Architectural Mediations:
The Reconfiguration of Muslim Urban Life in 20th Century Istanbul

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the continuing significance of Ottoman-era architecture and built environment in the reconfiguration of Muslim urban life in 20th century Istanbul. Drawing upon archival and ethnographic research data from the historical Fatih district, the dissertation explores three intersecting themes. Firstly, it examines how the historical memory of the Ottoman architectural practices and institutions in the district continues to inform contemporary space-making initiatives. The focus here is on the transformation of the Ottoman *waqf* or pious endowment as a concept and practice in the 20th century, and its revival in the last few decades to support the socio-religious and cultural needs of the district's inhabitants. Secondly, this dissertation delves into the role of the monumental Fatih mosque complex and other religious institutions in shaping the district's intellectual heritage. Specifically, it explores the effect of Ottoman modernization and Republican secularization on the district's religious institutions and spaces. From the late 19th century, the identity and functions of the Ottoman scholarly community saw an expansion beyond the traditional '*ulama*' class to embracing public intellectuals, academic scholars, poets, calligraphers, and Sufi personalities, giving rise to multiple intellectual discourses and movements. Lastly, the dissertation studies the integration of the Ottoman built environment of the district into Istanbul's contemporary neoliberal urbanization, thereby producing competing Muslim publics and counterpublics. By examining multiple lifestyles, religious aspirations, and everyday political activism, this dissertation provides broader insights into the evolving nature of Muslim urbanity. It argues that the dynamism of traditional built environments and their heritage in a globalizing context is a process not solely determined by political and economic elites, but rather shaped by multiple forms of urban aspirations, innovations, and experiments.

Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat se penche sur l'importance encore actuelle de l'architecture et de l'espace urbain d'époque Ottomane, dans la reconfiguration de la vie urbaine musulmane à Istanbul au XXème siècle. S'appuyant sur des archives et des données ethnographiques recueillies dans le quartier historique de Fatih, cette thèse se penche plus précisément sur trois thèmes qui se recoupent. En premier lieu, elle examine le travail de mémoire historique sous-jacent aux pratiques architecturales, ainsi qu'aux vestiges des institutions Ottomanes qui continuent d'informer les initiatives de création d'espaces dans ce quartier de nos jours. A ce stade, l'enquête se penche notamment sur la transformation historique du concept Ottoman de *waqf* (dotation pieuse), tel qu'il est mis en pratique au XXème siècle, ainsi que sur sa réémergence au cours des dernières décennies, pour répondre aux besoins socio-religieux et culturels des habitants du quartier. En deuxième lieu, nous passerons à une analyse plus précise du rôle du complexe monumental de la mosquée de Fatih, ainsi que celui d'autres institutions religieuses, dans le maintien du patrimoine intellectuel du quartier. Il s'agit dès lors de chercher à comprendre, à l'aune de nos observations dans ce quartier, comment la modernisation Ottomane d'une part, ainsi que la sécularisation républicaine des institutions et des espaces religieux d'autre part, ont élargi le champ d'application de la notion de culture savante Ottomane classique. Centrée à l'origine sur la classe traditionnelle des *'ulama'*, à partir de la fin du 19ème siècle, la catégorie de « l'intellectuel » évolue jusqu'à englober autant des intellectuels publics, que des universitaires, des poètes, des calligraphes et des personnalités soufies, ce qui donne naissance à une multiplicité de discours et de mouvances en son sein. Le troisième volet de notre enquête se base sur une analyse plus rapprochée de la place que l'on donne aujourd'hui à l'héritage Ottomane du quartier dans le cadre de phénomènes plus récents d'urbanisation néolibérale, entrepris à Istanbul notamment. Nous analyserons le rôle que celle-ci aura pris dans la production de publics et de contre-publics musulmans concurrentiels dans la Turquie d'aujourd'hui. Par le biais d'observations rapprochées du croisement et de la multiplicité des modes de vie, ainsi que des aspirations religieuses et l'activisme politique au quotidien, ce travail entend offrir des perspectives plus larges sur la nature évolutive de l'urbanité musulmane. La thèse soutient que le dynamisme des environnements bâtis traditionnels, en tant que patrimoine dans un contexte de mondialisation, est un processus qui n'est pas uniquement déterminé par les décisions diverses d'élites politiques et économiques, mais qui se révèle largement façonné *in situ*, par la multiplicité des aspirations, des innovations et des expériences urbaines qui s'y rencontrent.

Note on Transliteration

The dissertation primarily adheres to the simplified style of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES). In instances where Ottoman and Turkish names are frequently employed, they are rendered according to the modern Turkish spelling standard. However, for general terms related to Islamic traditions, such as *waqf* and '*ulama*', the Arabic spelling is used. Pluralization for both Turkish and Arabic words is done by adding an 's'.

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Introduction

On June 26, 2021, the Fatih municipality unveiled an exhibition on the life and work of Ibnülemin Mahmud Kemal Inal (1850-1957) at their newly opened art gallery. The exhibition was part of a series of events organized by the municipality to commemorate early 20th century public intellectuals who hailed from the Fatih district. Although the exhibition was curated to narrate Ibnülemin's biography and intellectual contributions, the photos and video installations also aimed to evoke nostalgia for the district's bygone times, spaces, and intellectual cultures. During the inaugural online session, the current mayor of the Fatih district, Ergün Turan, highlighted the importance of organizing such events:

> Even though Fatih has drastically changed from the Ottoman era to Republican times to the present, the soul (*ruh*) of its history is still alive in the streets of Fatih. The cemeteries and graves of Fatih carry history since 1453. The historical monuments and the important architectural innovations of our civilization have been produced and embodied in Fatih…In the last twenty years, many historical monuments and buildings have been rebuilt (*inşa etmek*) and renovated. We have given them their due respect. However, we have not been able to revive (*ihya etmek*) the social functions that these monuments had in the past. The monuments and spaces we have renovated in Fatih require a significant revival. Revival is not just the duty of a government or a municipality. It involves the participation of the community, along with the preservation of the cultural and intellectual heritage of the district. For example, to revive the function of buildings like *külliyes* (mosque complexes), *madrasas, sebil*s (fountains), *sibyan mekteb*s (Ottoman era elementary schools), there must be a social and intellectual capital to grow around these buildings (Turan 2021).

After his election as the mayor of the Fatih District in 2019, Ergün Turan has been vocal in acknowledging the failures or limitations of the projects involved in restoring the Ottoman era architectures and buildings in Istanbul. The mayor has repeatedly mentioned the question of 'revival' of the district's intellectual culture. Consequently, over the last few years, there has been a renewed interest in renovating and reopening buildings that used to function as socio-religious and educational institutions, such as *madrasa*s, *imaret* complexes (soup kitchens and hospices), and *sibyan mekteb*s.

Figure 1: An installation at the exhibition on Ibnülemin portraying photographs of him at his mansion with his intellectual circle, his library and his musical compositions. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

For many observers, the revival of the Ottoman urban heritage reflects the present-day Turkish political landscape dominated by the ideological struggle between Kemalist secularism and Islamism. After undergoing radical social experiments of secularization and Westernization since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Islamism emerged as a social movement that championed an Islamic revival in Turkey. This was understood as a religious and political response that aimed to reclaim the religious and cultural legacy of the nation's Ottoman-Islamic heritage. Furthermore, the spatial expressions of Islamic revivalism is also recognized as a broader reorientation of religion and secularism due to the political and economic transformation the nation has experienced since the 1980s (Tuğal 2009; Balkan et al. 2015; Walton 2017). Specifically, the nation has witnessed a shift in political power from secular elites to religious conservatives, paving the way for an emergent Muslim middle class who constantly negotiate for their political and social representation (Göle 2002). The transfer of power, according to this scholarship, has also resulted in the resurgence of pious Islamic lifestyles combined with the revival of Ottoman cultural heritage mediated through different Ottoman-era buildings and spaces (Walton 2017).

The restoration and revival initiatives of the Fatih municipality undeniably intersect with the larger political and economic interests of the current ruling government led by the AKP (Justice and Development Party, Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi). Since the early 1990s, with the success of the conservative RP (Welfare Party, Turkish: Refah Partisi) in the Istanbul municipal election, various efforts have been made to restore Istanbul's Ottoman heritage. With Turkey's economic success in the 2000s, the restoration and preservation of the Ottoman heritage of Istanbul and other cities in Turkey became an important project for the AKP. Given this context of the Islamist ascendancy to power and their efforts to reclaim the Ottoman legacy, space-making has largely been understood as a top-down process, where the agency to shape urbanism is determined by the political elites.

