eyüp’s significance as a site of Muslim pilgrimage draws these crowds. There are three interrelated factors that help explain why Eyüp has become such a destination during the month of Ramadan.

The first has to do with the emergence of religious oriented consumers over the past two decades. Individuals can now craft self-conscious Muslim lifestyles by means of a wide variety of consumer products and experiences, ranging from televisions programs to books to fashion accessories to real estate to household décor. Likewise, the consumption of particular sites within Istanbul becomes for the formation of social and cultural identities. In contemporary Istanbul, consumer goods and experiences associated with Islam have become a big business. As both residents and visitors explained to me, Eyüp had become more popular in the 1990s, in part thanks to the general redevelopment of the area (covered in Chapter 2) and in part because of television documentaries that had broadcast Eyüp’s importance to a broader media public.

The second factor involves the nature of Ramadan celebrations in Eyüp. In contrast to other Muslim shrine complexes in Istanbul, Eyüp’s celebrations are large, easily accessible, and well known. While Ramadan in Istanbul has always been marked by increased socialization, as people (usually men) visit friends and relatives to share iftar (the evening meal that breaks the


212 I did not find the specific documentary, but I suspect that it was shown on the private television channel TGRT. YouTube searches for “Eyüp Sultan Belgeseli” (Eyüp Sultan Documentary) and “Eyüp Belgeseli” (Eyüp Documentary) turn up several videos that seem to have been produced in the 1990s and are probably the documentaries referenced by my interlocutors.
Ramadan activity zones (*etkinlik alanları*) today function as key sites for the production and consumption of culture that is freely available and draws upon both religious and historical motifs. Sponsored by civil society organizations and local municipalities, the range of Ramadan activities include iftar meals, often located in prominent and highly visible venues; the organization of cultural activities, including music, dance, lectures, and book fairs; specifically ‘religious’ performances, including the recitation of the Qur’an, lectures by well-known teachers and religious authorities, and the performance of *ilahi* (religious hymns). These events are generally located in temporary structures decorated with traditional visual and architectural motifs, including wooden balconies, calligraphy, and tulips. Because these events are almost always free, working and lower middle class and religiously observant individuals are able to participate in much greater numbers than one might find at a classical music concert or an art museum, sites from which they might be excluded by virtue of admission fees or social norms. In other words, Ramadan activity zones mark a broadly accessible form of culture that secondarily help to advertise the accomplishments of local municipalities. In addition to the complexes found in Eyüp (in the central square and at Feshane), other centers of celebration include Beyazit (a book fair), Sultanahmet (a performance stage and a traditional streetscape), Eminönü (a municipal iftar), Taksim (a municipal iftar), and Üsküdar (a municipal iftar and performance stage).
The third factor is economic. As Ramadan events have become more popular in Istanbul, the month has become an important economic opportunity for restaurants, hotels, and a host of other ancillary actors. Nearly all restaurants in the major Ramadan zones of the city (Sultanahmet, Eyüp, Üsküdar, Eminönü, and Beyazit) advertise some form of a fixed price “Ramadan menu.” These restaurants and their menus can vary widely in price, ranging from 10 TL/person (about $4) to upwards of 40 TL/person (about $16). In informal conversations with residents of Eyüp during Ramadan in 2013, they suggested that restaurant owners there earn as much during Ramadan as they do during the rest of the year combined, making the month a key money-making opportunity for a variety of business owners. Yet where the Ramadan activity zones are ostensibly open to all, the varying prices of Ramadan menus end up producing a socioeconomically stratified landscape.
The Political Geographies of Ramadan

There are two overlapping political geographies that shape life in Istanbul: the complicated and unstable politics of communities and everyday encounters, and the geographies shaped by control of Istanbul’s 39 district municipalities (ilçe belediyeleri). Here, I focus only on the latter. Control at the district municipality level is key for obtaining permits and funding for Ramadan activities. In general, nearly all of the public Ramadan activities that take place in Istanbul today are found in municipalities controlled by the Justice and Development Party. Celebrating the ostensibly traditional culture of Ramadan and drawing upon a neo-Ottoman aesthetic, these complexes link an experience of the imagined past with the religious program of Ramadan. While most of these buildings are not explicitly religious in nature (as a purpose-built mosque might be), the public visibility of these buildings also marks them as one intervention in an ongoing debate about the public performance of religious and secular lifestyles. These Ramadan events are consistent with the Justice and Development Party’s broader commitment to encouraging religiously observant lifestyles, but they also act as important opportunities to advertise municipal success. The tents and stages that host Ramadan activities will almost invariably be emblazoned with the name of the municipality and the name of the current mayor. Mayors will also be occasional guests on television shows broadcast live


from their municipalities, making the month an opportunity to advertise themselves and their municipality to a national audience.

Since 1994, Eyüp has been controlled by a sequence of religiously oriented parties: The Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, 1994-97); the Virture Party (Fazilet Partisi, 1997-2002); and the Justice and Development Party (2002-present). Beginning in the late 1990s, Ramadan festivities became a prominent part of the Eyüp Municipality’s efforts. It is important to note that even though local municipalities are the key actor in producing Ramadan events, they are far from the only ones. Planning a Ramadan requires significant negotiation and coordination between the municipality and the various television programs and vendors who need to be recruited.

Figure 23: Stage built by the Eyüp Municipality to host Ramadan programming. Municipality logos are displayed prominently. Timur Hammond, 2013.

The Ramadan festivities of 2013 demonstrated that coordination, most tangibly in the form of the structures that filled the central square in front of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan. The
largest structure was a large stage for performances and lectures that covered the square’s fountain and looked out on rows of portable plastic chairs. Two large video monitors that could broadcast live television feeds flanked the stage, along with prominent signage advertising the Eyüp Municipality and its Ramadan motto: “In Eyüp, Ramadan is a Different Kind of Beauty (Eyüp’te Ramazan bir başka güzel)”. Nearby, two raised platforms hosted live television programs: a sahur program shown on the state television channel TRT, and an iftar program on Samanyolu, a television station associated with the Fethullah Gülen movement. Those programs frequently referenced their proximity to the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, both by using the mosque as a visual backdrop for the camera and by referencing their own proximity to the mosque’s ‘spiritual’ (manevi) presence. In the portion of the square normally used as an auxiliary prayer space, the municipality erected the revaks (arcades) that provoked such confusion on their initial appearance. A second, smaller structure was erected at the far edge of the square.
Why did the Eyüp Municipality go to such lengths to reshape the square in 2013? The municipality’s activities in 2013 were guided by two linked goals: First, to demonstrate the success of the then-current municipal administration by means of tangible projects; and second, to position itself as responding to the requests of its residents. At the same time, the Eyüp Municipality’s transformation of the central square took on an added resonance because of the recently ended protests in Gezi Park and Taksim Square. My conversation with Kenan Bey, an assistant official in the Eyüp Municipality, made this clear.

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215 By bus, Taksim Square and Gezi Park were roughly 15 minutes away. Even though the protests had been relatively spatially proximate, there had been very little direct response to the protests in Eyüp. On
When I asked Kenan Bey about why the municipality had gone to such lengths this year after its comparatively limited efforts in 2012, he spoke first about the political value of the Ramadan festivities. As he explained, the structures were “an investment (yatırım) towards the [municipal] election [in 2014].” Political success at the municipal level in Istanbul is frequently predicated upon the visibility of municipal activity. The hope was that popular Ramadan events would translate into increased support for the Justice and Development Party in the municipal elections that would take place in March 2014.\(^{216}\)

![Figure 25: Banner hung from one of the major restaurants beside Eyüp's central square thanking Mayor Ismail Kavuncu for his efforts, August 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013.](image)

The second reason Kenan Bey provided was public demand. A number of people, he said, had complained to the municipality about the previous year’s Ramadan. Although he did not elaborate on the events of 2012, we had both observed how the square was used. Because the protests, see for example Anthony Alessandrini, Nazan Üstündağ, and Emrah Yildiz, eds., "Resistance Everywhere": The Gezi Protests and Dissident Visions of Turkey (Washington D.C.: Tadween Publishing, 2014); Mehmet Barış Kuymulu, “Reclaiming the Right to the City: Reflections on the Urban Uprisings in Turkey,” *City* 17, no. 3 (2013).

\(^{216}\) The Justice and Development Party did win the March 2014 election, although a different man was nominated to run for mayor. Ismail Kavuncu was replaced by Remzi Aydın.
municipality had not organized formal events in the square itself, many families soon began to organize their own iftar meals in the open space. Often arriving by car, families would spread mats on the marble and then beginning preparing an array of food for dinner. In some cases, they would even bring small propane canisters to warm up their food before the evening call to prayer.

Figure 26: Eyüp's central square being used for families to picnic during Ramadan in 2012. Timur Hammond, 2012.

The square’s use as a picnic area prompted three kinds of critiques. The first was functional: Many of the families were slow to move after finishing their iftar, resulting in problems when municipal employees tried to prepare square for the well-attended evening prayers. Moreover, families were not always diligent about collecting their own trash, expecting that municipal employees would clean up after them. The second critique was sensory: Both residents in Eyüp (already inconvenienced by heavy traffic) and visitors (who were paying for
their iftar in restaurants that surrounded the square) complained about the sight of families sitting on the ground and about the smell of their food being prepared. The final critique was rarely explicitly articulated but ran through many of my casual conservations with residents and visitors: Those who ate in the square were critiqued as being unable to follow the rules of the city. Given that many of those who ate in the square might not have been able to frequent the restaurants that surrounded the square, this critique of inappropriate behavior involved issues of class and urban norms.

Kenan Bey’s explanation in 2013 was much more circumspect. A number of people, he said simply, had complained to the municipality about the square. The efforts of 2013 were an effort to address those complaints. During summer months, the municipality typically erects a number of portable awnings to shade the square during crowded prayers. This year, he continued, the municipality expanded its regular practice of using portable awnings to shade the square during crowded and prayers and decided to make the awnings permanent for the entire month of Ramadan:

We thought, ‘Why not do something a little different, let’s shade the square (meydan) a little bit,’ because there’s also the historical fabric of the mosque, the arcades (revak) were set up to complement that, to make everything look a little nicer. And most people are happy — I mean, there are a handful who complain, a couple who have written letters here or there, but I’d say that probably 90% of the reaction has been positive. And like I was telling you last week, this is a democracy, if 90% of the people like what you’re doing, it means that you probably made the right decision, right?

In highlighting the percentage of people who approved of the changes, Kenan Bey was also referencing a conversation we had shared the previous week about the protests in Gezi Park that had recently been shut down by police intervention. Kenan Bey was a vociferous critic of the protests. Despite the visibility of the protests, he argued that they never represented the will of a majority. In his view, what democratic right did a minority of people have to take over the
square? That is why he stressed the 90% approval rate of the municipality’s efforts. Even if there were critics, he suggested, they were small in number. Left unexplored in our conversation was the precise relationship between public demand and political community. What role did the municipality play in producing a public? By framing the square only as a question of whether or not people liked the square, he sidestepped a question of the process that produced this in the beginning, the municipality’s skill at creating forms of public demand.

The municipality’s architectural model for the fiberglass arcades was also striking: The arcades were modeled on the Ottoman-era arcades that surrounded the Kâbe in Mecca. Although it never emerged as a topic of conversation during my field interviews, the original arcades were then mired in controversy in Saudi Arabia. As part of Mecca’s ongoing redevelopment, the 16th century Ottoman arcades that surrounded the courtyard of the Kâbe were designated for removal. Many in Turkey protested, arguing that the arcades were the last traces of Ottoman control of Mecca.217 In other unspoken irony, the decision to link Mecca with Eyüp Sultan also echoed a 1957 pledge from then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes to turn Istanbul into a second Mecca and Eyüp Sultan into a second Kâbe.218 These references remained in the background. By and large, the Ramadan complex was a popular one, attracting residents of the surrounding districts. Its accessibility to the public was an important goal of the municipality, even as the municipality tried to shape what that public could be.

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218 But Prime Minister Menderes is deposed in a May 1960 coup and executed for threatening the security of the state. Zürcher, Turkey: A Modern History, 221-40. This was never part of my conversations about the Ramadan complex in 2013.
Responses

As with nearly any municipal project, the Eyüp Municipality’s complex provoked a wide range of response. Below, I juxtapose multiple responses to the square. In some cases, these responses correspond to differing political commitments, but my interlocutors’ evaluations were never phrased in terms of support for or opposition to the AKP-identified local municipality. Even though the Ramadan complex was prominently marked as belonging to the Eyüp Municipality, different residents’ reactions to the complex often ranged far beyond the municipality alone. My narrative below traces how this complex both materially and symbolically organized the square; how ibadet (worship) emerged as a key contested term; and how the external signs of piety had come at the expense of inner sincerity. What were the stakes of marking Ramadan in the form of fiberglass arcades that were designed to look like those that surrounded the Kabe in Mecca? What are the tensions produced by making observance tangible, a project that takes on particular salience during the month of Ramadan?* The square was a place in which the fault line between worship for God and fallible human desires like profit and enjoyment became visible.

A Space of Comfort in the City

Despite my initial confusion about the appearance of the Ramadan complex in 2013, I came to appreciate the benefits that it provided. I would remove my shoes at the edge of the carpets and sit with my back against one of the fiberglass pillars. If there was a lecture, I would half listen as I closed my eyes and rested in the shade. I came to realize that the municipality’s complex in the square was above all a comfortable space, cooled by misters mounted to the arches, with cushions and low desks for reading the Qur’an. Its audience during the middle of the

219 Starrett, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo,"
day skewed older, likely retired men and women. Mothers would shepherd their children to listen to the lectures and performances. One local resident described the whole scene as a mixed success. “For the people of Eyüp,” he shrugged, “it’s ok, but for those who come from outside, it’s a wonderful ambiance (güzel bir ambiyans).” In this, he seemed to echo the municipal official’s characterization of the whole project, as one of shading the square and making people comfortable and satisfied.