However, the dissertation argues that this understanding only partially explains how Ottoman-Islamic urban institutions such as *külliyes*, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, shrines, and mausoleums continue to mediate religious discourses, practices, and cultural sensibilities. While many of these institutions had a different function during the Ottoman era, the architecture, the built environment, and the spaces they produced have become a significant force in everyday religious space-making activities by different actors in the city (Henkel 2007; Hammond 2023). This necessitates us to focus not only on how the political elites use the built environment and heritage to serve their interests but also how various urban religious aspirations, innovations and experiments are mediated through them.

While this dissertation acknowledges the ideologically rooted power struggles in postcolonial Muslim societies and the role of global capitalism in defining and configuring spaces for accumulation and profit-making in contemporary cities, it suggests a historical and sociological inquiry into the transformative nature of the Islam in urban contexts. Recent interventions in the discipline of the sociology of Islam suggest the need for a critical exploration of the ways in which Muslim societies engage and adapt to modernization and globalization through the reconfiguration of knowledge-power matrices, socio-economic institutions, and cultural networks, thereby reinventing heterogeneous lifeworlds (Salvatore 2016; Bamyeh 2019). My dissertation responds to these critical interventions by examining religion's spatial expression as a discursive and material process in which religious discourses and practices, the built environment, and changing material culture are mutually constitutive.

Dissertation Objectives

This dissertation explores how the Ottoman-era architecture and built environment of the Fatih district in Istanbul function as a meta-force in the reconfiguration of Muslim urban life in the 20th century. In Istanbul's context, many historical neighborhoods and districts carry a certain collective social identity. This social identity is historically shaped by the material, institutional, and heterogeneous everyday socio-religious and cultural practices of the community that resides there. The Fatih district is often perceived and represented through such a social identity. Like many other localities in Istanbul, Fatih is generally understood or represented through the binaries of 'traditional versus modern,' 'religious versus secular,' or 'conservative versus liberal.' For example, a popular saying in the district goes, "Religious knowledge is in Fatih; it cannot be transferred to Aksaray" (*İlim, Fatihten Aksaray'a inmez*). Fatih is identified as a locality that historically housed religious institutions and authorities for centuries, while Aksaray, a neighboring district came to be known for trade and commerce. The common perception of the district as a locality of conservative religious communities could be due to its inseparable connection to the Ottoman past. Over the last four decades, Fatih has gained attention for being an important locality for Islamist activism. Many consider the district as the locus of religious revivalism and conservatism. However, reading and understanding Fatih only through the space of political discourses and activism misrepresents the labyrinth of everyday religiosity and spatiality produced in Fatih. This dissertation breaks down the district's collective social identity by examining its different institutions and spaces in changing times.

In many of Istanbul's districts and neighborhoods, the Ottoman era built environment has disappeared or become dysfunctional over the last century (Behar 2003). For example, the important centers of Ottoman urbanism, such as Süleymaniye, Sultan Ahmed, and Eminönü districts have now become localities for tourism, musealization, and the commodification of cultural heritage (Aykaç 2022). In contrast, the Fatih district has often resisted such changes and continues to mediate diverse historically rooted religious and cultural discourses. The concentration of a large number of Ottoman era buildings in the district is said to be protecting its historical built environment and socio-religious identity.

Figure 2: The Fatih mosque complex and the district. Salt Research (CALIST026202)

The district's historical importance can be traced to 1463 when the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (ca.1432-1481) decided to build a monumental mosque complex on the site after conquering the city. The construction of numerous monumental mosque complexes, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, and shrines in the later Ottoman period transformed the district into a space reflecting the enduring political and socio-religious presence of Ottoman and Islamic urban traditions. They also significantly impacted the configuration of religious authority and institutions, as well as the production and circulation of knowledge, pious practices, and spaces in the district. While Ottoman modernization in the 19th century and early 20th century Republican secularization have significantly transformed Istanbul's built environment and urban culture, the Fatih district is widely conceived as a region that has preserved the Ottoman-Islamic intellectual, cultural, and material heritage. Hence, due to its irreplaceable Ottoman heritage, the Fatih district provides a unique case study to explore the discursive and material transmissions of Islam, and to examine how it continues to inform the everyday lifeworld of its inhabitants.

Drawing upon 18 months of collection of archival and ethnographic research data from the Fatih district, three dimensions of space-making are central to my dissertation project. Firstly, the dissertation examines how the historical memory of the Ottoman architectural practices and

institutions in the district continues to inform contemporary space-making initiatives. Here, I look at the revival of the Ottoman *waqf* or pious endowment as a concept and practice that serves the socio-religious and cultural needs of the district's inhabitants. Secondly, the dissertation delves into the role the monumental Fatih mosque complex and other religious complexes play in shaping the district's intellectual heritage. Specifically, I examine how Ottoman modernization and Republican secularization transformed the functions of the district's religious institutions and spaces by expanding the classical Ottoman scholarly identity ('*ulama*'), which previously focused solely on Islamic theology and related discourses. In the 20th century, this transformation encompassed public intellectuals, academic scholars, poets, calligraphers, and Sufi personalities. I explore how these changes have given rise to multiple intellectual discourses and movements. Lastly, the dissertation explores the integration of the Ottoman built environment of the district into the neoliberal urbanization of Istanbul and how it has produced competing Muslim publics and counterpublics. By examining multiple lifestyles and everyday political activism, the dissertation aims to provide broader insights into the evolving nature of Muslim urbanity.

Contribution to the Literature

    a) **Conceptualizing Muslim Cities, Urbanism and Urbanity**

During the first half of the 20th century, numerous studies contributed to the conceptualization of an essentialized notion of the 'Islamic city.' This conceptualization was informed by the prevailing hegemonic Orientalist and colonial discourse that approached the East, and more specifically, the Muslim societies, as homogenous and unchanging (Said 1978). Influenced by Max Weber's comparative study of Oriental and Occidental cities ([1921] 1966), Orientalist scholarship postulated a static Muslim urban life determined by a specific type of urban morphology and Islamic law across time and space (Marcais, W. 1928; Marcais, G. 1940; Von Grunebaum 1955). It apprehended Muslim urban life as largely revolving around a mosque situated in the center of a city, surrounded by other buildings such as markets, public baths and encircling residential quarters. In this form of urbanism, what defined the norms and conducts of everyday life, ranging from matters of private life to commercial transactions, was Islamic law (*shari'a*).

       Since the 1970s, critiques of Orientalist discourse (Hodgson 1974; Said 1978) have led scholars to review the essentialist prototype of the 'Islamic City.' Instead of developing a

prototype or an ideal type, new scholarship has emphasized studying how different forces shaped the urban culture of cities in which Muslims were politically and socially dominant. In this regard, the works of historian Ira Lapidus and anthropologist Dale Eickelman provide important insights. Turning away from previous studies' essentialization and formalistic approaches, Lapidus and Eickelman advocate an examination of the heterogeneous factors that contributed to and sustained Muslim urbanism. Lapidus aptly summarizes this approach: "Developed simultaneously in different places, grounded in the interchange of diverse peoples and ideas, and influenced by broad economic, cultural, and other historical forces, Muslim city society is understandable only in the context of Muslim history" (Lapidus 1973, 22). Similarly, Dale Eickelman's anthropological study of 20th century Boujad (Morocco) dismisses many stereotypes related to the concept of the Islamic city. By studying the everyday social organization of Boujad's inhabitants, and how they interact with and comprehend urban life, Eickelman highlights the importance of understanding the nature of socio-religious networks and the cultural milieu in which Muslim urban life is constituted (Eickelman 1974).

Janet Abu-Lughod's publication of the seminal paper 'The Islamic City-Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance' (1987) is considered to be an important intervention in this early revisionist critique of the concept of the Islamic city. Abu-Lughod problematized the focus on the physical characteristics of North African cities in the studies of French orientalist scholars such as William Marcais (1928), Georges Marcais (1940) and Von Gustav Grunebaum (1955). Without totally dismissing the relevance of how Islamic institutions and authorities shaped Muslim cities and urbanism, she suggests researchers study the social organization of Muslim-majority cities from a trans-regional and trans-cultural perspective. These new interventions have led to a reorientation in the study of Muslim urbanism by taking into account multiple factors, such as socio-religious, economic and political aspects, that shape diverse urbanisms across the Muslim world (AlSayyad 1999; Grabar 2006; Jayyusi et al. 2008; Hammond 2020).

A central concept that has informed many new studies is how the *waqf* (pious endowment/foundation), as both a socio-religious concept and practice, significantly shaped the urbanization of Muslim cities in the post-Mongol context and in the successful consolidation of the political and socio-religious institutions of the early modern Muslim empires (Bonine 1998, Hoexter 1998; Leeuwen 1999, Arjomand 2007). The autonomous characteristics of the *waqf*

played a pivotal role in the long-term sustainability of numerous socio-religious institutions, including mosque complexes, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, shrines, hospitals, soup kitchens, and caravanserais across the Muslim world. It facilitated a bottom-up process of urbanization by upholding religious norms and values in the public spheres and spaces of the city, contributing to the flourishing of a cosmopolitan civility (Salvatore 2016). In addition, the *waqf* has also been studied as a socio-legal concept that profoundly reshaped property relations, and public and private philanthropic practices in the Muslim world in the confrontation with modern state secularization projects (Moumtaz 2021). My dissertation builds on this literature, and inquires how Ottoman-era *waqf* properties shaped the production and consolidation of an Ottoman built environment and how the historical memory of *waqf* continues to mediate everyday religious discourses and practices in the Fatih district in the 20th century. How does the revival of *waqf* discourse through restoring and preserving Ottoman architectures intersect with the political and economic paradigms of neoliberal urbanism?

Inspired by Marshall Hodgson's (1974) significant concept of the Islamicate, which understands civilizational matrices in Muslim societies as resulting from their interaction and adaptation to diverse religious cultures, contemporary studies on Muslim cities have suggested developing an understanding of Islamicate urbanism. Islamicate urbanism approaches Muslim cities "from a dynamic nexus of social, economic and political transformations unique to it and to a specific time and region" and the "variations in urban forms are therefore tempered by inherited forms upon which the Islamicate culture will have transformed the urban landscape" (Nasser 2002, 176). Consequently, instead of attributing a pristine Arab-Islamic characteristic to the cities, their development and evolution are understood to be the result of cross-cultural and inter-religious interactions and exchanges (Rahimi and Şahin 2018). Similarly, Hodgson's historical-sociological framework has also introduced new interventions in the study of the sociology of Islam, emphasizing how political power is intertwined with institutional patronage, discursive knowledge production and the configuration of everyday civic culture and urbanities in the history of Muslim societies (Arnason et al. 2007; Salvatore 2018 et al.).

In urban historical studies, several new comparative case studies have appeared over the last two decades to comprehend how patrimonial political power and institutional patronage had a deep impact upon the urbanisms of early modern Muslim cities. Stephen Blake's study on the development of the North Indian city Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) in the 17th and 18th centuries

demonstrates how the patrimonial-bureaucratic organization of the Mughal state had a long-lasting impact on the architectural patronage, institutions and everyday urban culture (Blake 1991). Rather than approaching the physical and social characteristics of Shahjahanabad as being solely determined by Islamic culture, Blake views them as reflective of Islamic and Hindu influences. The notion of patrimonial-bureaucracy enabled Blake to compare the urban culture of Shahjahanabad to early modern Muslim cities such as Isfahan and Istanbul. Similarly, architectural and urban historian Gülru Necipoğlu's comparative study of Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal architectural culture notes that monumental religious complexes and buildings constructed during the early modern Islamic empires were not a simple act of construction but also produced "specific institutions and modes of human interaction" (Necipoğlu 2021, 256). The dissertation deepens these observations by drawing attention to the role of material mediation in transmitting Islam, enabled by architectural patronages and the production of built environments. Furthermore, the dissertation underscores the transformative nature of an urban tradition shaped by early modern Ottoman-Islamic political and religious institutional discourses and their influence in mediating everyday spatial practices and relations in contemporary Istanbul.

New research on the urban history of Muslim societies has also called for examining not only the actions of the elite, but also how ordinary people have shaped urban spaces and localities, and how they underwent changes in the confrontation with colonialism and modernity (Arnaud 2008; Hudson 2008; Rahman 2015; Susewind and Taylor 2015). These new studies highlight how neighborhoods became the functional space of everyday interaction and sociality for Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants, and how they provided a strong sense of identity and regulated the norms and values of public life (Behar 2003; Boyar and Fleet 2010; Freitag 2020). This intervention has also prompted an examination of the micro dimensions of Muslim urban life by considering urban enclaves and neighborhoods as important sites for the production of heterogenous forms of urbanities (Sinha et al 2013; Alimia et al. 2018).

As Muslim societies have had to negotiate with the hegemonic European models of urban development projects and governance since the 19th century, the concept of urbanity, rather than urbanism—which denotes the macro development of a city shaped by different ideological, political, and economic processes—provides more nuances in understanding how Muslim societies experience urban life in the present. In approaching urbanity, I find Nora Lafi's

conceptualization helpful, as it posits urbanity in Ottoman cities as a collective activity that involved both elites and the common people in organizing the civic life of the city. Lafi suggests avoiding the understanding of urbanity as solely defined by political and ruling elites or as something appropriated solely by the people from below (Lafi 2018, 12). According to Lafi,

> [The] form of the local assembly, the governance of the urban space was also the responsibility of a collective urban civic body. The civic sphere, in such contexts, was, of course, not democratic or egalitarian in nature – an anachronistic concept in this historical context. It was limited to a small number of notables. These notables, however, were supposed to answer to more general principles (such as the Islamic precept of the *hisba*) and represented larger groups: guilds, confessional communities, traders' associations, the populations of their respective neighbourhood, and the members of their confessional communities. This dimension of civic spirit was key in the very definition of the city and in the constitution of urbanity as its spatialized materialization (Lafi 2022, 19).

Here, the Islamic concept of *hisba*, or common good and shared ethics, plays an important role in shaping everyday conduct and relations in urban life. While this dissertation does not specifically explore the concept of *hisba*, it examines how religious and cultural ideas about a good life are shared and contested in the Fatih district. In addition, while Lafi's study is confined to the Ottoman period, my dissertation illustrates how the legacy of Ottoman heritage continues to influence contemporary urbanity in the Fatih district. What are the historical, social, and material processes that are influential in configuring diverse forms of religious aspirations and activities in the district, as mediated through Ottoman-era buildings and institutions? How does this process complicates the secular and neoliberal visions of urbanism in Istanbul?

b) Architecture, Built Environment and Mediations

If Muslim cities are not monolithic and static as envisioned by the early 20th century Orientalist scholarship, what framework would be helpful to understand present-day urban life in historical Muslim cities and localities? My dissertation draws upon the concept of built environment to comprehend the role of religious architectures, institutions and spaces in mediating the everyday urbanities in the Fatih district. This dissertation is largely indebted to the multidisciplinary theoretical conceptualizations that analyze the dynamic relationship between the organization of social life through architectural practices and the production of built environments.

Recent historical and archeological interventions in the study of religion and urbanism suggest that the study of interactions between lived religion, built form and ancient cities is relevant for examining the continuing relevance of religious aspirations and their material manifestations in urban contexts (Urciuoli and Rupke 2018). The material transformation of urban spaces through cross cultural and religious interactions were vital in altering the way in which religion was practiced, experienced and remembered (Harmansah 2013). One set of literature that I found helpful in my research comprises archaeology studies that examine the archaeological remnants of Mediterranean civilizations. These studies recognize the multiple forms of city structures, material culture, and urbanisms that existed, while also highlighting the central role that religion played in shaping the material and social organization of Mediterranean cities (Rami 2008; Droogan 2013). Many cities emerged in response to the constant fluctuations of religious practices and institutions, with religious architectures and buildings often being among the earliest structures built in a community (Kaizer et al. 2013). The archeological inquiries into the Byzantine-Mediterranean era cities has revealed how the Byzantine architectural legacy was inherited and adapted during the construction of monumental architectural complexes and in shaping the built environment of the Ottoman cities (Cerasi 2008; Kafescioğlu 2009; Mihajlovski 2021; Çağaptay 2022; Fowden et al. 2022).

While building on the literature that recognizes the imprint of Byzantine heritage on the Ottoman built environment and urbanism in Istanbul, this dissertation also draws on the poststructural shift in the study of religion and culture. Late 19th and early 20th century sociological and anthropological studies primarily centered on understanding the functionality and meaning of social structure within specific social systems (Lévi-Strauss 1963). In response, poststructuralist interventions have shifted the focus towards exploring how everyday practices and social relations are shaped and formed by technology, built forms, and material culture (Lawrence and Low 1990). For example, in establishing a theory of *habitus*, Bourdieu draws upon the example of the Kabyle house as a metaphor to understand how the built form of a domestic space influences social practices and relations, both in their production and reproduction (1980). This approach facilitates Bourdieu's understanding of human interactions within a built environment, shedding light on the temporal and social organization of community life. The cultural-material turn in sociology approaches the built environment as a product of existing social and political ideological structures. For instance, Foucault observes how

architectural practices profoundly shape social relations, hierarchies, and modes of knowledge production (Foucault 1986). Meanwhile, studies in cultural anthropology have drawn attention to how material culture provides clues to the symbolic interpretation of a religious culture and its historical evolution (Geertz 1973, Turner [1974] 2018; Bellah 2011).