Figure 27: A comfortable afternoon in the Ramadan complex, July 2013. Timur Hammond, 2013.

On a different occasion, I spoke with one mother about the municipal events in the square. She lived near the center of Eyüp, and her children were frequent participants in the free English classes that I taught, classes that tended to attract working class families. She liked the events because they provided an outlet during the day for the children’s energy, particularly as she herself was fasting. By carpeting the square, installing misters and an awning that shaded the
square, and providing a range of free lectures during the day, the Eyüp Municipality had turned the public space of the square into a much more intimate – and almost domestic – environment.

**Visibility and Openness**

A second way that people praised the Ramadan activities was by calling attention to the openness of the square. A conversation with another employee of the Eyüp Municipality helps to make that clear. I was passing through the square one afternoon when I saw Selim helping to coordinate the activities sponsored by the municipality. On stage, a group of men were performing *ilahis* (religious hymns), and there were a handful of people scattered in the plastic seats that had been set up to face the stage.

We had interviewed each other a few days previous while sitting in the Eyüp Municipality, each of us asking the other about our respective experiences in and observations about Eyüp. Selim referenced that conversation as he gestured out at the crowd, “See, this is what I was talking about [the other day in our interview], there are all sorts of people here, women with headscarves, without scarves, in short skirts, in pants, there are people all shapes, sorts, and sizes. You don’t find this in Fatih, for example.”

“Why?” I ask, “Is it more conservative/strict (*tutucu*) there?”

“Yes, exactly,” he replied, “It’s not as diverse (*karışık*) as this.”

Selim was referencing a widely shared social geography of Istanbul, one in which the city was divided into zones depending on their religious character. Within that geography, districts like Taksim, Kadıköy, Nişantaşı, and Beşiktaş are all described as more secular, places in which people’s religious obligations were not always apparent. 220 In contrast, Eyüp and Fatih – a district

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220 Turam, "The Primacy of Space in Politics."; Gökarıksel, "The Intimate Politics of Secularism and the Headscarf: The Mall, the Neighborhood, and the Public Square in Istanbul."
in the center of old Istanbul that surrounds the mosque of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror – are almost invariably described as more religious.

Tellingly, he singled out women’s dress as a key marker of Eyüp’s diversity, noting how women did and did not wear headscarves, how some wore dresses and others wore pants. While it is possible for men to ‘pass’ as they move through different districts of the city, women’s dress marks both their bodies and becomes a convenient metric to evaluate how religiously conservative a given district might be. In ‘conservative’ districts, a majority of women wear a headscarf and long coat; those who do not will still wear long pants and blouses that cover their arms. Women who dress differently within those environments will often attract attention. The reverse holds true for ‘liberal’ districts: Women who wear headscarves and long coats will attract negative attention as they move through streets on which most women wear t-shirts, skirts, or shorts. In Selim’s eyes, Eyüp was special because both ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ forms of dress coexisted within its central square. The external diversity of dress became a marker of the district’s underlying social diversity.

Yet Selim’s comparison was not between ‘secular’ districts and ‘religious’ ones but between different kinds of religious districts. In his account, Eyüp’s uniqueness stemmed from its capacity to accept people of all types. Tellingly, he singled out women’s dress as a key marker of diversity, insofar as that has been and continues to be one of the primary markers of

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221 Anna Secor, "The Veil and Urban Space in Istanbul: Women’s Dress, Mobility, and Islamic Knowledge," ibid. 1, no. 9 (2002); Banu Gökarıksel and Anna Secor, "Islamic-Ness in the Life of a Commodity: Veiling-Fashion in Turkey," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 35, no. 3 (2010); "'Even I Was Tempted': The Moral Ambivalence and Ethical Practice of Veiling-Fashion in Turkey."; Gökarıksel, "The Intimate Politics of Secularism and the Headscarf: The Mall, the Neighborhood, and the Public Square in Istanbul."

222 Turam, "The Primacy of Space in Politics."
religious affiliation in Istanbul. Where it is possible for men to ‘pass’ as they move through
different districts of the city, women’s dress marks both them and the districts through which
they move.223

As Selim looked out on the audience, he saw a diverse crowd that could not exist
anywhere else in the city. I looked out on the audience with him and asked, “Do you think people
are happy? Are they enjoying all of these performances?”

“Oh yes,” he says, “Everyone is really happy with this. There’re ney performances,
Qur’an recitation, and sema.224 It’s important that we organize these sorts of things.”

The municipality’s efforts were oriented towards producing new publics. They tried to do
so by constraining the uses of the square (prohibiting people from eating iftar there), by
sponsoring lectures and performances related to Islam (so that listeners might increase their
knowledge), and by transforming the materials of the square (making something that looked like
Mecca so that people might feel themselves transported). But as my conversation with the
municipal official Kenan Bey, the municipal employee suggested, the municipality also framed
its work as responding to the demands of the people (halk). As he had rhetorically asked me, “If
90% of the people like what you’re doing, it means that you probably made the right decision,
right?”

223 Secor, "The Veil and Urban Space in Istanbul: Women’s Dress, Mobility, and Islamic Knowledge."
224 Berna Turam, Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement (Stanford: Stanford University
Press, 2007); "The Primacy of Space in Politics." While both men’s clothing and their facial hair can be
used to mark different political and religious affiliations, the case of women is more extreme.

The ney is a traditional wind instrument from Turkey. In large part because of its association with the
Ottoman past and Islam, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in the instrument over the past two
decades. See Banu Şenay’s work for references on this. Recitation (tilavet) of the Qur’an can be a public
performance, with one person reciting the Qur’an to an audience, even though many in the audience may
not know the actual Arabic of the verse in question. Sema is the ritual practice of whirling associated with
the Mevlevi Sufi order, one that has also been classified as part of Turkey’s intangible cultural heritage.
But it’s also important to recognize that multiple publics were being produced. The municipality wanted a well-mannered public that listened to their events; they did not want an unruly public that ate iftar in the square. But there were also class dimensions to this: The center of Eyüp was filled with several restaurants that offered prix fixe iftar meals that were well beyond the means of the people who ate in the square. And yet both of these groups were part of a Muslim public. Many of the municipality’s publications made use of the same slogan: “Ramadan in Eyüp is something different. [Eyüp’te Ramazan bir başkadır.]” That slogan played on Eyüp’s perceived difference — its authenticity, its otherworldliness — from the rest of the city. But making Ramadan in Eyüp “something else” generated a range of responses that I turn to now. At stake in these responses were deep anxieties about the relationship between exterior signs and interior truths.

Organized and Appropriate: Materializing Rules of Place

More than simply transforming the square into a comfortable space, the municipality’s structures also brought a new level of organization and order to the square. This organization and order materialized a set of implicit rules of place, especially the rule that people should not celebrate their iftar as a picnic in the square. Two different conversations help show how the material form made explicit what – in their view – should have been implicit rules of place.

One afternoon in July 2013 – in the midst of Ramadan – I stopped in to visit with Salih Bey, a shopkeeper on a small street near the central square. Although he prayer regularly and was fasting in observance of Ramadan, he generally tended to avoid the central mosque, explaining that space there should be reserved for those who visited from a greater distance than he. I asked him how he found the activities in the square, and he paused a moment before answering. “It’s a good thing,” he said, “because last year it was disorganized (düzensiz), this
year there’s a lot more organization (daha düzenli) to it, they’ve done a much better job. This is what people should see when they come to visit Eyüp.” Where the empty square of 2012 produced a “disorganized” landscape, the structures of 2013 materialized a set of rules of place: the square was not a place to eat one’s meal, it was a place for prayer and religious reflection.

Salih Bey’s positive comments about the organization of the square were echoed in many of my other conversations with residents during Ramadan. Another afternoon, I crossed paths with Ziya, a young man with whom I’d shared several discussions about Islam and appropriate public behavior. Knowing that he passed through the square frequently, I asked him about the square’s changed appearance during Ramadan. He focused immediately on how the structures of 2013 prevented the square’s use as a picnic area. “It’s good,” he said, “better than last year, last year people came and spread out their meals (sofra), that wasn’t appropriate, that’s something that shouldn’t happen (uygun değil, olmaması gereken bir şey).”

In their estimation – shared by many people who passed through Eyüp’s square during Ramadan – the complex of structures that appeared during Ramadan in 2013 helped to organize the square. In contrast to the disorder of 2012, most visible in the practice of picnicking in the square for iftar, the arcades helped materialize a set of rules and norms that designated the square as a place for religious activity. As Salih Bey noted approvingly in another conversation, “The square was opened to worship (ibadete açılmış).”

A Place for Worship? Profit, Enjoyment, and Carnival

Yet the square’s position between the mosque proper and the row of restaurants and shops that faced it posed two related problems. The first was a material one: Large as the square was, it was not enough on a handful of occasions, such as when huge crowds visited on the Night of Power (Kadir Gecesi). The second issue was the relationship between the proper activity of
the mosque (*ibadet*, worship) and the business activities of the district that surrounded the mosque. In Salih Bey’s view, the square had been opened for *ibadet* in an appropriate way during Ramadan.

A conversation with Kadir Bey offered a different perspective. Like Salih Bey, Kadir Bey was a longtime resident of Eyüp. He also prayed regularly and was fasting for Ramadan. Yet when we talked about the uses of the square, he was dismissive of the changes. “The square isn’t being used for worship (*ibadet*),” he said, “It’s become an open restaurant, not the sort of thing you should find in a house of worship (*ibadethane*).”

I agreed with him and referenced one of the phrases that I had heard on multiple occasions during the month. “Ramadan’s not a month of enjoyment,” I said, “it’s a month of worship (*Eğlence ayi değil, ibadet ayıdır*).” Kadir Bey nodded in agreement and added a concluding point: “Wherever there’s profit (*menfaat olduğu yerde*), Allah’s approval is absent. (*Allah’ın rızası olmaz*).”

At stake in Kadir Bey’s critique of the square is the relationship between success in this world and true success in the afterlife. *Ibadet* is act that reminds Muslims of their smallness before God. As a consequence, when people seek profit (*menfaat*) in this world, they neglect what should be the true goal of ‘Allah’s approval’ (*Allah’ın rızasi*). Insofar as the square became a place of profit, that profit seeking replaced the practice of worship. The municipality occupies a complicated position within this debate. On the one hand – and as Salih Bey and Ziya had noted approvingly – the municipality had brought a needed level of organization to the square in 2013. On the other hand, they were also invested – literally and symbolically – in attracting business to Eyüp during Ramadan.
On another night during Ramadan in 2013, I was at the bookstore where my friend Şenol worked. It was a weekend night, and Eyüp was loud with the voices of young touts advertising their cafes and restaurants, families calling to each other across the crowd, friends laughing. Carts selling cotton candy, boiled corn, popcorn, and tea were crowded alongside small stalls selling books, bracelets, herbal remedies, and religious paraphernalia. We had shared iftar together and now stood on the bookstore steps together, drinking our first tea of the day and watching the crowd.

Şenol grimaced. “Eyüp has become a carnival (panayır olmuş).” In his view, Ramadan—and especially Ramadan as it was observed in Eyüp—had become overly commercialized, focused on spectacle and enjoyment. I agreed with him, but said that the commercialization of Ramadan wasn’t so different than what happened in the United States during Christmas. “The only difference,” he said, “is that it’s just a day for you, it’s an entire month here.” The tension between unadorned worship and the Ramadan spectacle involved both visitors’ choices about consumption and belief and the role of the municipality in organizing these Ramadan activities.

**External Signs of Belief**

I close with a series of conversations that took place one day towards the end of Ramadan. My interlocutors were Sema Hanım, Filiz Hanım, and Nedim Bey, three long-time residents of Eyüp. Filiz Hanım had been born and raised in the district. Her grandfather had worked in one of the factories built during the 19th century, and our conversations were frequently inflected by her deep sense of Eyüp’s lived history. While not born in the district, Sema Hanım was also a long-time resident, able to remember Eyüp’s past as a moderately prosperous working-class district, its deindustrialization and impoverishment, and its emergence over the past two decades as a destination for religiously motivated tourists arriving from
outside. Though Nedim Bey didn’t live in his childhood home anymore, he still visited the
district frequently, and it was in that context that we shared the series of conversations that
follow.

In addition to nurturing long-term connections to Eyüp, all three would describe
themselves as strong supporters of Atatürk and the secularizing projects that were associated
with him. Yet their support of Atatürk did not mean that they were opposed to religion. Both
Filiz Hanım and Sema Hanım were fasting, and Sema Hanım had also visited Mecca for umre
(the term for visiting Mecca and Medina outside of the official period of the hajj). The key
distinction was not whether or not one was religious or secular but about the precise form that
being Muslim takes, both in terms of individual practice (the conversation with Sema Hanım
below) and in terms of material transformation (the comments of Nedim Bey below). I now turn
to these conversations.

One afternoon as I was sitting in the meydan taking advantage of the misters that the
municipality had installed under the revak, I saw Sema Hanım as she was exiting the mosque.
Now retired, she was a well-known resident of the district, exchanging greetings with many of
the shopkeepers as we walked back to her apartment.