The poststructuralist intervention has also produced new ontological theories of the 'social', which approach the social as a product of interaction between human and non-human actors (Delitz 2017). Sociologist Bruno Latour's work has been important within this context as he insists on the agency of nonhuman agents in assembling and mediating human actions, and its potential in the constant assembling and reassembling of the social (Latour 2005). Inspired by the new theories of social ontology, studies in architectural sociology urge researchers to "incorporate architectural artefacts, actors, and forms of knowledge into general sociology or into sociological theory – in order to understand the social potential of architecture" (Delitz 2017, 43). Here, architecture and the built environment is not examined as something that solely reflects social and ideological structures, but rather urges us to understand their agential capacity to transform social relations and practices within changing historical conditions. By building on this approach, my dissertation examines the potential of Ottoman-era architectures and buildings in reassembling social relations and community life in contemporary Istanbul, and explores the new forms of religious discourses and practices that it constitutes.

The poststructuralist intervention has also produced a variety of scholarship in sociological and anthropological research on the relationship between religion and material culture (Meyer 2009; Houtman and Meyer 2012). For instance, Meyer argues against an essentialized ontological conceptualization of religion, rather "approach religion as a set of human ideas and practices with regard to another, non-empirical sphere—a beyond—which can only be rendered tangible through mediation, and thus requires some sort of media" (Meyer 2020, 3). This intervention has coincided with the emerging scholarship in the sociology and anthropology of Islam, which have been underscoring that an overemphasis on the notion of Islam as discursive tradition (Asad 1986), and the body as the site of pious mediations (Mahmood 2005) has led to the exclusion of localized variations in the material transmission of the Islamic tradition. Instead they urge researchers to recognize the intertwined role of material (architecture, locality, space) and non-material (dreams, jinns) dimensions in shaping everyday Muslim life (Rose 2006; Ho 2006; Mittermaier 2011, Desplat and Dorothea 2014; Taneja 2017).

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Consequently, recent works in the study of Islam have also redirected our attention to the notion of the mediation of Islam through various material cultures, ranging from textual and visual to acoustic technologies that generate religious sensibilities and affects (Eisenlohr 2018; Pokkanali 2020). These recent studies help us to understand the transformative role of material culture in the mediation of the Islamic tradition. By focusing on the built environment, my research draws attention to how discursive as well as material transmissions of the Islamic tradition engage, adapt and transform within shifting historical and social conditions.

A particularly insightful work in examining the role of architectural practices and the production of the built environments in mediating new forms of urbanisms in the Muslim world is Stefan Maneval's recent research on Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Maneval 2019). He draws attention to how shifting architectural practices in Jeddah over the last few decades, influenced by socio-religious and economic factors, have resulted in the production of a new Islamic urbanism. Drawing upon archival and ethnographic findings, Maneval's study highlights the role of the Salafi revivalist discourse (*al-sahwa al-Isamiyah*) in shaping new notions of public and private spaces through architectural practices. His research underscores architectural sociology as a theoretical and methodological framework to examine the role of architectural assemblage and the built environment in mediating the everyday life of Muslims in the city.

In the context of Istanbul, specific neighborhoods that retain the Ottoman built environment play an influential role in mediating faith and pious spaces in urban everyday life (Henkel 2007; Walton 2010; Gökarıksel 2012). They also reflect the continuation of creating pious public spheres and spaces historically central to Ottoman urban social life (Wolper 2003; Gürbüzel 2018). However, the scholarship that has examined the resurgent role of Islam in shaping Istanbul's public spheres and spaces largely attends to the top-down political projects of Islamist movements (Keyder 1999; Tuominen 2010). Few scholars have explored the heterogeneous forms of everyday practices mediated by Ottoman architecture and built environment in Istanbul's historic districts and neighborhoods. Heiko Henkel's study observes how the religious built environment and historic neighborhoods could be influential in shaping religious subjectivities and experiences (Henkel 2007). While acknowledging the importance of the Ottoman built environment in districts such as Fatih in shaping the religious sensibilities of conservative Muslims, Henkel argues that focusing solely on this dimension would "overlook the phenomenological insight that life worlds are not simply there but emerge as the objectively

given environment is perceived and inhabited" (ibid., 67). Similarly, Irfan Ozet's recent work on the Fatih district has shown how political shifts and economic mobility have transformed the habitus of middle-class Muslims, leading many to migrate to districts such as Başakşehir (Ozet 2019). According to Ozet, the district's Ottoman heritage and spaces have become insignificant in mediating an Islamic experience for many individuals and communities who have migrated to middle and upper class districts of Istanbul. While I agree with Henkel's and Ozet's observation that practicing and experiencing Islam are subject to changes and transformed by economic and material conditions, this dissertation examines how the Fatih district's Ottoman heritage continues to inform everyday religious aspirations and a sense of belonging for many in the city.

Timur Hammond's recent work on the Eyup district of Istanbul is an important intervention in understanding the role of the built environment in mediating diverse forms of belonging in the city. Hammond challenges and complicates the approach to the spatial expression of religion as a top-down process as implied in much of the earlier literature. Instead of approaching the built environment as a fixed entity, he examines how state and non-state actors constantly shape and reshape the built environment. The motivations of these actors are diverse, and their actions provide multiple understandings and meanings of Islam as they engage with the Ottoman-era and modern day buildings and institutions of the Eyüp district (Hammond 2023). My dissertation builds on Hammond's work, however, instead of exploring how different actors are constantly acting upon and shaping the meanings of buildings, built environments, and places, my dissertation highlights how the built environment became a meta-force and medium for the transmission of historically articulated Islamic discourses and practices.

c) Religion, Space and Social Change

Having discussed some of the theoretical and empirical works that have studied the dynamic nature of Muslim urban life, I want to turn to a set of methodological and theoretical interventions in historical and analytical sociology that I found useful in understanding the changing nature of everyday Muslim spatialities in the Fatih district.

While historical sociology examines how continuity and changes are constituted within a long-term framework, analytical sociology stresses studying the link between actors, actions, and social outcomes at the micro and macro levels (Barkey 2009). In contrast to the early 20th century scientific and interpretative methods that dominated historical-sociological studies, the

cultural and empirical turn has shifted attention to analytical as well as explanatory methods to explore micro-histories and the ways in which they inform macro-transformations (Delanty and Engin 2003; Sewell 2005). This shift has also led to a theoretical understanding of social change from a spatial perspective. Rather than understanding space as a static setting, it is comprehended as a product of various processes, where cultural, material and spatial forms are incorporated into the study of social relationships (Coleman and Collins 2007; Nonini 2014). In this regard, the spatial theory outlined by French sociologist Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, which conceptualizes space as socially produced by the everyday practices of the inhabitants who dwell within it, has been most influential (Lefebvre [1974] 1991). By that time, inquiries into multiple layers of social relations and structures by examining space and spatialities had become an important methodological approach for historians and sociologists. Similarly, geographer Edward Soja's intervention has been also important in approaching space as a dynamic reality shaped by power relations, real and imaginal perceptions, and historical processes (Soja 1996).

Inspired by the intervention brought by the spatial turn, the spatial perspective on cities has urged researchers to reconceptualize urban space by exploring everyday practices and negotiations and how they produce meaningful assemblages, socio-spatial relations, and belongingness in cities (McFarlane 2011; Junxi Qian 2014; Mills and Hammond 2016). By treating space as an analytical concept, this dissertation examines the role of religion in producing spaces and localities and looks at the historical, social, and material elements that determine this process. Spatial studies also highlight the production of urban assemblages where individuals and communities engage in everyday practices and meaning-making processes through various material and immaterial mediums (Simone 2010; Burchardt and Hohne 2015). While acknowledging the dominant role of late capitalism in configuring the built forms and spatial relations in the city, the theory and method in the study of urban assemblages pay attention to the historical and contemporary forces and agencies that produce diverse local urbanisms, often resisting the hegemonic urban planning and governance (Angell et al. 2014).

Scholars influenced by Lefevbre's spatial theory have also stressed the importance of the role of space and spatiality in the study of religion and culture (Knott 2005; Sen and Silverman 2013). Increased awareness of the spatiality of everyday life has led to a reevaluation of the structuralist and phenomenological conception of sacred and profane spaces in the study of religion (Eliade 1959). New theoretical approaches observe how religious spaces are socially

produced and how such spaces are an important element in the constitution of everyday religious rituals and practices (Smith 1987; Knot 2005; Corrigan 2009; Kilde 2014). In this context, spatial ethnographies have drawn attention to the intertwining role of embodied practice, materiality and built environment integral to the mediation of religious experiences (O'Meara 2007; Cousineau 2013). These interventions have resulted in a spatial analysis of religion that considers the "practical, discursive, and material entailments as co-constructed by religious actors in engagement with their traditions, social relations, and historical, geographical, and political contexts" (Knott 2010, 29). It has also prompted scholars to explore how the "spatial organization of cities and spatializations of religious communities, practices, and aspirations" transform both religion and urbanism (Burchardt and Becci 2013, 13).

Building on the aforementioned literature, the spatial approach serves as the central theoretical and methodological framework in this dissertation for understanding the transformation of Muslim urbanism and urbanities in the 20th century. Doing so allows us to overcome the essentialized typologies in the study of Muslim cities, instead focusing on the intertwinement of locally-produced Muslim spaces "with the emergence of global networks and currents of Islamic thought and discourses on the one hand and with immediate topographical, geographical, material, institutional and emotional resources on the other" (Sinha et al. 2017, 2-3). In this regard, my dissertation contributes to the study of religion from a spatial perspective by exploring the role of the built environment and material culture in the production of religious spaces. By problematizing research that reduces the spatial expression of religion exclusively to identity politics, the dissertation suggests a new perspective for sociological inquiries that can help understand the everyday aspirations and sensibilities of religious communities in a changing urban environment. How does the spatial analysis of Muslim localities help broaden our understanding of how Islam is practiced and experienced in a transforming urban environment? What forms of new cosmopolitan practices and spaces have evolved in this process, and how are they diversifying local expressions of Islam?

Locating the Fatih district

One of the significant challenges in conceptualizing the field of ethnographic research on historical neighborhoods and districts in Istanbul, and elsewhere, is determining their boundaries. Particularly in Istanbul, the urban development projects of the last century have drastically

changed the administrative boundaries of various districts in the historical peninsula, with some neighborhoods losing their name and identity (Behar 2003). This posed a problem during fieldwork in terms of how to delineate the boundaries of the Fatih district. For instance, during the Ottoman era, the neighborhoods surrounding the Fatih mosque complex were under the administration of the *nahiye* (region) of Sultan Mehmed. In the late 19th century, the term Fatih district (Fatih *Semti*) began to be more frequently used both in administrative contexts and by the district's inhabitants. In the 20th century, the Fatih district evolved into a larger administrative province now known as Fatih Municipality, encompassing the majority of the historical peninsula of Istanbul. However, the primary focus of the fieldwork was on the Ottoman-built environment of the neighborhoods around the Fatih mosque complex. Several of my interlocutors during fieldwork emphasized that "historical Fatih" (*Tarihi Fatih*) does not align with the current administrative definitions of the municipality. A similar observation can also be deduced from the memoirs and essays that I have examined in this dissertation. They perceive the identity of Fatih as a space that preserves the collective memory of an Ottoman district, enabling their everyday discourse and practices mediated by the centuries-long intellectual, institutional and material heritage. Hence, as shown in the figure below, the fieldwork primarily focused on historical Faith instead of the current-day administrative Fatih municipality.
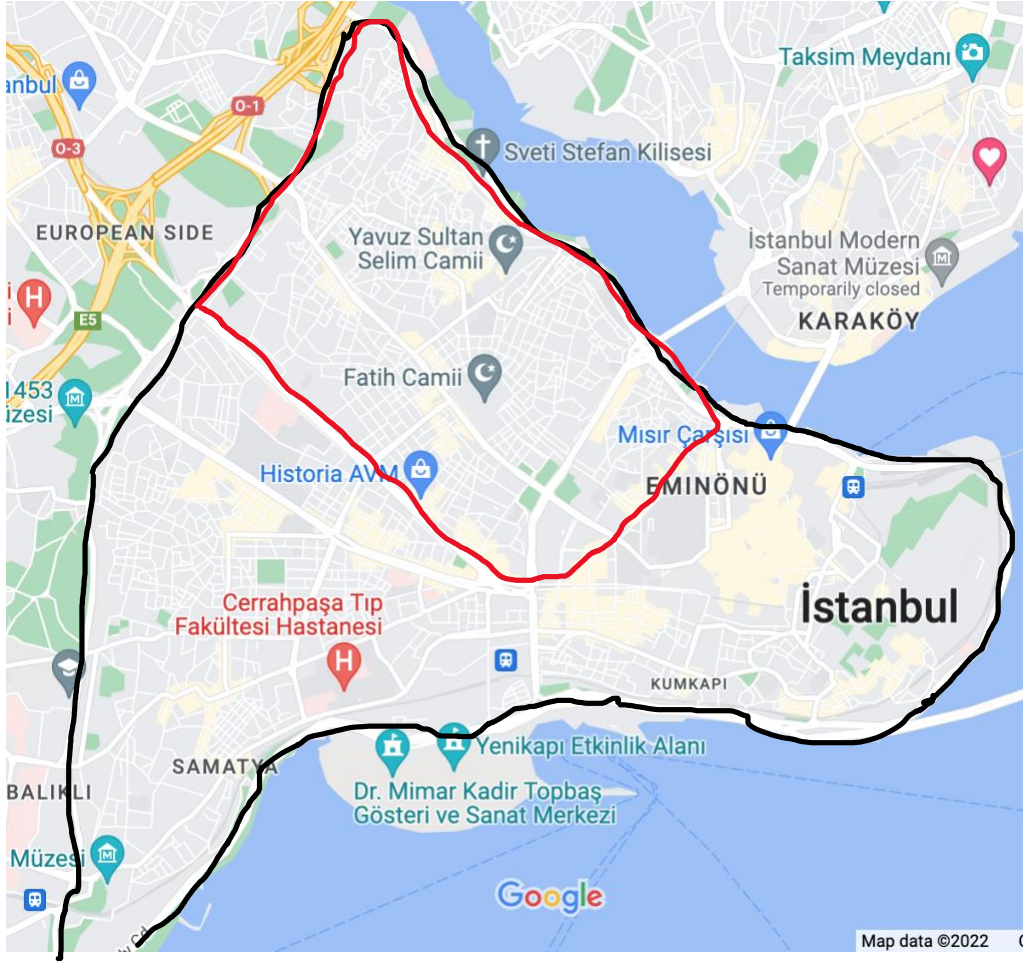
Figure 3: The boundaries of the historical peninsula (current day Fatih Municipality) is marked in black, while 'historical Fatih' is marked in red. Google Maps

Methods

The dissertation primarily used archival and ethnographic research to comprehend the heterogenous space-making process in the Fatih district. Archival research materials—such as periodicals, newspaper articles, photographs, memoirs, and hagiographies—were used to understand the district's social history and the larger urban changes experienced by Istanbul, and their impact on the district's everyday religious sociality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The ethnographic research primarily involved participant observation and interviews. The primary interviewees were Turkish citizens, but foreign nationals who had recently settled in the district were also interviewed. Formal and semi-formal interviews were conducted with individuals in visits to monumental mosque complexes, Sufi lodges and shrines, book stores, coffee shops, and market spaces in the district. The ethnographic research also explored the

changing function and role of religious buildings and institutions, as well as the everyday activities of different religious groups and civil society organizations.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter 1 explores the construction of significant religious architectural complexes during the Ottoman era and their impact on shaping the built environment of the district. The chapter adopts a *longue durée* approach to comprehend the historical formation and transformation of the built environment of the Fatih district up to the second half of the 20th century. This approach aims to provide the historical and sociological context and background for the three subsequent chapters of the dissertation. Chapter 2 investigates how the Ottoman built environment solidified the identity of the district as the ''*Ulama' Semti'* (the district of religious scholars) and how this identity has been reconfigured since late Ottoman modernization and in 20th century Turkey. By tracing the intellectual history of various scholarly figures laid to rest in the Fatih cemetery and other cemeteries in the district, the chapter explores how the classical Ottoman scholarly identity, primarily focused on theology and related discourses ('*ulama*'), broadened to encompass public intellectuals, academic scholars, poets, calligraphers, and Sufi adepts. Chapter 3 specifically examines how, following the abolition of Ottoman religious institutions and the centralization of religious education by the Turkish state, the Ottoman era *waqf* properties, such as *madrasa*s and Sufi lodges, facilitated the revival of classical Islamic education, scholarly networks, and embodied Sufi socialities in the district. While recognizing the role of the political and economic liberalization of Turkey since the 1980s in contributing to the revival of *waqf* discourse by various state and non-state actors, the chapter argues for approaching it as the reconfiguration of a historically rooted Islamic concept and practice. Chapter 4 explores the integration of the Ottoman built environment of the district into neoliberal urbanism and how this has produced competing Muslim publics and counterpublics. By examining competing lifestyles, religious aspirations, and everyday political activism, the chapter aims to provide broader insights into the evolving nature of Muslim urbanity.