She told me a story of a recent time that she had gone to pray in the mosque. While she
was praying in the mosque, a woman approached her and told her that her arms were not covered
enough and that as a consequence, her prayers would not be accepted. Sema Hanım pointed to
the joint of her hand and her wrist to show me how far her sleeves had extended. She said that
the other woman insisted and gave her two half sleeves that fully cover the backs of her palms.
“Our people are getting too fundamentalist (halkımız yobazlaşılıyor),” she complained. She
described her own practice of worship as something that felt true to her, “I try to worship in a way that comes from me (içimden geldiğì gibi ibadet etmeye çalıstıyorum).”

For women, proper performance of prayer requires wearing clothing that covers the arms up to the wrist.225 The woman who stopped Sema Hanım from praying was insisting that her arms be even more covered, including the backs of the palms. This insistence was what led Sema Hanım to complain about people becoming too fundamentalist. She contrasted her way of praying as something that came from inside of her. Even if Sema Hanım’s act of prayer didn’t reproduce all of the external markers of the other woman, she described her practice of worship as something that came from inside her and was thus more true to who she was. I found a parallel between Sema Hanım’s description of her own religious practice and her critique of the outward spectacle of the square during Ramadan.

Sema Hanım transitioned to a discussion of how people today had ceased to treat each other with the respect that they once did. “We’ve become arrogant (halkımız küstahlaştı).” When I asked her why, she said she didn’t know, but shared a story about the other day when she had seen a group of people throwing their trash on the ground. When I scolded them, she said, they looked at me like I was crazy. Implicit in her story is a sense of the rules of place that once informed people’s behavior and now no longer function the same way. Even though the signs of outward piety have become more obvious, implicit social codes have eroded.

Several other people, including Filiz Hanım and Nedim Bey, joined us for iftar that night. Both of them were also long time residents of Eyüp, and they were also critical of the spectacle of Eyüp. Filiz Hanım added, “Eyüp’s mystical atmosphere has been ruined (ulvi atmosferi

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225 If men are wearing a long-sleeved shirt, they will usually roll the sleeves down during prayer. However, men are able to pray in short-sleeved shirts, although this is again a debated topic.
They both agreed that the problem of all the municipal events was that they had drawn so many people to the district that the act of contemplation – ostensibly at the center of one’s individual responsibilities during Ramadan – had become impossible. Eyüp wasn’t this crowded 10 years ago, Sema Hanım added, it’s only in the past decade that it’s become like this.

Nedim Bey’s critique echoed theirs. We sat on the balcony in the darkness and looked out towards the dome of Eyüp Sultan.

You’re bringing a cheap imitation Kabe (çakma Kabe’yi getiriyorsunuz).…. If you’re going to do something, be honorable and respectable (şerefli ve namuslu ol) about it. If you’re going have recitation of the Qur’an, follow it with an explanation in clear Turkish so that everybody can understand. If nothing else, let those who come derive a little bit of illumination (hiç olmazsa gelenler feyiz alsınlar).

The arcades that stood at the center of Eyüp were modeled upon the arcades that surrounded the Kâbe in Mecca. Nedim Bey linked the “cheap imitation” municipality events with a recitation of the Qur’an that was unintelligible to most listeners. In critiquing the recitation of the Qur’an without an accompanying Turkish translation, Nedim Bey was not arguing against a form of Islam in public; rather, he was critiquing a recitation of the Qur’an that substituted for actually understanding it. By providing an explanation in Turkish, Nedim Bey imagined a situation in which visitors might at least be able to derive a benefit from their visit in the form of “illumination” (féyiz).

As he continued, his critiqued broadened out from the square itself to the district’s transformation as a whole. Because Eyüp had become such a destination for visitors during Ramadan, traffic and parking had become significant problems for local residents. “As it is now,” he continued, “visitors come to the neighborhood, then park in the first open space they

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226 On the contested history of the translation of the Qur’an into Turkish, see Wilson, "The First Translations of the Qur’an in Modern Turkey."
can find and then leave their car. People can’t get into and out of their houses, it’s a shame, an
embarrassment, there’s no value in their ziyaret (pilgrimage) because they’re infringing on
someone else’s rights (hakkını yiyorlar).”

Nedim Bey’s critique linked two key issues. He understood people’s religiously
motivated desires to visit Eyüp (the act of ziyaret), but he argued that whatever individual value
might accrue from that ostensibly religious act was canceled out by their disruption of the lives
of Eyüp’s residents. Phrased differently, Nedim Bey’s used the “cheap imitation Kabe” as an
entry into a broader discussion of social responsibility and collective good. The emphasis on
external shared forms – most visibly the arcades, but also the broader range of religious activities
– had resulted in a neglect of the shared social norms (“infringing on someone else’s rights”).
This echoed Sema Hanım’s complaint about how people had become arrogant.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the geographies of observance that emerged during Ramadan
in Eyüp in 2013. More than simply an abstract month marked out on the calendar, the month of
Ramadan is made tangible through multiple mediums: the transformed rhythms of people
participating in the daily fast; new domestic routines organized around the meals of iftar and
sahur; the changed sensory landscape of the city, including new smells, sounds, and images; and
most notably, through the construction of purpose-built structures that staged religiously oriented
public performances. The ethnographic objects at the center of this chapter – the Kâbe arcades
built by the Eyüp Municipality in 2013 and the debates surrounding their construction– marked

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227 Parking continues to be a huge problem. Developing new solutions for the increasing numbers of
people who drive in Eyüp continues to be a goal of the municipality.
one particularly clear example of how these geographies are produced through competing understandings of how belief should be lived and observed in the city.

Making Ramadan tangible is also an act of connection. It connects specific embodied acts with particular sites, a linking that involved normative judgments about how people should worship, interact with their surroundings, and comport themselves in public. Being able to make certain connections – such as visiting an expensive restaurant for iftar or sitting in a particular part of the square – is also shaped by inequalities of class and privilege. In other words, these connections and the geographies they produce are never shared equally even though the majority of people in Eyüp’s central square were fasting. Both the sites that assumed visibility during this month and the behavior that these sites authorized were and continue to be the product of unequal capacities to change and govern Eyüp’s material landscape, a situation in which the local Eyüp Municipality occupies a key position. But as I showed, even the municipality was only one of many actors who came together in this district during Ramadan.

There are three important points that we can take away from this chapter’s tightly focused analysis of the geographies of Ramadan in Eyüp: the necessity of analyzing not only the temporal but also the spatial reconfigurations that make Ramadan tangible; the importance of attending to the ongoing work of producing religious identities even in front of Istanbul’s oldest and most important Muslim shrine complex; and the possibility of enriching our understanding of visibility by analyzing how other embodied senses (hearing, smell, taste) mediate how individuals come to belong in the city.

For Muslims around the world, Ramadan is a month of heightened observance and reflection. Yet as Samuli Schielke has argued, this “time of exceptional morality” is better understood not as a model for the entire year but precisely as a month whose strict religious
obligations make possible a more flexible and situational approach to religious norms and ethics during the rest of the year. One might imagine that Ramadan produces an analogous geography in which an exceptionally sacred geography is contrasted with a more flexible and porous moral geography during the rest of the year. At least in Eyüp, however, that is not the case. Although Ramadan is different in Eyüp – both from the months that precede and follow it and from the rest of the city, that difference cannot be understood solely in terms of a sacred geography divided from the city and world around it. Instead, this chapter has shown how the difference of Ramadan – “Eyüp’te Ramazan bir başka güzel,” the municipality’s posters promised – that difference is in fact the product of forms of observance that actually connect Eyüp to the world around. Far from creating a sacred bubble in Istanbul, Ramadan’s geography is actually characterized by intensified connections between people who visit, the places they visit, and the sorts of social and religious behaviors deemed appropriate and normal. In that sense, the geographies of Ramadan in Eyüp seem to echo what Lara Deeb and Mona Harb have found in the cafes and leisure spaces of Beirut. Even though many of these cafes are located within sections of the city known for their social and religious conservatism, they find a geography characterized by flexibility, experimentation, and negotiation. Analyzing the mediums of connection that produce these geographies requires both careful ethnographic attention to the spatialities of urban life and a geographical conceptualization that moves beyond explanations of districts and neighborhoods to a more complex sense of linkage and mobility that produce a geography of observance.

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229 Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi’ite South Beirut*. See also Turam, "The Primacy of Space in Politics."
Ramadan’s geography of observance does not emerge out of a void. Rather, it is traced over Istanbul’s already existing geography of pilgrimage and belief, raising a second question: What does the building of the Ramadan arcades in Istanbul’s holiest shrine complex tell us about how individuals come to live in Istanbul in a self-consciously Muslim way? In his thoughtful ethnography of the unexpected ways that observant Muslims in Istanbul create new geographies of belief, Heiko Henkel argues that it Istanbul’s traditional markers of belief (its mosques, tombs, and other religious buildings) in the “felicitous spaces of the old city” are important “[not] as taken-for-granted horizon of the everyday but as places that are sought precisely because of their particular felicity.”230 Henkel rightly helps us see that pious individuals cultivate Muslims ways of life in ‘secular’ spaces, but his characterization of the “felicitous” districts like Eyüp misses both the ongoing interventions that help to maintain these districts and the contested experiences of these districts’ Islamicness.

In place of Henkel’s “felicitous spaces of the old city,” we might focus instead on the rules of place, the regimes and norms that shape meaning and action. The built environment is one key source of rules of place. In the case of Eyüp, the district’s mosques, cemeteries, tombs, and other religious buildings provide are an important medium through which rules of place are materialized and thus made durable. Crucially, however, the rules established by the built environment are neither fixed nor unchanging. Felicity, to borrow Henkel’s phrasing, is not fixed but an ongoing process. This is why the use of the urban landscape is so important. Because it can communicate identities and community values, the landscape is a central site of struggle and intervention.231 The municipality’s Ramadan complex was a deliberate intervention in Eyüp’s

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231 Duncan and Duncan, Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb, 8.
landscape, reminding us that even in the city’s oldest shrine complex, Eyüp’s mediums of belief – its built environment of mosques, tombs, graveyards, medreses – are the outcome of ongoing contested practices of transformation, interpretation, and experience.

Finally, this chapter opens up a broader discussion of the relationship between visibility and public space. There are two ways in which our understandings of visibility might be developed. The visibility – or the invisibility – of religious observance in public space has been a key way through which scholars have tried to understand Islamic movements in Turkey. As Nilufer Göle and Alev Çınar have shown us, for example, the political rise of Islamist parties during the 1990s was closely linked to a visible politics of public space. Being (or becoming) visible was a challenge to a hegemonic political system in Turkey that had been predicated upon the enforced invisibility of religious practice. As Kabir Tambar’s analysis of the changing participation of Alevi groups in the public sphere has shown, however, more visibility can in fact hinder – rather than enable – political participation. He asks, “How do the material and spatial contingencies of public performance enable or hinder political engagement? What are the aesthetic limits of political intelligibility?”


In this context, scholars primarily explore the visibility of bodies within the public sphere.\textsuperscript{235} In contrast, this chapter looked at buildings suddenly made visible: the complex of structures that was built by the Eyüp Municipality during the month of Ramadan. What does the visibility of buildings mean? As I showed, some people encountered this landscape as one of order and beauty. Others saw it as literally and figuratively hollow, mere spectacle standing in for substance. At stake was not simply a political disagreement; it had something to do with how people understood their own religious practice in relationship to the built environment around them.

The second way we might develop our understanding of visibility is to consider the other senses that work with vision to mediate experience of and in the city. Scholars who deploy \textit{medium} and \textit{mediation} as key conceptual terms generally emphasize linked the visual and material dimensions of social life. There are important reasons for doing so. As William Mazzarella has argued, for example, the “politics of immediation” in contemporary India depend upon the careful manipulation of transparency and opacity.\textsuperscript{236} Left unexplored in Mazzarella’s account is that way that other senses – particularly smell and sound – play a key role in constituting social life. Though visibility remains a key part of mediation – and thus social life – there are other senses through which social worlds are woven. In Eyüp in Ramadan, this involved the sounds of the call to prayer, of the communal prayers led from the mosque, the


\textsuperscript{236} Mazzarella, "Internet X-Ray: E-Governance, Transparency, and the Politics of Immediation in India," 476.
physical press of crowds praying shoulder to shoulder, the smell of rose water and busy restaurants.

The square in Eyüp in Ramadan 2013 was a particularly interesting site from which to explore the geographies of observance. It provided a vantage point from which to consider how individual experiences of religion are negotiated vis-à-vis collective forms of authority and belonging and multi-sensory mediums of belief.

Mosques can be seen as one paradigmatic site of and for the sacred. This is particularly true in Eyüp, where the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan houses the tomb complex of Halid bin Zeyd. During the month of Ramadan, this mosque complex and the surrounding district becomes the center of intensified set of connections that link people, place, and social practice. But as I’ve tried to show, the connections are contested, temporary, and frequently open to multiple interpretations. These interpretations depended upon differing understandings of the visibility of religious observance (Did more visible Ramadan celebrations mean they were better?) and the norms of urban life in Eyüp and beyond (Had a certain urban civility been lost as Eyüp became more crowded during Ramadan?). By focusing on this one moment, this chapter has tried to shed light on the broader geography of Islam in contemporary Istanbul.
CHAPTER 4: OUT OF PLACE IN EYÜP SULTAN?

Opening Scene

In July 2013, I joined a small group of tourists visiting Eyüp during Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. Because it was Ramadan, Eyüp was crowded with people who came to pray in the central mosque of Eyüp Sultan, enjoy free performances organized by the Eyüp Municipality, visit Eyüp’s numerous cafés and restaurants, and generally take part in the district’s spiritual atmosphere. All of the our group members were Turks, Istanbul residents, and able to afford the tour’s cost (roughly $100). Falling as it did during the month of Ramadan, our tour was advertised as a *sahur* tour, meaning that we would visit Eyüp’s monuments at night before finishing with a *sahur* meal at one of Eyüp’s local restaurants.237 Despite being called a *sahur* tour, however, it was unclear how many tour participants were observing the other primary part of Ramadan: the daily fast. Because we were touring at night, the daytime distinction between those fasting and those not fasting did not hold. Passing outside of and around many of Eyüp’s tombs and mosques – most lit up and filled with people – it was not precisely clear where the tourist ended and the religious began.

At one point in the tour, we passed into the mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Much of the mosque’s inner courtyard had been covered with carpet, and people sat scattered throughout the space. Some were praying in small groups, performing their *teravih namazı*.238 Others stood facing the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd, their hands cupped in front of them as they prayed. Most

237 See Chapter 3 for more information about these performances and the debates they sparked. *Sahur* is the pre-dawn meal before the fast begins during the month of Ramadan.

238 Supererogatory prayers specific to the month of Ramadan, and particularly to its observance within Turkey.
people, however, were simply relaxing on the carpets. We moved as a small group and followed our guide, listening to his voice over the small earbuds that we had been provided with.

Figure 28: Visiting the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan as tourists during Ramadan. Timur Hammond, 2013.

We must have made a curious sight, because one man who happened to be in the mosque pulled me aside to ask about our group. “Did you hire the guide yourself?” he asked. “Did you know each other beforehand? How much was it?” I answered the first two questions truthfully: Yes, we had hired our guide, and no, we didn’t know each other before we started the tour. I lied about the last question, because I was embarrassed about spending over 150 lira (roughly $90-$100) to join the tour. To me, being able to pay that much money for a nighttime tour seemed almost excessive in a district where many residents made do with monthly incomes of 800 lira or less. After hearing my answers, the man bid me well and praised what our group was doing.
“Helal olsun,” he said, “you’re gaining knowledge about religion (bilgi alıyorsunuz din üzerine).”

But as we parted, another passing man muttered derisively to his companion, “They’re tourists (Onlar turist).”

Introduction

One way to understand this opening story is in terms of the rules of place that shape how mosques in general – and particularly the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – should be visited and experienced. Where the first man approved of our activities – “you’re gaining knowledge about religion” – the second man’s derisive comment – “They’re tourists” – was an implicit judgment that drew upon rules that differentiated between better (i.e., religious) and worse (i.e., tourist) ways of moving through the mosque. Yet our tour group was also moving through the mosque according to a set of rules other than the “appropriate” rules of place in a mosque. For us, the mosque’s historical, cultural, and artistic value didn’t rule out its use as a space of worship, but neither did the mosque’s status as a site of worship exclude our mode of moving through it.

The rules of a place – the norms and codes, both formal and informal, explicit and implicit, that determine appropriate and inappropriate behavior in a given place – shape the way that that place comes to be experienced and understood. As Michael Curry has argued, “The carrying out of actions in given locations, described within narratives and repeated in ways that express what is possible – and not possible – within those locations… is just the way in which

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239 “Helal olsun” literally means “Let it be halal” (i.e., religiously appropriate and sanctioned, the opposite of haram), but the phrase is used in a more general sense to praise someone else’s actions in the sense of “Well done” or “Good for you.”
places are created.” In a more general sense, the rules of place are at the center of struggles over the meaning and significance of places at multiple scales. The articulation, transmission, and enforcement of these rules play central roles in the making of place. One consequence of the making of place is the definition of what is not that place. “The ‘outside,’” as Tim Cresswell notes, “plays a crucial role in the definition of the ‘inside.’”

In the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, these rules include the following: rules that separate the ritual, sacred space of the mosque from the broader fabric of the city; rules that establish certain permissible and impermissible acts in given locations within the mosque; and rules that signal the religious identity, the purpose of their visit, and even their place of origin of visitors. In short, one might easily speak of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan having ‘its’ rules of place, in much the same way that places are spoken of as having ‘their own’ histories. One might also see our Ramadan encounter as a competition between two different sets of rules, one that corresponds to a religious lifestyle and one that corresponds to a secular life.

It is tempting to think of the rules of place that apply in the mosque as being somehow essential to the mosque (a product of some internal quality) and as something unchanged (as Eyüp Sultan has always been a sacred place, its rules of place today must have always been). However, seeing the mosque of Eyüp Sultan as having its own set of fixed rules is incomplete in two important ways. First, the normative rules of place that shape Eyüp Sultan are not bound to this place but that product of linkages between people, practices, and ideas. Second, while a set

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240 Curry, "Toward a Geography of a World without Maps: Lessons from Ptolemy and Postal Codes," 683.


of normative rules govern how the mosque is used today, those rules have changed in important ways over time. How, why, and in what way do particular norms and rules come to be used to define who is in place and out of place in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan?

I make two linked arguments in this chapter. First, although the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan are specific to this mosque, those rules are not rooted in this place. Focusing on the three primary ways that rules are transmitted in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, I show that these rules are produced through the interconnections of people, practices, and shared narratives. Collectively, the architectural layout of Eyüp Sultan, the signs posted throughout the complex, and the comportment and management of bodies within the complex produces a specific conjunction of rules. These rules are both particular to this place and connected to elsewhere, norms of movement, worship, and social behavior that are variably shared in places other than this mosque.

Understanding these rules as the product of interconnection opens up a second – and seemingly counterintuitive – argument: The primary fault line within this mosque today is no longer that between Muslims and non-Muslims but is rather the many fractures between different forms of being Muslim, inflected by class, gender, and social identity, that connect Muslim Turks in different ways to this mosque and the rules of place that apply within it. Even though the mosque of Eyüp Sultan continues to be one of the paradigmatic monuments through which many Muslims in Istanbul articulate a sense of “our history,” the common rules of belonging in the mosque are in fact not common but dependent upon ongoing acts of policing and exclusion.

This chapter develops these arguments by focusing on three groups who might be understood as being potentially “out of place” in the mosque: Non-Muslim foreign tourists, whose presence in the mosque was once proscribed but are now described as being more
attentive to the rules of the mosque; domestic tourists, whose shared background of Islamic knowledge and practice with many of Eyüp Sultan’s religious visitors (ziyaretçiler) make them paradoxically more rather than less out of place in the mosque; and women, whose very noticeable presence within the mosque today challenges masculine norms about dress and physical proximity. Through these groups, I explore what happens when the common-sense norms and habits that define this mosque encounter people who either don’t know those norms, engage with them differently, or are understood by others to be somehow outside of the standard rules of place. One of the reasons that buildings are so important is that their boundaries (doors, thresholds, walls) seem to mark clear divisions between inside and out, a space in which the rules apply and one in which they don’t. But as the ethnographic data I draw upon shows, buildings – and the rules of place linked with them – are far more porous and fragile.

**Mediating the Rules of Place**

As a mosque, Eyüp Sultan shares many of its rules of place with tens of thousands of mosques around the world. Rules that govern how people perform their ablutions before prayer, comport themselves within the mosque, and arrange themselves vis-à-vis others around them form a common texture of faith for Muslims. However, there are also rules specific to Eyüp Sultan, rules that are shaped by the specific conjunction of people, buildings, and objects in this mosque. This section outlines three types of rules found in Eyüp Sultan today: those mediated by *buildings*, the specific arrangements of interior and exterior spaces that shape the behavior of visitors; those conveyed by *public texts*\(^{243}\), which communicate to specific audiences authorized understandings of appropriate and inappropriate behavior; and *bodies*, the management and presentation of which provides opportunities for visitors to imitate and critique modes of moving.

\(^{243}\) Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text*. 194
through the mosque. Collectively, these rules constitute a common set of norms that govern how this mosque is used and experienced.

Figure 29: Schematic plan of Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Primary doors marked in red. © Timur Hammond.

Buildings

The building of a mosque is one of the central means through which Muslims around the world come to make a place for themselves in the word. Historically, the building of a mosque within an already existing cityscape has been one of the primary ways that new Muslim rulers marked their control of and presence within the city.\(^{244}\) In a decidedly different contemporary

\[^{244}\] Irene A. Bierman, Rifa‘at Ali Abou-El-Haj, and Donald Preziosi, eds., *The Ottoman City and Its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order* (New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1991); Kafescioğlu,
context, the construction of mosques within non-Muslim cultural landscapes is often closely connected to Muslim communities claiming political and social agency.\textsuperscript{245} Less often explored, however, are the sorts of rules and norms built into the fabric of the mosque itself, a set of rules that use the physical material of the building to produce divisions of inside and outside, ritual and non-ritual space.

The central – and fundamental – architectural space of any mosque is its main prayer space. Prayer spaces almost always share a common set of features. There will be a prayer niche (mihrab) that orients people in the direction of Mecca (the qiblah/kible). In Friday congregational mosques, there will be a minbar (pulpit), along with a preacher’s seat (vaiz kursu). Carpets will cover the floors. Low shelves will be found beside the doors and arranged around the outer edges of the mosque, so that visitors might store their shoes during prayer. Although the primary function of this space is the performance of prayer, it can also be used for teaching, reading, thinking, and even sleeping. Although nearly all mosques in Turkey are administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, any explicitly political act – such as the distribution of election pamphlets or flyers – is forbidden within the interior of the mosque. The main prayer space of Eyüp Sultan – as with almost all mosques – is also reserved for men.\textsuperscript{246}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Constantinople/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital.}
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\textsuperscript{246} On the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, see for example İstar B. Gözaydın, "Diyanet and Politics," \textit{The Muslim World} 98, no. 2-3 (2008).
Although women will sometimes circulate through the rear section of the main prayer space, the center of the mosque is also a strongly gendered space.

The threshold of a mosque thus marks a key zone of transition between an interior space for prayer and the outside world. Although the precise location of a mosque’s main door can vary widely, both historic Ottoman mosques and more recent constructed mosques usually locate the main entrance along the main axis of the prayer niche. The area immediately outside of this door is known as the *son cemaat yeri*, a place for men who arrive late to the congregational prayer. The *son cemaat yeri* is usually incorporated into a courtyard (*avlu*). In contrast to the interior prayer space of the mosque, the *avlu* can oscillate between being used as an interior space for prayer and being used as an external space, connected to the broader life of the city around. In contrast to the overwhelmingly male character of the mosque’s interior, the courtyard – and particularly the courtyard of Eyüp Sultan – is decidedly more mixed, with men and women visiting alongside one another.
Figure 30: In the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, the *son cemaat yeri* is located to either side of the main door (in this picture, green). Timur Hammond, 2013.

Two things make the mosque of Eyüp Sultan unique among Ottoman-era mosques of Istanbul. First, the mosque of Eyüp Sultan was built deliberately to include the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd. Both tombs and mosques are found throughout Istanbul, but they are almost always built separately. In contrast, the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd forms one beautifully tiled wall of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan. As a consequence, the inner courtyard of Eyüp Sultan is used both as an auxiliary prayer space for the mosque proper and as a devotional space for people who come to visit the tomb.
The second thing that makes Eyüp Sultan unique is its sequence of courtyards. Until the 18th century, most major Ottoman mosques were designed along relatively similar plans: A large interior prayer space, covered with a dome, and a single rectangular courtyard, aligned along axis marked by the direction of prayer. The current mosque of Eyüp Sultan was reconstructed from the ground up at the end of the 18th century. In this second form, a new, outer courtyard was added to the structure of the mosque. This outer courtyard included a number of elements: an ablutions fountain (şadirvan), several small rooms designated for mosque staff; and an entrance to the sultan’s loge (now used for the women’s section in the mosque). In addition to being architecturally singular within Istanbul, the courtyards are also functionally important. Because of the large numbers of people come to visit the mosque, the outer courtyard has come to be used
as an important auxiliary prayer space. Since the renovation of the square adjacent to the mosque in the 1990s, that square has also been used as an auxiliary prayer space.

The unique shape of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan has several consequences for the rules of place that apply in the mosque. Two are especially important. First, the positioning of the courtyards in relation to the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd means that most of the mosque complex is actually open to the elements. Entering the mosque – particularly to pray – requires a set of actions that specifically distinguish the interior from the exterior of the mosque (e.g., removing one’s shoes, women covering their hair and shoulders, performing one’s ablutions before prayer, using one’s right foot to enter the mosque, uttering a prayer to Allah). Because much of Eyüp Sultan is exterior to the central prayer space, it means that people do not necessarily perform the same actions that they might on entering the mosque’s interior. The diverse ways that visitors observe (or don’t observe) the rules of place in the courtyards is one of the key sources of disagreements between visitors about how the mosque should be used.