Chapter 1

The Fatih District: A Historical-Sociological Portrait

Introduction

The Ottoman city of Istanbul is an exemplary representative of the amalgamation of plural urban cultures that Muslims accumulated and developed since their transformation into an imperial and civilizational force. Well before the conquest of Istanbul, the Ottomans had already created powerful urban centers and spent enormous wealth and energy to construct monumental mosque complexes and other religious institutions. The Ottoman cities of Bursa and Edirne epitomized not only the growing strength of Ottoman political power but also the continuity of the Muslim urbanism that the Ottomans largely inherited from the Seljuk Empire (Crane 1991). The conquest and the subsequent transformation of Byzantine Constantinople into Ottoman Istanbul was not only shaped by Muslim urbanism but was also subjected to the transformative characteristics of the early modern period of global interconnectivity (Rahimi and Şahin 2018).

A well-known quote attributed to the Ottoman ruler Mehmed II (1431-1481) says, "The true craft in laying the foundations of a city is to cultivate prosperity in the hearts of the people" (Fatih Mehmed II vakfiyeleri 1938, 36).[1] Interlocutors in the field have frequently quoted this saying to me while sharing their thoughts on the impact of Istanbul's urban transformation on social life, particularly in the Fatih district, over the last century. This quote is also widely circulated in local magazines and online blogs that cover topics such as Ottoman cities and urbanism, and Ottoman Istanbul, etc.[2] While strolling through the different neighborhoods of the Fatih district, the salient presence of the numerous Ottoman era architectural complexes and buildings and their role in mediating the inhabitants' diverse aspirations and sensibilities are evident. During my fieldwork, one of my central queries was why and how the district's Ottoman heritage continues to evoke and mediate Mehmed II's vision of urbanism dating back to the city's conquest. What forms of philosophical, religious, and cultural visions shaped Ottoman urbanism after the conquest of Istanbul? How did the Fatih district come to epitomize these vision discursively and materially?

The first part of the chapter will examine how *waqf*-endowed institutions played a significant role in the reconstruction, and the socio-religious and economic revival of Istanbul after the conquest in 1453. While these institutions helped in the urbanization and Islamization of Anatolian cities during the late Selçuk and early Ottoman reigns, the conquest of Istanbul added

new meanings and functions to it. The construction of the Fatih *Külliye* (mosque complex) and the development of the Fatih district were the result of such a process. The *külliye,* which housed numerous institutions such as a central mosque, *madrasa*s, hospital, *imaret* (soup kitchens and hospices)*,* and caravanserai, urbanized the region and eventually became the socio-religious center of Ottoman Istanbul. The section will specifically show how the district's built environment consolidated the imperial and socio-religious identity of the district over the centuries.

The second part of the chapter examines how the Ottoman built environment of the Fatih district underwent changes with Ottoman modernization in Istanbul starting from the second half of the 19th century. This section will also explore the impact of socio-political and secular urban reforms implemented after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Through the analysis of several literary texts, memoirs, and essays written in the early 20th century, the final section of the chapter will demonstrate how the district's dilapidated Ottoman built environment became a site of mourning and nostalgia.

Envisioning, Planning and the Making of Ottoman Istanbul

The *vakifname* (in Arabic *waqfiyya*) or the Deed of Trust, the document that contains information on the endowment deeds of Mehmed II, provides a broader insight into the religious philosophy, political, and socio-economic visions aimed at rebuilding and revitalizing the millennia-old Byzantine capital into a thriving capital city of the Ottoman Empire. In the introduction to the *vakifname,* Mehmed II considered the city's reconstruction as a greater war after the lesser war, i.e., the conquest of the city (*Cihad-i asgardan cihad-i ekbere*) (Barkan 1963; Lowry 1986). The historical sources also shed light on the various efforts that were made to prepare the physical and social landscape of the city so that religious prescriptions could be observed properly (Inalcik 1990, 6).[3]

Right after the conquest, to signify the political victory of the Ottomans over the Byzantines, Mehmed II converted the Church of Hagia Sophia into a mosque and transformed the 'rediscovered' grave of the martyr saint Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (known as Eyup Sultan in Turkish) outside the city walls into a site of veneration and pilgrimage.[4] However, his long-term visions and plans to rebuild the city commenced with the construction of numerous monumental religious complexes inside the Byzantine city walls. The construction of the Topkapi palace (c.

1465) and the Fatih *Külliye* (c.1470) can be considered as the two foremost initiatives to transform the city's built environment. The construction of these two complexes were conceived as complementary acts in constituting the religious and secular administration during "the symbolic refounding" of the city (Necipoğlu 2012, 22).

The architectural plans and urban development projects initiated in Istanbul demonstrate the innovative assimilation of "Byzantine, Italian Renaissance, and Timurid-Turkmen elements into the Ottoman tradition as an expression of multifaceted cultural self-identification" (Necipoğlu 2010, 263). Thus, Mehmed II expected his new capital to prosper as the center of Ottoman sovereignty, and as a city that would boast a multi-religious and multi-ethnic cosmopolitan identity. While the architectural projects commissioned sought to display the Islamic and Ottoman identity, they also reflected early modern cosmopolitan urban aesthetic sensibilities and perceptions.[5] In particular, Italian Renaissance architectural visions deeply influenced Mehmed II's planning of the city through the Italian courtiers he had invited. "The importation of foreign artistic idioms, accompanied by the creation of an indigenous aesthetics of fusion, contributed to the construction of a multifaceted imperial identity" (Necipoğlu 2012, 1).

The reconstruction initiatives of Mehmed II and his ruling elites, and the forced resettlement of Muslims, Jews, and Christians from other regions of the Ottoman empire, gradually led to the revival of socio-religious and economic life in the city. According to Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, the reconstruction activities during the first three decades following the conquest aimed at the monumentalization, representation, and inhabitation of the city (2009). In other words, Mehmed II, who claimed the title of the Caesar of Rome (*Kayser-i Rum*), paid careful attention to aesthetic, visual, and functional dimensions while rebuilding the city. Subsequently, with the creation of a network of political and socio-religious institutions, he established a "new visual order and formal hierarchy" to the city "that would, in turn, represent the new political and cultural order" of the empire (Kafescioğlu 2009, 56).

One socio-religious institution that played a key role in transforming the Byzantine-Christian built environment of the city into an Ottoman-Islamic one was the *waqf* endowment. The *waqf* operated as a meta-institutional infrastructure in Muslim societies to support religious, educational, and charitable services (Salvatore 2016). In the Ottoman context, the *waqf* emerged as a socio-religious and legal principle on which Ottoman rulers urbanized cities with long-lasting properties and institutions. The *waqf*-endowed institutions Islamized the urban space and

gave Ottoman characteristics to the overall built environment in the long term (Cerasi 2016). They also helped in urban administration as neighborhoods and districts grew around the *waqf* endowed socio-religious complexes (Behar 2003; Kayaalp 2009; Boyar and Fleet 2010).

While the institutionalization of the *waqf* endowments to fund myriad religious and non-religious buildings gradually developed during the Selçuk Empire (Hodgson 1974), the institution reached a new scale during the Ottoman conquests of Anatolia and the Balkan regions. The Ottomans used *waqf*s to commission the construction of monumental religious complexes, experiment in innovative architectural projects, and Islamize/Ottomanize the built environment of the new cities conquered. In particular, *waqf*-endowed *imaret* complexes became central to the built environment of Ottoman cities by the 15th century, after emerging as peripheral institutions adjacent to the Sufi lodges and caravanserais during the late Selçuk and early Ottoman periods to provide food and accommodation for travelers, the city's poor, and wandering Sufi adepts (Demir 1998; Singer 2002; Macaraig et al. 2007). They also helped in creating a common urban experience for Ottoman subjects in the empire's Balkan, Anatolian, and Arabic-speaking regions (Singer 2002). The seventeenth century Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi (ca. 1611-1682) remarked that *imaret* complexes evolved as an enviable socio-religious institution across the urban centers of the empire (Macaraig et al. 2007).

The construction of the *waqf* properties became an important medium through which Mehmed II revived the socio-religious and economic life of the city. In particular, he utilized the concept of *irshadi waqf* (the endowment of supervision) within the framework of the Islamic legal tradition (Akgündüz 2000; Atçil 2017). He regarded the entire city as a property for endowment and himself as the endower. Consequently, under his supervision, various city regions were distributed to the elites of his administration who were asked to construct numerous religious foundations and other buildings (Inalcik 1991; Atçil 2017).[6] Most importantly, during the reconstruction activities, *imaret* complexes started to take a central place within the construction of the *külliye*s (Kafescioğlu 2009). The *waqf-imaret* system eventually supported the construction of religious and non-religious buildings, local neighborhood mosques, monumental mosque complexes, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, mausoleums, hospitals, libraries, and caravanserais.