Second, the blurring between the interior and the exterior of the mosque has consequences for the interaction between men and women. The mosque of Eyüp Sultan is one of the few mosques in Istanbul where women can participate in communal prayers in areas that are visible to the general public. In most cases, women’s prayer areas are screened in from view. Because the number of women visiting the mosque for communal prayers is so high (relative to the space available inside the mosque), mosque authorities have established women’s prayer areas at the rear of the outer courtyard and at the rear of the square outside. But if most mosques share a common rule that the performance of prayer by women is to be separate from the performance of prayer by men, Eyüp Sultan marks a modification of that rule.
Public Texts

In addition to the mosque’s physical layout, signs, placards, and posted announcements play an important role in conveying the rules of place. The overwhelming majority of these objects are written in Turkish by the office of the Eyüp district müftü (chief religious official). Two permanent placards explaining the significance of Halid bin Zeyd are located in different courtyards of the mosque. Several signs list a range of appropriate and inappropriate behavior while visiting the mosque and tombs. In addition to the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd, the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan is filled with an assortment of other tombs and graves, many of which are also labeled with small signs of varying length. By explaining the proper historical and religious significance of the mosque/tomb complex and by communicating a set of rules about proper visitation practices, these signs render the mosque complex legible to domestic visitors.
One striking difference between Eyüp Sultan and many of Istanbul’s other major mosque monuments is the lack of signage in languages other than Turkish. This is in contrast to many of the mosques in the popular tourist areas of Sultanahmet and Süleymaniye. There, signage will almost always include an explanatory text in multiple languages and a set of instructions (e.g., dress in appropriate clothing, no eating, etc.) addressed to tourists. During 2011-13, the single instance of a non-Turkish sign was a large panel written in Arabic. Donated by the then King Idris I of Libya in the 1950s, the panel retells the story of Halid bin Zeyd. As Turkey has become an increasingly popular tourist destination for Arabic-speaking visitors over the past decade, the panel has come to be read by an entirely new audience.

It is also important to remember that there is another important kind of public text in the mosque: a wide array of calligraphy in the Arabic script. Some of this – such as the passage in the photo above Haci Beşir Ağa’s tomb – is Arabic, usually quoting from the Qur’an or from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Other passages, however, are written in Ottoman Turkish. The overwhelming majority of visitors today cannot read the inscriptions; despite that, the simple visibility – and not necessarily their legibility – of these inscriptions marks the mosque complex as a religious space.

**Bodies**

The mosque of Eyüp Sultan is visited by upwards of 3 million visitors per year, of whom the vast majority are residents of Turkey. Among visitors from Turkey, the majority comes for religious purposes, and their visits are exceptional events, often coinciding with births, deaths, important exams, weddings, and/or religious holidays. The large number of people who visit the mosque complex – often for the first time – poses a particular challenge for establishing shared
rules of place. There are three primary ways that people learn how to configure their bodies according to the rules of place.

Social networks are the most important factor affecting individual’s understanding of the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan. Families continue to be the first and primary source of religious knowledge in contemporary Turkey. When people visit as a family unit, fathers and mothers frequently instruct their children in ‘appropriate’ behaviors, whether by showing them how to hold their hands in prayer, reciting Qur’anic prayers with them, or scolding them if the children are misbehaving. People will also come visit the mosque as a group of friends, in which one individual might have more familiarity with the mosque than others. In some cases, visitors might also belong to a tarikat (Sufi brotherhood) or cemaat (Muslim association). Within the space of the mosque, women and men who belong to these groups mark themselves through their dress (ranging from how women tie their headscarves to the sorts of rings that men wear) and their manner of praying (how they hold their hands in supplication).

When people visit the mosque, they can also be acutely aware of the behavior of those around them. Most of the time, this awareness is passive, in the way that people everywhere negotiate crowded situations. Sometimes, visitors will imitate the actions of people around them. This is especially true in the immediate vicinity of the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, when individuals who pray at or concentrate on other (poorly marked or illegible) graves or tombs can attract the

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attention of passers-by. Finally, visitors also critique the actions of those around them. While these critiques rarely take the form of direct argument or accusation, visitors will frequently share their negative evaluations of other people in the mosque. This is why our tourist group attracted such attention in the mosque during Ramadan. In a moment in which nearly everybody seemed to be in the mosque for devotional purposes, our group’s conduct stood out and generated multiple responses.

Mosque staff and attendants are the third factor shaping visitors’ embodied movement through the mosque. Their numbers include tomb attendants, municipal police (zabita), plainclothes police officers, and mosque custodial staff. Collectively known as the görevli (“on duty”), they can all intervene in activities they deem inappropriate. For example, custodial staff might ask someone writing their prayer on a wall to stop, or a tomb attendant might interrupt someone’s prayer on the grounds that it is superstitious. Given the large number of visitors who pass through Eyüp Sultan every year, the staff presence is relatively small. Nevertheless, their enforcement of the rules of place plays a key role in shaping how the mosque is used.

This section has argued that the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan are transmitted in one of three ways: through the layout of the separate areas within the mosque complex, the public texts displayed throughout the complex, and the management of people’s bodies as they move through the complex. There is a coherent (though not monolithic) set of rules that establish norms of behavior and conduct within the mosque. I’ve shown that these rules are not the product of some internal essence of the mosque; rather, the overlapping movements of people, practices, and narratives have produced these rules by connecting this mosque to other places. Yet although these rules are normative, they are neither unchanging nor always equally applied. Indeed, their very status as normative is the product of ongoing debates about the regulation, requirement, and
transformation of the practices that constitute Islam. Below, I turn to three moments in which those rules of place are shown to be flexible and open to other interpretations: when foreigners move through the mosque; when domestic tourists move through the mosque; and when women move through the mosque. These are moments when the common-sense norms and habits that define this mosque encounter people who either don’t know those norms, engage with them differently, or are understood by others to be somehow outside of the standard rules of place.

**Foreigners in the Mosque**

Historical Ottoman mosques occupy an interesting field in Istanbul today. On the one hand, they continue to be places of ongoing worship, staffed by officially appointed imams, managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and regularly attended by residents and visitors alike. On the other hand, they are also historical sites, identified within guidebooks and tourist itineraries as sites of cultural value. Foreigners’ visiting of mosques – and the visiting of non-Muslim foreigners in particular – presents one important challenge to the typical rules of place that apply in a mosque like Eyüp Sultan.

One anecdote, frequently repeated in 19th century Istanbul travelogues, gives one clue to the relationship between foreigners and the rules of place in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, and particularly the way that mobility reproduces and transforms the rules of place. Both the mosque of Eyüp Sultan and the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd were off-limits to non-Muslim foreigners. The only way for a non-Muslim to visit the mosque was in disguise. This is because dress marked one of the central means through which ethnic and religious identities were performed in late Ottoman Istanbul. As the story goes, an “infidel” couple donned a disguise and entered the

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249 See Talal Asad’s point: “The way these powers [that produce orthodoxy] are exercised, the conditions that make them possible... and the resistances they encounter are equally the concern of an anthropology of Islam.” Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 15-16.
mosque. As soon as they crossed the mosque’s threshold, they were overcome and revealed as Christians. This rule of place no longer applies in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, but the anecdote reminds us that non-Muslim foreigners – identifiable by their dress, language, and comportment – were once seen to be violating the rules of place that applied in Eyüp Sultan. The rules of place involve different kinds of mobilities: Non-Muslim foreigners are marked as foreign precisely by their mobility through the city (and through the mosque in particular).

Today, it is easy to identify non-Muslim foreigners by means of their relationship to the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan. In contrast to Muslim visitors, non-Muslim foreign visitors are generally not familiar with the layout of the mosque and the rules that shape one’s movement through it. Likewise, most foreign visitors do not read Turkish. Their ignorance of Turkish renders the mosque’s public texts (and the rules they convey) illegible. Foreign visitors do imitate Turkish visitors – most visibly when women cover their head on passing from the square into the outer courtyard – but their mistakes are policed in a different way by mosque staff.

**Foreigners Are More Respectful Than We Are**

Beginning in the early part of the 20th century, this began to change, and foreigners gradually became able to visit the mosque of Eyüp Sultan more freely. While one might assume that foreigners were always liable to be ignorant (and thus potentially in violation of) the rules of place that applied in the mosque, a description of the mosque and tomb in the 1950s tells a different story.

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Haci Cemal Öğüt, one of the most respected figures in Istanbul’s religious establishment at the time, published a two-volume guide to the life and works of Halid bin Zeyd entitled *The Famous Eyyüp Sultan*.\(^{251}\) Part of his motivation for writing the book was his strong feeling that people living in Istanbul lacked knowledge – and religious knowledge in particular – about the city in which they lived. As a consequence, many Istanbul residents were guilty of a number of faults when they visited an important mosque complex like Eyyüp Sultan. “[I]gnorant and undeserving (*nasipsiz*) people – both those from out of town and locals from the area” were behaving themselves in ways that suited neither themselves nor the atmosphere of the mosque. In contrast, foreign travelers, “touring the Turks’ national works that they’ve seen on their maps,” entered the mosque and removed their hats, “showing their respect according to their own manners and feelings.” Meanwhile, “some of our ignorant and careless Muslims, their hands clasped behind their backs, [whistled] while they pass through the tomb, or, cigarette dangling from their lips, [swung] a chain around and around, signing songs and ditties while they come and go.”\(^{252}\)

Öğüt’s account articulated what would become a theme common to many of the guides and pamphlets published about Eyyüp Sultan in the 1960s and 70s: Visitors (from Turkey) were ignorant and did not show the respect appropriate to this place. They key point to draw from Öğüt’s account is that *even* foreigners – non-Muslims and therefore ignorant of the religious significance of this mosque and tomb – were able to comport themselves in a more appropriate way. Locals and residents refused to change their behavior as they passed from the street (where smoking cigarettes and singing would be appropriate) into the mosque (where such acts were

\(^{251}\) Öğüt, *Eyyüb Sultan*.

\(^{252}\) Ibid., 68.
disrespectful). In this case, foreigners provide a useful foil to explain what Muslims should be doing.

**No Naked People in Eyüp**

Foreigners continue to be a point of reference for many Muslim Turks when they describe what makes the mosque special. I asked Zafer – a young man, pious, himself new to Istanbul – about what made Eyüp different from other parts of the city, and he responded by drawing a fascinating comparison between Eyüp Sultan and the major historical monuments of Sultanahmet. Here in Eyüp Sultan, he said,

You rarely see çıplak (naked) people… ‘Open’ (açık) people come but they cover up with something [when they do]… It’s not that way in Sultanahmet. [There], someone wearing a miniskirt can go into the mosque there with just a head scarf (sadece bir başörtüyle) but that’s something I’ve never encountered here [in Eyüp Sultan].

He continued, “There are clear rules for every place, how is a mosque dressed for, how is it entered… Now, Sultanahmet is a place that should be thought of in the same way but I think that there are more people who pay attention in Eyüp Sultan.”

Zafer’s description provides one way to think about the tensions produced by encounters between non-Muslim visitors (usually foreign) who don’t follow the rules of place and the clear Muslim rules of place in Eyüp. Implicit in Zafer’s explanation is the topography of tourism in Istanbul. The single most touristed district of the city is Sultanahmet. There are two reasons for

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253 “Eyüp Sultan’da çok nadir çıplak insan görürsün, çıplak dediğimde yanlış anlaşılması… açık insanlar gelir fakat bir şey öterler [when they come]… Sultanahmet’te öyle değil affederseniz yanlış anlaşılması tekrardan söylerim, minietek giydiği insan sadece bir başörtüyle camiye girebiliyor orada ama burası geldiğimden itibaren hiç rastlamadığım bir olaydır.”

254 “Şimdi her yerin belli kuralları var, camiye nasıl giyilir, nasıl girilir… Şimdi Sultanahmet’te aynı şekilde düşünülmesi gereken bir yerdir ama Eyüp Sultan’da daha çok dikkat edenler [var diye] düşünüyorum.”
this. First, three of Istanbul’s most important historic monuments — the Hagia Sophia, the Sultanahmet Mosque (also known as the Blue Mosque), and the Topkapı Palace — are located in the district and within an easy walk of each other. For tourists on a limited time schedule, the district provides an easy snapshot of Istanbul. Second, there is a well-developed infrastructure (easy transportation, signage in multiple languages, guides and guidebooks, and a dense cluster of hotels) that makes it easy for foreign tourists to orient themselves in the city. In contrast, Eyüp — and here Zafer’s use of “Eyüp Sultan” refers to the mosque in particular — is relatively peripheral to the city’s primary tourist itineraries. Although the number of restaurants catering to tourists has increased since the late 1990s and new hotels have opened, Eyüp lacks much of the infrastructure that has turned Sultanahmet into a heavily trafficked tourist area.

Zafer’s comparison draws our attention not to the numbers of tourists who visit but to the rules of place that they follow. In particular are the rules that correspond to entering the mosque. All mosques in Istanbul visited by tourists will provide head scarves and ankle-length dresses that visitors — primarily women, but sometimes men as well — can use to cover their bare heads, shoulders, and legs. In many cases, attendants will be stationed at the mosque entrance in order to make sure that foreign visitors are dressed appropriately. However, because of the number of people who visit Sultanahmet, it is sometimes difficult for attendants to stop every foreign tourist, hence Zafer’s observation about “someone wearing a miniskirt” and entering the mosque.

During my fieldwork in Eyüp, I noticed the same thing that Zafer had. Whenever foreign tourists visited — they were marked as foreign by their dress, their cameras, their skin tone, their lack of Turkish, and their traveling in groups — they almost always wore more conservative clothing. In general, the same holds true for domestic tourists as well: There is a more reserved
dress code in Eyüp compared to other parts of Istanbul, and one rarely sees women or men wearing shorts in the district. Foreign visitors’ attentiveness to these rules is all the more striking because relatively few staff monitor tourist behavior. One explanation for the difference in foreign visitors’ behavior lies in their different understanding of the devotional value of Sultanahmet and Eyüp Sultan. Sultanahmet is usually visited as part of a ‘heritage’ itinerary, one that links the Topkapi Palace, the Hagia Sophia, and the Sultanahmet Mosque. In contrast, Eyüp Sultan is visited by foreign tourists interested in seeing a living Islam.

Figure 33: German tourists watching Friday prayers in Eyüp. Timur Hammond, 2012.