The Ottoman-Turkish concept of *imaret* (soup kitchen) which evolved from the Arabic word '*imara* (to build) and *ta'mir* (to repair), ultimately derives from '*umran* in Arabic, i.e., to

create prosperity and civilizational growth (Demir 1998; Altinyildiz 2007). The incorporation of *imaret*s into the monumental mosque complexes brought new features to Ottoman architectural designs and practices. Conceptually, it also concretized the vision of Mehmed II laid out in the *vakifname,* i.e., to rebuild the city into a prosperous urban center for its residents. The following section will look at how the construction of the Fatih *Külliye* and the development of an Ottoman built environment in the district came to represent this vision.

The Foundational Moment: The Construction of the Fatih *Külliye*

The original and innovative plans for transforming the built environment of Istanbul with the help of *waqf-imaret* complexes commenced with the construction of the Fatih *Külliye*. Its construction can be considered as the foundational moment after the conquest of the city, which sought a rupture from Byzantine urbanism and the beginning of a new form of sociality and spatiality informed by Ottoman-Islamic urban institutions.

Regarding the construction of the Fatih *Külliye,* the Greek Chronicler Kritovolous observes:

> The Sultan himself selected the best site in the middle of the city and commanded them to erect there a mosque which in height, beauty, and size should vie with the largest and finest of the temples already existing there. He bade them select and prepare materials for this, the very best marbles, and other costly polished stones, as well as an abundance of columns of suitable size and beauty plus iron, copper, and lead in large quantities, and every other needed material (1954, 140).

The decisive factor in selecting the site of the *külliye* was that it was built on the ruins of the second most important Byzantine church complex in Constantinople, the Church of the Holy Apostles (ca. 550).[7] This act reflects the political and ideological effort of the Ottomans to replace Byzantine spatial sovereignty (Kafescioğlu 2009). The construction of the *külliye* was one of the most innovative and revolutionary acts in the history of Ottoman architectural projects commissioned up to that time. It was accomplished by incorporating medieval and early modern architectural practices to institutionalize the political and socio-religious order of the empire (Kafesicoğlu 2009, 68). Its construction also characterized the onset of an imperial era, which had to be distinguished through its signature architectural expressions (Necipoğlu 1997). Thus, instead of depending on the existing Middle Eastern and Central Asian architectural designs and built environments with which the Ottomans were familiar, Mehmed II and the ruling elites of

the empire accommodated and assimilated the Byzantine and Roman architectural visions and practices.

Firstly, the influence of the Church of Hagia Sophia in developing the architectural design of the Fatih *Külliye* is indisputable. According to the 15th century Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Tursun Bey (1420-1499), "the great mosque based on the plan of Hagia Sophia, not only encompassed all the arts of the latter, but in addition attained a fresh new idiom, and unequalled beauty in accordance with the practices of the moderns" (as quoted in Necipoğlu 2010, 266). The Ottomans approached the architectural features of Hagia Sophia not only as a model to embrace but also to compete and produce a better one. Secondly, the tight geometry of the *külliye* suggests the influence of the Renaissance Italian architectural visions of the time. In particular, the Florentine architect Filarete's (c. 1400-1469) anticipated visit to Istanbul suggests the influence of his architectural philosophy of rational and symmetrical measurements in the construction (Hayes 2001; Kafescioğlu 2009; Kiper 2016).[8] Finally, the evolution of Ottoman architectural practices in the previous capitals of the empire, Bursa and Edirne, certainly influenced the design of the Fatih *Külliye* (Kafescioğlu 2009; Gündoğdu 2013).[9]

The architectural design of the *külliye* provides us information not only about the regional and inter-regional influences but also about the empire's 'religious politics' and the ideology of bureaucratic centralization (Kafescioğlu 2009). The *külliye* was built under the supervision of the architect Sinan-ı Atik (d. 1471); the mosque was situated in the center of the complex, surrounded by eight higher learning *madrasa*s and eight preparatory *madrasa*s, a primary school, a library, and an *imaret* complex with a hospital, a soup kitchen, and a caravanserai. With the incorporation of the *imaret* inside the *külliye,* a new architectural innovation was established (See Figure 4).

The *külliye* embodied the growing centralization and institutionalization of the empire as it brought various socio-religious functions under one complex (Kiper 2016). The mosque in the center of the complex was a space for the Muslim community to perform daily prayers, attend the Friday congregational prayer, and other Islamic rituals. The *madrasa* complex of Sahn-i Seman (the court of eight) became the most important institution of higher learning in the empire. Mehmed II showed specific interest in providing patronage to the *'ulama'* (sing., *'alim*) community to support the empire's bureaucratic and urban administrative needs and to guide the newly settled Muslim community of the city (Unan 2003; Ozcan 2016). With the expectation of

making Istanbul a center of learning and knowledge production, Mehmed II emphasized hiring high-profile scholars, who were knowledgeable in the religious and rational sciences, in the *madrasa*s (Kiper 2016).
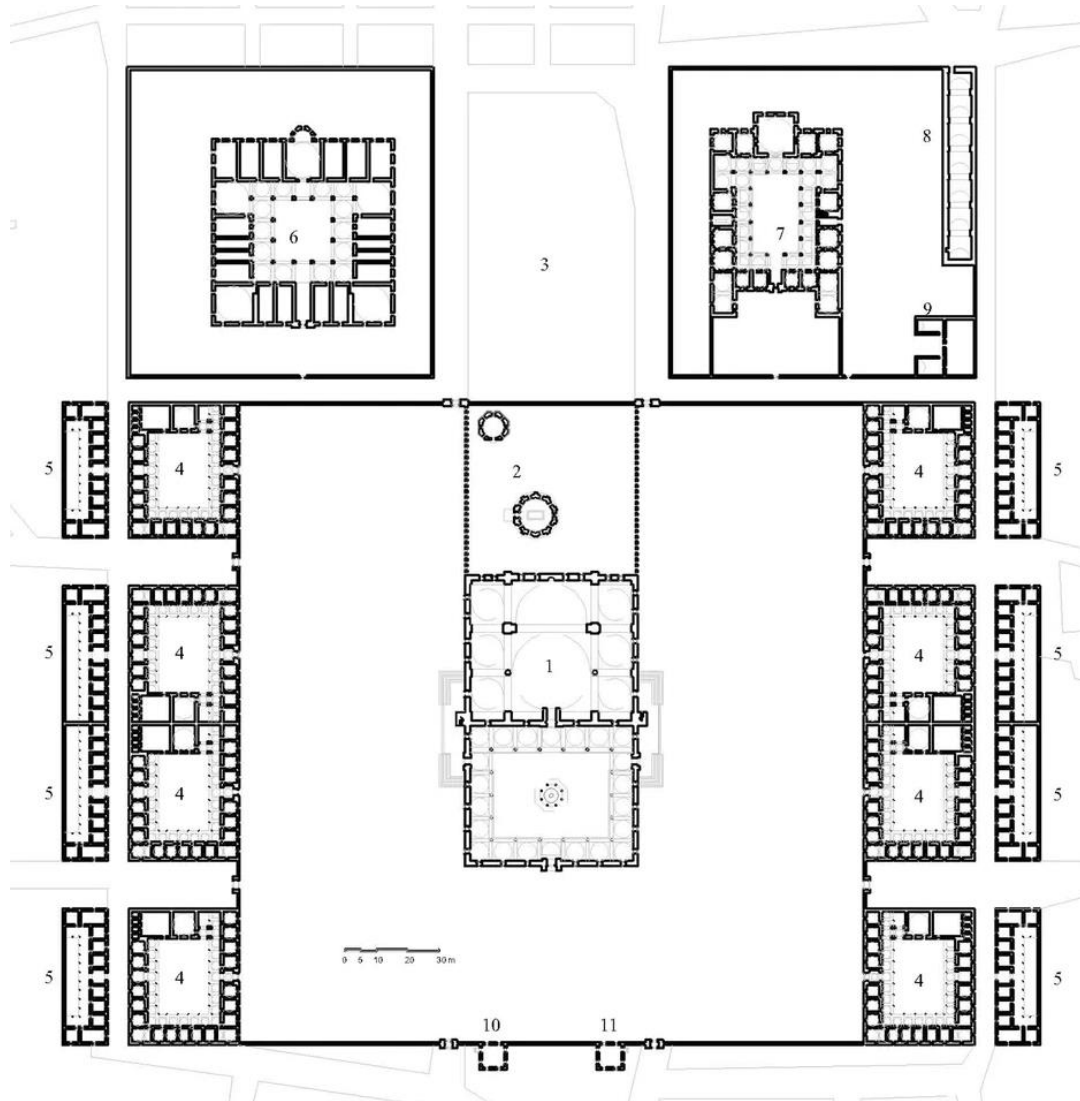
Figure 4: The architectural plan of the Fatih *Külliye.* 1) Fatih Mosque, 2) the Mausoleum of Mehmed II and his wife Gulbahar Hatun, 3) the Cemetery Complex 4) Sahn-i Seman *Madrasa*s, 5) *Tetimme* (preparatory) *Madrasa*s, 6) Hospital, 7) Caravanserai, 8) Horse Stable, 9) Soup Kitchen, 10) Elementary School, and 11) Library. Source: https://www.archnet.org/sites/2842