In Zafer’s telling, every mosque should have the same rules: They are entered in a certain way, one dresses in a certain way. Ideally, these rules are the same everywhere, but as he notes, these rules of place are more frequently observed in Eyüp Sultan. Although people visit Sultanahmet to pray, tourists generally outnumber worshippers there. In contrast, worshippers
always outnumber tourists — particularly foreign ones — in Eyüp. Rules of place are always in dialogue with the people who do (or do not, as the case may be) observe them.

**The Changing Nature of Foreign Tourists**

One of the striking shifts of the past two decades is the increasing number of Muslim tourists visiting Turkey. Many of these tourists are from the Arabic-speaking Middle East, including the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, but there are also tourists from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. These tourists share many of the same itineraries as other foreign tourists (visiting the Topkapı Palace, climbing the Galata Tower, visiting the Grand Bazaar, etc.), but they differ in their understanding of the rules of place that apply in Eyüp Sultan. The key difference lies in their relationship to the mosque: Non-Muslim foreign tourists move through the mosque of Eyüp Sultan as a devotional space for other people; Muslim foreign tourists move through the mosque as their own devotional space. While foreign Muslim tourists often find much of the mosque’s signage illegible (because they don’t speak or read Turkish), their knowledge of the embodied practices of piety make their adherence to the rules of place quite different. If nothing else, the increasingly visible presence of foreign Muslim tourists has helped to decouple a long-standing association between being foreign and non-Muslim.

More than anything, the presence of foreign tourists in the mosque demonstrates that foreignness is produced in part by violating the proper rules of place. At the beginning of the 20th century, foreigners’ different habits of dress, language, and worship helped to mark them as foreign. A century later, some of those habits have changed: Many foreigners are now visiting from majority Muslim countries and many forms of dress are less visibly marked as Turk and foreign. At the same time, many Turks have also shifted their relationship to the mosque. This

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255 To say nothing of the Syrian refugees who have crossed the border fleeing the civil war.
next section focuses on how some Turks visit the mosque of Eyüp Sultan not as worshippers but as heritage tourists.

**Turkish Tourists in the Mosque**

Since the 1990s, a second shift has reconfigured assumptions about what it means to be a tourist in Eyüp Sultan: the emergence of domestically oriented heritage tourism. As I use the term, heritage tourism refers to a specific subset of the Turkish tourism industry in Turkey that caters to individuals explicitly interested in learning about their history. This was the motivation that guided the 2013 *sahur* tour with which I opened the chapter. While on that tour, I spoke with one of the participants – a middle-aged Istanbul resident – about why he joined tours like this. He explained, “We go to Europe, and we see all their churches and museums, but we don’t do the same in our own country. A couple of years ago, we realized we didn’t know Istanbul. So we started to do these tours, and bit by bit we’ve started to learn Istanbul.”

These tours offer a fascinating opportunity to think about the encounter between two different kinds of rules: those that apply to religious visitors to Eyüp Sultan, and those that apply to tourist visitors. While often in tension, these two kinds of rules are not necessarily exclusive. As I showed above, foreign tourists often visit mosques alongside domestic worshippers. Domestic tourists in mosques, however, raise a different sort of issue, because they challenge the assumed equivalence of ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim.’

**Heritage Tourism Today**

The visibility of domestic tour companies catering to domestic tourists to visit sites of the Ottoman past is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back to the 1990s. There are a number of factors at work in this, but four stand out. First, the Ottoman past was reconfigured as an
attractive and cosmopolitan destination.\textsuperscript{256} Although major monuments like mosques and palaces had always been important tour destinations, the 1990s were marked by a popularization of the Ottoman past. Second, beginning in the 1990s but especially since the 2000s, there have been massive investments in tourist facilities and restoration projects.\textsuperscript{257} Third, the rise in living standards in Turkey has enabled the growth of leisure activities like tourism. Domestic tourism is one part of an expanded landscape of popular consumption. Being able to go on boutique tours like these is part of the complicated cultural politics of tourism in Turkey today, a politics that turns on questions of public access and social distinction.\textsuperscript{258} Finally, there has also been a shift in the cultural politics of distinction that characterized Turkey’s relationship to Europe. Where being ‘cultured’ once involved visiting Europe’s museums, it can now include domestic tourism organized around the splendors of the Ottoman past.

The tour company I joined was one of the first to be established in Istanbul. They have been in business for roughly the past twenty years and currently offer a varied range of tours, including Istanbul-focused tours, domestic tours, and international tours to locations ranging from Cuba to the Great Wall to Central Europe to India. In the two tours I joined, their clientele seemed to be relatively wealthy and well-educated Istanbul residents. As a consequence, the rules of place observed by this tourist agency have more to do with a particular form of tourist

\textsuperscript{256}Mills, "The Place of Locality for Identity in the Nation: Minority Narratives of Cosmopolitan Istanbul."; Öncü, "The Politics of Istanbul's Ottoman Heritage in the Era of Globalism."


\textsuperscript{258}Houston, "The Brewing of Islamist Modernity: Tea Gardens and Public Space in Istanbul."
mobility, one connected to class and cultural outlook. The ethnographic encounters below are drawn from those two tours.

Our tours followed an itinerary similar to that traced by foreign tourists: We began at the café of Pierre Loti, walked down through the cemetery, visited the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, and then passed through a number of other heritage sites, including the imaret of Mihríşah Sultan, and the tomb of Sultan Reşat (Mehmet V). While everyone who comes to Eyüp – religious visitor or tourist – visits the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, religious visitors generally do not visit sites like the imaret of Mihríşah Sultan or the tomb of Sultan Reşat, marking one key difference between the itineraries of religious visitors and heritage tourists.

While many heritage tourists share a common understanding of the rules of place within foreign tourists, there is one key difference: their relationship to those sites, one that oscillates between other and ours. This is why the response of the man that I spoke with is so interesting, his description of going to Europe to see “churches and museums” but not making the same investment in “our country.” Despite engaging with this history as “ours,” the everyday sharing of history (as when different groups of Turks visit and move through Eyüp Sultan) is often far more complicated. The imagined community suggested by “our Ottoman past” frequently dissolves in debates about political, ethnic, social, and religious identity. Indeed, much of this boutique heritage tourism overlaps with foreign tourists who rarely engage with the people and ongoing life that fills many monumental spaces in Istanbul. This is particularly true in Eyüp.

Sharing (or Not Sharing) the Rules of Place

On a December morning in 2012, our small group met in front of the Atatürk Culture Center in Taksim. We were 12 in total, two older couples, perhaps retired, two friends traveling together, four of us on our own, a representative from the tour company, and our guide. We
boarded our small bus, where we were given small portable broadcasting sets and a set of headphones. The day before, I had received a text message from the tour operator. “Note: We request that our female guests bring a head covering (baş örtüşü) alongside them.” Implicit in the note was an assumption that the tour participants did not wear tesettür (the head covering that frequently marks women’s piety). As I noticed when our group gathered, none of the women did.

While our bus made its way through light morning traffic from Taksim to Eyüp, our guide explained the importance of the district. He began – as most of my self-avowed pious friends in Eyüp did – with the figure of Eyüp Sultan, Eba Eyyüp el-Ensârî, the standard-bearer (bayraktar) of the Prophet. However, I noticed that his phrasing differed in one small but important way from many of my devout interlocutors in Eyüp. Where they would almost always say “Our Prophet (Hz. Peygamberimiz),” our guide dropped the possessive, saying only “the Prophet (Hz. Peygamber).”

The shift between “the Prophet” and “our Prophet” corresponds to two different ways that people engage with the religious importance of Eyüp. Those who use “our Prophet” are trying to evoke a mutual religious community in which connection to the Prophet Muhammad functions as one of the primary markers of belonging. On this trip, our guide’s use of “the Prophet” instead of “our Prophet” was not a rejection of belief or religious identity. Rather, it marked one attempt to bracket off the use of Islam as a common axis of identity.

Indeed, these tours have a complicated relationship to the public forms of religiosity found in Eyüp today. The tours that I participated in always visited the mosque of Eyüp Sultan, but we never stopped formally to pray. This isn’t to say that participants were opposed to religion in their lives. As one woman explained to me on that December rout, she used to come
regularly to the mosque to pray two *rekat*.²⁵⁹ “I’m Muslim,” she said, “so coming here is a sort of relationship, it’s good for one’s soul.” But our tours were never timed to coincide with the large communal prayers that now take place in Eyüp, particularly on Fridays and weekends. While there may have been a logistical benefit to this (the mosque was less crowded), it also avoided a very visible contrast between the communal performance of prayer and tourists’ modes of moving through the mosque.

The mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan is frequently crowded with visitors. Adherence to the normative rules of place provides a quick and relatively easy way for visitors to classify the people around them. Practices like taking photographs, listening to guides, not praying at the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd, and moving in groups, quickly mark visitors as tourists. I now turn to the second tour to explore the tensions produced by being a Turkish tourist in Eyüp Sultan.

**Turkish Tourism During Ramadan**

As I argued in Chapter 3, Ramadan is marked by an intensification of religious observance in Eyüp. Although the exact form of the celebrations varies from year to year, the Eyüp Municipality constructs a variety of temporary structures and organizes a range of activities open to the public. Eyüp’s restaurants shift their hours and menus to cater to visitors seeking *iftar* and *saḥur* meals (the two meals that mark, respectively, the end and the beginning of the fast). The number of people visiting Eyüp also increases. These visits almost always involve a visit to the mosque complex, where people will either pray in front of the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd or participate in one of the communal prayers (either the evening prayer following *iftar*, the supererogatory *teravih* prayers, or the dawn prayer immediately before the

²⁵⁹ A *rekat* is the name for the sequence of prayer that results in someone placing their forehead on the ground in *secde*. Two *rekat* is a form of prayer known as *şükür namazı* (prayer of thanks).
fast begins). Most importantly, the rules of place become sharpened, with the lines between observance and non-observance becoming more defined during Ramadan.

Amidst that heightened observance, our tour group must have made a curious sight. It was nighttime after all, a period in which most tours were not organized. It was Ramadan, a period of more visible observance and in which the rules of place were more defined. We were following our guide, shepherded along by a representative from the tour company. As we entered the mosque, our guide explained the significance of Lale Mustafa Paşa, a 17th century grand vizier whose tomb abutted the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd. He called our attention to the baroque details of the mosque, the fountains constructed by Sultan Selim III that were adorned with Mevlevi headgear. Yet our group was speaking in Turkish.

This is likely why one man pulled me aside to ask about our group. “Did you hire the guide yourself?” he asked. “Did you know each other beforehand?” I answered the first two questions truthfully: Yes, we had hired our guide, and no, we didn’t know each other before we started the tour. After hearing my answers, the man praised what our group was doing. “Helal olsun,” he said, “you’re gaining knowledge about religion (bilgi alıyorsunuz din üzerine).”260 But as we parted, I overhead a second man’s derisive comment: “They’re tourists.”

To be a tourist in Eyüp Sultan is to not follow the ‘normal’ rules of place. That is why our group stood out: We were visiting at a time in which tourists rarely visit and conducting ourselves in a way not associated with Eyüp Sultan’s Ramadan rules of place. Even though we weren’t following the rules, the first man approved of what we were doing – even though we weren’t praying as a group or conducting ourselves in the typical way, we were learning about

260 “Helal olsun” literally means “Let it be halal” (i.e., religiously appropriate and sanctioned, the opposite of haram), but the phrase is used in a more general sense to praise someone else’s actions in the sense of “Well done” or “Good for you.”
religion in our own way. But the dismissive comment – “They’re tourists” – was a reminder that the practice of tourist can be seen as less valuable than the practice of worshipping in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan.

The increased numbers of visitors that accompany Ramadan also produce a second tension: That produced by the interaction between men and women. I now turn to a series of moments and responses in which the visibility of women in the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan has produced tensions related to the proper rules of place.

**Women in the Mosque**

One of the unique features of Eyüp Sultan is the relatively large presence of women. In part, this presence stems from the location of the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd within the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan. While both men and women practice tomb visitation to varying degrees around Istanbul, tomb visitation today is more frequently described as part of women’s devotional work. Because greater numbers of women visit the mosque of Eyüp Sultan relative to other mosques in Istanbul, their participation in communal prayers raises a number of questions about the standard rules of place that ought to govern the space of the mosque.

There are two rules of place that I want to highlight: The first governs the physical proximity between men and women immediately before and during prayer times. The second is that of the visibility of women. In presenting these problems, I’m aware of the irony that I’m using the voices of men to talk about the place of women. This is largely an artifact of my research experience. Incomplete as it is, I think it’s valuable to start thinking through the multiple ways that women move through the mosque complex and encounter its rules.

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261 For a recent analysis of this, see Fatma Gökçen Dinç, "The Religious and National 'Others' of the State: People, Superstitions and the Nationalization of Islam in Turkey (1925-1970)" (Humboldt University, 2016).
Problems of Proximity

The most crowded night in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan is the Night of Power (Kadir Gecesi), the night upon which the Qur’an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Falling as it does in the last week of Ramadan, the night is the devotional high point of the month of fasting. Even people who do not necessarily fast for the month of Ramadan (much less observe it in any regular way) will seek out a mosque on the Night of Power. The intense crowds who appear in Eyüp present a special difficulty because of the way that crowds render ‘appropriate’ gender divisions nearly impossible.

The day before Kadir Gecesi in 2012, I had been warned to avoid the mosque. “You won’t even be able to take a step [from the crowds],” a policeman had warned me. He was right: By the time of the teravih prayers, the entire square in front of the mosque was completely filled with people trying to find a space in which to pray. I overheard two men complaining about the scene. They were from Ankara, and were dismayed by what they found. In particular, they complained about the proximity of men and women praying in such close proximity, “right beside one another (yanyanına).” This proximity posed special challenges for men who worshipped according to the strictures of the Shafi‘i madhab (Şafi‘i mezhebi).²⁶² According to the strictures of that madhab, any physical contact between a man and a woman would violate a man’s state of purity before prayer. If that happened, a man would have to perform his ritual

²⁶² A madhab is a school of Islamic law and teaching. Within the Sunni tradition, there are four: Maliki, Hanbali, Hanefi, and Shafi‘i. The primary legal tradition in Turkey today (and the legal tradition of Diyanet, Turkey’s Ministry of Religious Affairs) is Hanefi, but many people with roots in eastern Anatolia have been raised within Shafii communities.
ablutions a second time in order for them to be deemed acceptable and his prayers religiously appropriate.\textsuperscript{263}

There simply isn’t space to accommodate all of the people who try to pray in Eyüp Sultan during Ramadan. The municipality’s construction of the Meccan arcades (\textit{revaklar}) in the square in 2013 (and in years following) was one attempt to expand the prayer space. However, that still does not meet all needs. The women’s section is always more crowded than the men’s prayer section, to say nothing of the facilities for performing one’s ablutions. Both men’s and women’s sections are extremely crowded during Ramadan prayers, but the women’s section especially so. When I was observing morning prayers in 2012 and 2013, some women moved to immediately in front of the mosque’s forward door. They could easily hear the imam – and so follow the congregation in prayer – but their positioning sparked heated arguments. From they prayed, the women were both in front of men and in front of the line marked by the imam on the inside of the mosque.

\textbf{Problems of Visibility}

In addition to the physical proximity of men and women in the mosque, women are also more visible in mixed gender spaces. One of the most notable examples of that visibility is women’s performance of communal prayers in the square outside of the mosque, where they are visible to passersby. While there are designated women’s sections in nearly every mosque in Istanbul – both historic and those of more recent construction – it is rare that women’s participation in prayers as part of the congregation (\textit{cemaat}) is visible to the general public. One of my interlocutors, a young woman named Seher, also expressed her ambivalence with

\textsuperscript{263} This likely holds true for women as well.
women’s performance of communal prayers in the square. “It’s not appropriate (*uygun değilirdir*),” she said.

Figure 34: Signs posted by local officials in January 2013. The sign on the left was addressed to all visitors, the sign on the right was addressed to women in particular. Timur Hammond, 2013.

Sharper debates emerge over how women dress within the mosque complex itself. In January 2013, I noticed a new sign that had been posted in visible locations within the mosque. It was addressed directly to the “Esteemed Women Visitors (*ziyaretçi*)” to Eyüp Sultan:

Visitors (*misafir*)… conducting their pilgrimage (*ziyaret*) in accordance with Allah’s commands is a religious commandment. For this reason, women visitors’ entering of mosques (The House of Allah) and courtyards bareheaded and with tight and sleeveless blouses and tight *pants* and *short skirts* is not appropriate. Please, let’s pay attention. Let’s be of assistance to the staff.

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The phrasing of the sign was noteworthy in several respects. First, it lumped the interior of the mosque with the exterior courtyards. One of the key rules of place that applies to women in mosques is the covering of one’s head. However, whether the courtyard of a mosque is part of that interior space remains an open question. While I observed many women – otherwise uncovered – who would tie a simple scarf around their head as they passed from the square into the outer courtyards of the mosque, I also saw many women who didn’t.

Figure 35: Female visitor to the mosque reading an explanatory sign in Turkish in the outer courtyard of Eyüp Sultan. The sign appealing for the assistance of female visitors stands to the left. Timur Hammond, 2013.

This visibility continues to be a debated topic. One online comment about Eyüp Sultan, posted by a male visitor in early 2015, raised a similar critique about the visibility of women. He wrote, “The spiritual (manevi) atmosphere there is being destroyed! I was there the first day of bayram! Both the interior and courtyard of the mosque had been turned into a podium! Women,
[with] their butts and heads uncovered (göüt başı her yeri açık), were displaying themselves everywhere!"^{265}

**Conclusion**

On crowded days in Eyüp Sultan, it can feel almost impossible to escape from the physical proximity of others. That the mosque is tangibly shared by tens of thousands of people every day seems manifestly obvious. Indeed, it is for that very reason that mosques continue to be key sites through which individuals negotiate and articulate forms of shared social belonging. At the same time, however, physical proximity between visitors to the mosque is no guarantee that the mosque is actually a shared sacred place.

This chapter has made two arguments. First, the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan are conveyed in three primary ways: through the building itself; through the public texts posted throughout the complex; and through the management and control of bodies as they move through the mosque complex. Rather than understand those rules as inherently connected to Eyüp Sultan, I tried to show how the particular combination of rules in this place are actually the product of multiple interconnections that link this mosque to other places and histories.

Second, I argued that the greatest tensions in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan today arise not between Muslims and non-Muslims – a division imperfectly glossed as that between Turks and foreigners – but between different groups of Turkish visitors. Turkish visitors share a language and a set of common historical references (to the Ottoman past) and religious practices (the practices of Islam). The mosque of Eyüp Sultan functions as one key site through which Turkish visitors develop a common sense of nation, faith, and history. As this chapter showed,

^{265} In Turkish, “Buradaki manevi hava yok ediliyor! bayramin ilk günü oradaydım! Caminin içi ve avlusu podyuma dönmüş durumdaydı!… Kadınların göüt başı her yeri açık camide sergiliyorlar kendilerini resmen!”
differences in class, social identity, and gender can often produce moments of crisis for the rules of place. Where once the sacredness of Eyüp Sultan was produced (and maintained) primarily by excluding non-Muslims from its precincts, today the sacredness of Eyüp Sultan is the product of a much more complicated set of connections.

Looking at three kinds of movement through the mosque complex – that of foreigners, heritage tourists, and women – I tried to show some of the ways that different subjects encountered the rules of place. To not follow the rules in Eyüp Sultan is to be foreign. Rather than an inherent (and unchanging) quality of visitors, foreignness is a condition produced by an inability to follow (or outright ignorance of) the rules. In the case of heritage tourists, I explored some of the ways that people from Turkey visit the mosque not as a space for their religious worship but as a heritage site. Despite being imagined as part of a shared Ottoman heritage, the experience of heritage tourists moving through Eyüp Sultan can be in tension with the everyday devotional practices that typically fill the mosque. Finally, I turned to the presence of women in the mosque, arguing that the proximity between men and women in the mosque complex and the visibility of women provoked particular (male) anxieties about piety and sacredness.

There are four brief points that I want to draw from this analysis of the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan. First, it suggests that we should complicate our understanding of the geographies of religious and secular that constitute Istanbul today. That geography can be conceptualized in terms of districts – one district is conservative, another liberal, one religious, another secular.266 There is relatively little analysis of the small movements through which people negotiate their

266 Berna Turam correctly argues against focusing on the “bipolar clash between devout Muslims and secularists under the rubric of ‘neighborhood wars’,” instead suggesting that we focus on the “multipolar conflicts in urban space, where authoritarianism meets democratization.” Turam, "The Primacy of Space in Politics," 411.
way through the city. Such an analysis is especially important in what we might assume to be the paradigmatic sacred space of the city: the mosque. In a recent paper on Turkish mosques in the Netherlands, Murat Es makes a key argument for understanding mosques not simply as visual markers on the landscape but as dense loci of socio-spatial practices within which mosque visitors form political, social and religious identities. In following those socio-spatial practices – what I have described as the rules of place – individuals configure themselves as particular sorts of social people. This chapter has shown how those rules can be mediated in multiple ways, including the physical material of the mosque itself, the various public texts posted throughout the mosque, and the imitation (and critique) of other visitors to the mosque. Crucially, to follow a rule of place in the mosque of Eyüp Sultan depends upon a form of equivalence, a set of connections that link this mosque to other places, peoples, and narratives.

Second, the different ways that people follow (or don’t follow) the rules of place opens up a discussion of what Lara Deeb has termed “authentication,” the “[establishment of] the true or correct meaning, understanding, or methods of various religious and social practices and beliefs.” Deeb’s ethnography provides a rich and compelling account of how the community of pious Shi’i in Southern Lebanon authenticates both their political and cultural identities and their religious practices. Places are also authenticated. In a very different context, Dydia DeLyser has examined the ongoing work and labor required to produce a feeling of authenticity in ‘historic’ ghost towns. Thinking in terms of the rules of place encourages us to focus on the ongoing


debates and struggles that produce norms of behavior and interpretation. Authenticity is a fragile product of those debates.

Third, rules of place are the products of different mobilities. This is true in at least two senses. First, the rules of place constrain particular forms of mobility. In Eyüp Sultan, the most visible example of this are the rules that govern the interaction between men and women. Second, the rules of place that apply in Eyüp Sultan are also produced by the different movement of people, narratives, and objects into and out of the mosque. Debates about superstition and saint worship, for example, are shared between different mosques and tomb complexes, but they must also be brought there. There is the ongoing labor of connecting the mosque of Eyüp Sultan to elsewhere. Thought of in this way, we might also think about mobilities not only across space but also across time. Many of Eyüp Sultan’s rules of place are constituted by reference to an authoritative past, although the definition of that past remains an ongoing subject of debate.

The ongoing nature of that debate also reminds us that Eyüp Sultan’s rules also have their own history. The rules of place are “bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant.”

Finally, thinking in terms of the rules of place provides a useful complement to recent debates that conceptualize buildings not as fixed objects but ongoing processes, variously made

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270 Pinto, "Pilgrimage, Commodities, and Religious Objectification: The Making of Transnational Shiism between Iran and Syria."


and unmade.⁷³ One of the key advantages of this approach is that it prompts us to understand the coherence of buildings – such as the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – not as an inherent quality but as the product of contested everyday practices of inhabitation, movement, and consumption.⁷⁴ This chapter has tried to show that buildings – their physical layout, the public texts posted on them, and the people who work in them – are not simply the backdrop for social life but important agents in shaping the rules of place.

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CONCLUSION: GLOBAL CITIES OF ISLAM

Even in American cities, which seem so much alike, where people seem all to be living the same lives, striving for the same things, thinking the same thoughts, there are still individuals a little out of tune with the times – there are still survivals of a past more loosely woven, there are disconcerting beginnings of a future yet unforseen. – Willa Cather, “Double Birthday”

Introduction

“Eyüp yok olmuş,” some long-time residents of the district say, “Eyüp has disappeared.”

Even if we bracket off their nostalgia as a necessarily partial and incomplete memory of Eyüp’s past, there is no doubt that Eyüp’s material landscape has been almost completely transformed over the past century. The gardens and orchards that once sat between tightly clustered wooden houses are now gone; so too are the factories and warehouses that grew up in their place, the small shops that catered to local workers; those factories and warehouses are gone, replaced by new roads, small housing cooperatives, restaurants catering to visitors from outside, squares paved in concrete and marble. And yet, some buildings persist – above all, the landscape of belief that forms the center of Eyüp: the mosque of Eyüp Sultan and the constellation of tombs, graveyards, smaller mosques, and medreses that spin out from the district’s center. This dissertation’s overarching argument has been that Eyüp’s material landscape – and its religious landscape in particular – provides one key medium through which visitors and residents articulate a form of Islam at once grounded in place and spanning time and space. Because of the density of Eyüp’s religious landscape – and its perceived durability – the district functions as a

powerful site of continuity in a city and country marked by ruptures between the religious and the secular, the traditional and the modern, and the past and the present.

Working both historically and in the ethnographic present, this dissertation has shown that that landscape is in fact far more mutable and fragile than one might first assume. Documenting the changing politics and practices of the built environment, I have tried to show how Eyüp has at once disappeared – yok olmuş – and maintained its place relative to the world around it. The puzzle of Eyüp is to understand its ruptures and continuity not as a case of either/or (Either Eyüp is unchanged or it is gone) but as a fascinating instance of both/and (Eyüp is both unchanged and gone).

In the process, this dissertation has tried to speak to a broader issue of contemporary relevance: What is the place of Islam within the fabric of urban life? This question is usually answered in one of two ways, depending on whether Islam is understood to be ‘in place’ or ‘out of place.’ In cities across the ‘traditional’ Muslim world – cities in which Islam is assumed to be ‘in place’ – attention is usually focused on the ways that the practice and understanding of Islam is being reshaped by new modes of political governance, projects of economic development, and forms of cultural consumption. But Islam is understood as belonging to the city – sometimes accused of inauthenticity, the challenge of how to understand spectacles of faith.

On the other hand, the visibility of Islam in cities of the ‘non-Muslim’ world – a world in which Islam is assumed to be ‘out of place’ – has raised a different set of questions frequently oriented toward the question of belonging. Whether understood in terms of citizenship, dress, assimilation, mosques – Islam is somehow understood to be in tension with the forms of urban citizenship ostensibly shared between cities of the non-Muslim world.
In Eyüp, these questions take a very specific form. As I argued in the Introduction, from one perspective, Eyüp’s Islamic identity is rooted in place. That rootedness finds its most tangible expression in Eyüp’s religious landscape. For those people, Eyüp produces a powerful feeling of continuity, shared belief, and historical depth. From another perspective, however, Eyüp’s built environment marks not continuity but rupture, an ongoing transformation of people, lifestyles, and landscapes. For them, Eyüp’s Islamic identity is divided, filled with multiple contested (and sometimes contradictory) meanings. We thus seem to be presented with an impossible choice: Either Eyüp’s identity should be understood as single, essential, and unchanged; or its identity should be understood as plural, fragmented, and changeable. Rather than try to resolve that tension by choosing either continuity or rupture, this dissertation has tried to dwell in the conceptual in-between by thinking of the built environment as a medium of connection.
Islam comes to be in place in the city by means of the built environment, but there are also other dynamics at work: political belonging, the shifting flows of people, ideas, and capital that connect people to the contexts in which they live, and the geographically contingent ways that Islam comes to be lived as a meaningful practice. Even in a moment of globalized Islam, in which the forms and practices of belief in different places seem so similar, where people seem to be living similar lives, striving for the same things, thinking the same thoughts, Eyüp is still a little different, still a little unique. It is a place that points both to the obdurate persistence of ‘local’ forms of belief and to the possible shapes of the future. Stitched together by migration, media, and consumption, the global practices of Islam are becoming more similar, but this has not erased the specificity of grounded forms of Islam, intimate and everyday forms of belief in places like Eyüp. The globalization of belief does not necessarily erase local specificity but
instead encourages the reconfiguration of places like Eyüp as sites of belief that are simultaneously ‘unique’ and closely connected to circuits of authority, imagination, and power that span cities, nations, even the globe.

**Summarizing the Dissertation**

This dissertation opened with the history of Eyüp’s transformation during the 1940s and 50s. It used three sites – the Eyüp Halkevi, the mosque complex of Zal Mahmut Paşa, and Eyüp’s road network – as a lens through which to understand the uneven ways that Eyüp was made modern. Following these three projects – and not a single totalizing ‘modernizing’ impulse – was an attempt to show these overlapping projects that produced a complicated formation of modern Eyüp. Making Eyüp modern was necessarily in dialogue with two things: the Ottoman past and the social practice of Islam. Because both the Ottoman past and the social world of Islam continued to be durable in Eyüp in a way that differed from many other places in Turkey, making Eyüp modern was an especially contested problem. But as I tried to show, the forms of modernity that emerged in the district were not simply imposed from above. Rather, they involved a complicated set of relationships that brought residents into new relationships with the city and nation around them. In a broader sense, this chapter also set out to expand upon Ananya Roy’s recent call to explore the “uneven historical geography” of contemporary cities.²⁷⁶

The second chapter, “Making Eyüp Ottoman,” began from a seemingly contradictory question: How could a district like Eyüp be made Ottoman? After all, wasn’t the importance of the district a precise function of the unchanged (and unchanging) monuments at Eyüp’s center? Yet I argued that in the aftermath of the 1994 municipal elections that brought the Welfare Party to power in the Eyüp Municipality, Eyüp was transformed in a number of ways in an effort to

make it Ottoman, a transformation that simultaneously positioned the Welfare Party as the proper representative of Eyüp and authorized their ongoing reconfiguration of Eyüp’s landscape. This transformation was accomplished through the telling of new public histories and the restoration and redevelopment of Eyüp’s material landscape. As I showed, this project had its origin well before Mayor Ahmet Genç and the Welfare Party took power in 1994, but it was their ability to leverage political and civil society linkages at multiple levels that made the Welfare Party so effective in making Eyüp Ottoman.

At the same time, I also tried to show that even this notably successful and comprehensive project was itself fragile, incomplete, and patchwork. Making Eyüp Ottoman involved not simply the restoration of ‘old’ buildings, but the production of a complicated quilt of ‘new’ buildings, producing an urban fabric that defies simple description as ‘traditional,’ ‘modern,’ or ‘historic.’ In the process, I traced some of the seams and stitches that hold this patchwork place together. In its way, belief and worship are also an act of stitching, tying people to this place of Islam.

My third chapter, “The Geographies of Ramadan in Eyüp,” focused on the complex of buildings built by the Eyüp Municipality to mark the arrival of Ramadan in 2013. I argued that the complex’s construction was part of the municipality’s effort to create a religiously oriented audience that shared a common set of experiences and conformed to a common set of norms. The tangibility – not just the visibility – of the complex thus played a key role in regulating the ways that Islam became a visible part of public life. Rather than producing a single audience, however, this chapter showed how the complex produced a diverse range of opinions. While competing ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ attitudes informed some of those opinions, the complex produced a more fundamental disagreement about external appearance and internal truth.
In the process, I tried to show how the meaningfulness of Eyüp understood in relationship to questions of tangibility and visibility. Some people encountered this landscape as one of order and beauty. Others saw it as literally and figuratively hollow, mere spectacle standing in for substance. At stake was not simply a political disagreement; it had something to do with how people understood their own religious practice in relationship to the built environment around them. What is the geography of tangible Islam? Scholars have right to point out that even a predominantly Muslim city like Istanbul is marked by a distinct geography in which ‘religious’ zones are contrasted with ‘secular’ ones, and in which even religious zones differ markedly. These differences are the product of a number of factors, including the socioeconomic composition of particular neighborhoods to the historical density of mosques, medreses, and tombs to the political identity of local municipalities. To that work, this chapter added a reminder that Istanbul’s geographies of observance are also temporally contingent, with a number of rhythms that coincide during the month of Ramadan.

Finally, “Out of Place in Eyüp Sultan?” explored the overlapping rules that govern the ways that different groups of people are supposed to move through the mosque complex of Eyüp Sultan. Focusing on three groups generally positioned as ‘out of place’ in the mosque – foreigners, Turkish tourists, and women – this chapter provided an ethnographically grounded account of the different ways that the rules of place are articulated, transmitted and enforced in Eyüp Sultan.

In doing so, I highlighted four broader points. First, by providing a closely observed analysis of the small movements that characterize urban life in Istanbul, this chapter enriched our understanding of the geographies of religious and secular that constitute Istanbul today. That geography can be conceptualized in terms of ‘districts’ – one district is conservative, another liberal, one religious, another secular. This chapter provided one account of the way that ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ ways of moving through the same space can actually overlap. Second, it tried to show how acts of ‘authentication’ were linked to the articulation and reproduction of appropriate ‘rules of place’ that structured how people were supposed to behave and interpret the mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Third, I suggested that Eyüp Sultan’s rules of place be understood not solely in relation to the mosque but also in relation to the different spatial and temporal mobilities that constitute life in Istanbul. Finally, I argued that careful attention to the rules of place in Eyüp Sultan provided a useful complement to ongoing efforts to rethink buildings not as fixed objects (with fixed rules) but as ongoing processes, variously made and unmade. One of the key advantages of this approach is that it prompts us to understand the coherence of buildings – such as the mosque of Eyüp Sultan – not as an inherent quality but as the product of contested everyday practices of inhabitation, movement, and consumption. This chapter has tried to show that buildings – their physical layout, the public texts posted on them, and the people who work in them – are not simply the backdrop for social life but important agents in shaping the rules of place.

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278 Turam, "The Primacy of Space in Politics."

279 Jacobs, "A Geography of Big Things."; Rose, Degen, and Basdas, "More on ‘Big Things’: Building Events and Feelings."

Future Research Trajectories

Not surprisingly, the process of writing and revising my dissertation has highlighted a number of topics for further research and development. Below, I organize those topics into two groups. The first concerns issues specific to my dissertation, including the need to engage recent political, social, and urban changes in Eyüp. The second group includes a number of questions that emerged from my research but are embedded within a broader intellectual context.

As I suggested above, urban development, tourism, and the Syrian Civil War continue to reshape Eyüp’s social and material landscapes. Mayor Remzi Aydın (elected in 2014 and replacing Ismail Kavuncu) has gone on record several times over the past year to stress the need for continuing urban redevelopment (kentsel dönüşüm) in Eyüp. Mayor Aydın cites three linked issues: Eyüp’s historic character (urban redevelopment will protect the district’s ‘historic’ buildings); the infrastructural faults of some of Eyüp’s building stock (some buildings are vulnerable to earthquakes); and the ongoing issues with automobile traffic in Eyüp’s center (both because of the press of visitors and increasing levels of car ownership in general). At the same time, the neighboring Gaziosmanpaşa Municipality is the site of a fierce struggle between two groups fighting over how urban redevelopment happens in their neighborhoods. On one side, the local municipality – acting with the support of central government in Ankara – and an alleged ‘construction mafia’ is in the process of expropriating a number of neighborhoods in order to ‘improve’ the city. On the other side, opponents – civil-society organizations, professional chambers, some political parties, and a number of residents – have organized against the expropriations. They have been able to learn from a series of struggles that have played out
across Istanbul over the past fifteen years. One of the key questions that my dissertation research raised – but never answered – is how urban redevelopment will take place in Eyüp. Will the district’s social composition and its legal designation as a historic protected area (sit alanı) change the sorts of strategies being pursued by the local municipality?

Figure 37: Screenshot of a video posted by the Eyüp Municipality to Facebook in May 2016 advertising President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s participation in the opening of 13 new buildings in Eyüp. May 4, 2016.

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A second issue to which I plan to return is the relationship between political connections and tourist-oriented development in Eyüp’s central district. Beginning in the early 2000s, but accelerating with the election of Ismail Kavuncu as Eyüp Mayor in 2009, a number of heritage properties (civil architecture, not religious buildings) were transformed into boutique hotels, upscale restaurants and cafes, and headquarters for civil society organizations loosely affiliated with the ruling AKP. From what I understand, the conflict between the government and the supporters of Fethullah Gülen has impacted the economic success of some of those tourist properties – hotels and restaurants known to be associated with Gülen began receiving much less official patronage. While I did not pursue those questions between 2011-13, I hope to return and ask how the fallout between those one-time allies has transformed Eyüp’s central district.

A third question brings together questions of urban redevelopment and tourism: There were some signs during my fieldwork that some properties in Eyüp were being purchased by foreign citizens from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. Beginning in 2013, increasing numbers of refugees from Syria were also resettled in some of Eyüp’s districts. I plan to explore how political and economic shifts since 2013 have affected the social life of Eyüp’s neighborhoods, property regimes, and the district’s cultural politics. In what ways has the emergence of a more explicitly global Muslim identity under the AKP intersected with the grounded forms of sociability and belief in Eyüp? Have increased numbers of Arab tourists produced new tensions in the district?

My research has also opened up two projects that I would like to develop. The first looks at the 20th century transformation of the vakıf system. As part of the Turkish Republic’s secularizing, modernizing, and nationalizing reforms, new vakıf were outlawed and the administration of Ottoman-era foundations was reorganized under a central authority. State
authorities began an uneven process of dismantling the network of *vakıf* properties around the country. Despite these changes, the *vakıf* system continued in two senses: First, because most of Turkey’s major Ottoman heritage sites were registered as *vakıf* properties, the visibility of those mosques, medreses, and markets across Turkey marked the stubborn endurance of the *vakıf* system. In a second and less visible sense, *vakıf* properties’ legally inalienable status often intersected with and obstructed the local development agendas of mayors, government clerks, engaged citizens, and urban migrants. Today, the disposition of *vakıf* properties continues to generate fierce political debates, particularly in the context of properties registered to Greek and Armenian communities.\(^\text{282}\) While the 20th century transformation of the *vakıf* system has merited some attention,\(^\text{283}\) there has been relatively analysis of the way that the changing status and administration of the *vakıf* system has impacted projects of urban transformation and preservation.

My second project will focus on the Istanbul intellectual Süheyl Ünver (1898-1986), who played a key role in bridging the gap between the lived experience of the late Ottoman Empire and the reinvention of the Ottoman past in the 1970s and 80s. In many ways, Ünver embodied Istanbul’s complicated engagement with ‘Western’ modernity: He was educated as a doctor and spent time studying medicine in France, but he was also deeply enmeshed in the social world of Sufi *tarıks* in Istanbul, even after their official proscription in 1924. As migration and


modernization reshaped Istanbul’s landscape in the 1940s and 50s, Ünver became one of the most important observers of the city’s vanishing Ottoman tombs, cemeteries, and houses.

Ünver made many of these observations in hundreds of personal journals, now collected in the Süleymaniye Manuscripts Collection. Combining sketches, newspaper clippings, postcards, and Ünver’s annotations in Ottoman and modern Turkish, these journals offer a fascinating record of continuity and rupture. On the one hand, these journals document the ongoing forms of the Ottoman past, including social relationships and artistic forms like calligraphy and ebru. On the other, Ünver’s journals also mark the very destruction of that Ottoman past. For example, in one journal about Eyüp, Ünver painted a small sketch of two Ottoman houses to which he later added the following note: “Unfortunately, they were destroyed several years later.” In a very tangible sense, Ünver’s journals are boundary objects, marking both the persistence of the Ottoman past and its erasure. This project would help further historicize the emergence of the Ottoman past and broaden our understanding of how the built environment – and Istanbul’s landscape in particular – came to be saturated with cultural meaning and political force.\(^{284}\)

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work in Eyüp. My research there has opened up an incredible range of personal and professional relationships. This dissertation – rich as it is – has only skinned the surface of the Eyüp that they (and I) know and love. Regardless of where my professional trajectory takes me, I hope to keep this district at the center of the way that I continue to learn about Islam and the city. Even if our conversations have not entered fully

\(^{284}\) Christine Philliou, "When the Clock Strikes Twelve: The Inception of an Ottoman Past in Early Republican Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011).
Bertram, *Imagining the Turkish House: Collective Visions of Home*. Türeli, "Heritagisation of the “Ottoman/Turkish House” in the 1970s: Istanbul-Based Actors, Associations and Their Networks."
into this thesis, my hope is that my friends and interlocutors in Eyüp recognize at least a part of their Eyüp within these pages.
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