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the *külliye* was famous for its architectural grandeur and the socio-religious services it provided, which were unparalleled anywhere in the Islamic world and Europe. In the mid-sixteenth century, on a given day, the *imaret* complex would feed 1,500

people, which included travelers, scholars, students, and traders. It also provided food for the employees working in different sections of the *külliye*, the Sufi adepts from the nearby Sufi lodges, and the city's destitute (Ünver 1946; Singer 2002; Unan 2003). The Greek Historian of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, Theodore Spandugnino (d.1538), writes in the 16th century about the services of the *imaret* and the people who benefited from it:

> Among the churches and hospitals in Europe is that of Mehmed in Constantinople, a super building, with its tomb nearby. The hospital is open to all Christians, Jews, and Turks; and its doctors give free treatment and food three times a day. I have seen men of the upper class and other grand persons lodging here, their horses being cared for. It has fourteen medical students, and they attend lectures from their masters, who are well paid (Spandugnino 1997, 134).

The construction of the *külliye* played an important role in the political and socio-religious administration of the empire. While the Old Palace, the pilgrimage complex of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, and the *madrasa*s opened within the Church complex of Hagia Sophia and Pantokrator served the empire's immediate political and socio-religious needs, the construction of the Topkapi Palace and the Fatih *Külliye* became permanent political, socio-religious, and urban administrative sites of the empire. The construction also replaced the preconquest patronage of numerous small-scale religious complexes, which did not really facilitate the creation of a religious orthodoxy (Necipoğlu 1997, 153). This was apparent in the closure of the first *madrasa* and *imaret* complex constructed adjacent to the shrine of Abu Ayub al-Ansari outside the city walls, thereby announcing the "departure from the social and intellectual roots of the ghazi state" (Kafescioğlu 2009, 45).[10]

The Sahn *madrasa*s facilitated the establishment of a centralized and hierarchical learning establishment and institutionalization of the Sunni-Hanafi religious orthodoxy in the empire (Kafescioğlu 2009; Atçil 2017). While Mehmed II also commissioned other *madrasa*s in the city, they were seen as inferior to the Sahn *madrasa*s (Atçil 2017). The importance Mehmed II gave to education eventually led to the settlement of the *'ulama'* community in the neighborhoods that grew around the Fatih *Külliye*. It is also important to note the absence of a Sufi lodge within the *imaret* complex of the *külliye*, which used to be a central feature of late Selçuk and early Ottoman religious endowments, demonstrating Mehmed II's specific interest in the *'ulama'* community as opposed to Sufi personalities within his bureaucracy. The *vakifname*

also indicates that the *imaret* complex would provide accommodation for travelers and important guests instead of Sufi adepts (Kafescioğlu 2009, 77). As a result, the centralizing policies of Mehmed II were met with complaints from the ghazis and Sufi adepts who had significantly contributed to the formation of the early Ottoman state.

Mehmed II was buried inside the *külliye* upon his death in 148I. Mehmed II's son Beyazit II (r. 1481-1512) erected a mausoleum at the site of his father's tomb. The Ottoman urban historian of the 18th century, Hafiz Ayvansaray (d.1752), emphasizes that the tomb of Mehmed II, which has a headgear typical of the Ottoman *'ulama'* tombs in the empire, reflects his investment in scholarly discourses as well as the patronage he provided for the *'ulama'* community (Ayvansaray [1865] 1987). The burial of Mehmed II inside the *külliye* also started a new foundational moment in the architectural tradition of the empire of burying Ottoman Sultans inside the walled city of Istanbul adjacent to the signature religious complexes they had built during their reign (Necipoğlu 1997). To the present day, the Mausoleum of Mehmed II has been a place not only for pilgrimage and veneration, but also to recall the political and socio-religious religious achievements, and the architectural innovations he initiated after the conquest of the city.
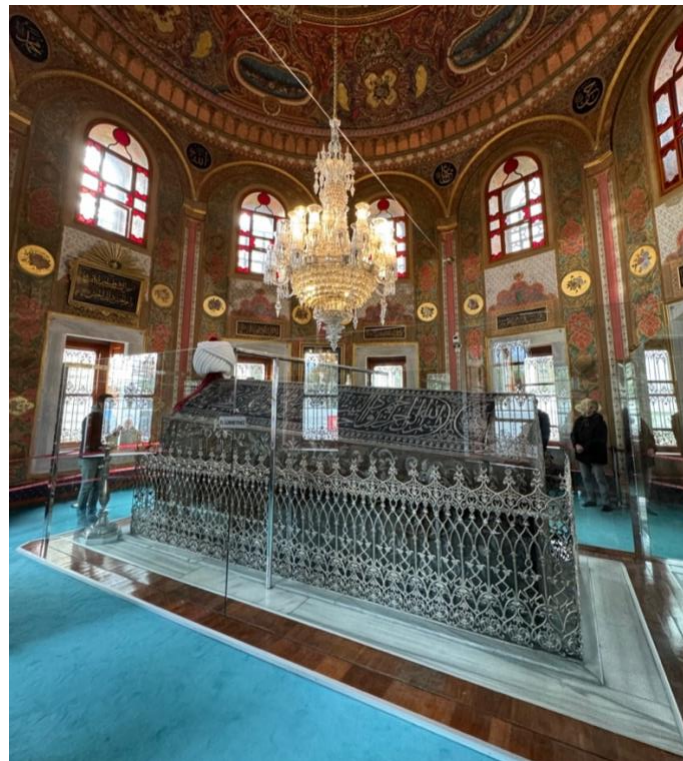
Figure 5: The tomb of Mehmed II. Humza Azam, 2024

The *külliye* gave birth to a monumental space that would eventually become Ottoman Istanbul's religious, intellectual, and cultural center. While the Süleymaniye *Külliye* (1557), commissioned by Suleyman I (r. 1520-1566) in the 16th century, surpassed all other *külliye*s in the empire in size and function, the Fatih *Külliye* never lost its importance during the Ottoman reign and afterward. Its historical significance of being the first *külliye* built after the conquest of Istanbul, the socio-religious and educational services it provided, and the emergence of numerous neighborhoods with several *waqf*-endowed religious institutions kept its imperial and socio-religious identity intact.

The Birth of the Fatih District

One of the most important challenges for Mehmed II after the conquest of Istanbul was to repopulate the city with people of diverse religious, ethnic, and professional backgrounds. By repopulating the city "with a multiethnic and multiconfessional community", Mehmed II aimed to promote "international trade and diplomacy" (Necipoğlu 2012, 2). Before the conquest, due to Latin invasions, earthquakes, and political instabilities within Byzantium, the city's population had decreased considerably. In addition, during and after the conquest, many communities had left due to the uninhabitable and ruined state of the city. Mehmed II undertook several measures, often unsuccessful, to encourage migration from different parts of Anatolia (Inalcik 2017). When he failed to bring people with offers such as free housing and tax exemptions, he resorted to *sürgün* or forced deportations to maintain the city's demographic balance (ibid.).

The construction of the Fatih *Külliye* played a significant role in repopulating the city with Muslim as well as non-Muslim communities. The *külliye* was surrounded by several *waqf*-endowed residential quarters and commercial establishments not long after it was completed. The income generated from these establishments served to support the complex's maintenance and expenses. The *külliye* was initially known as the New Mosque (*Cami-i Cedid*), and the site of its location, the neighborhood of the New Mosque (*Mahalle-i Cami-i Cedid*) (Kafescioğlu 2009). Eventually, with the development of several other neighborhoods around the *külliye*, the region came to be known as the *nahiye* (region) of Sultan Mehmed up until the second half of the 19th century. During the forced resettlement, the neighborhoods around Fatih *Külliye* had been the spot of migration for many Muslim communities from Anatolia (Göncüoğlu 2013). Ottoman

tax registers from the late 15th century show that the Fatih district had the largest number of neighborhoods in its administration (Ozcan 2016, Inalcik 2017).

The construction of numerous commercial complexes next to the Fatih *Külliye* was one of the factors attracting migration to the Fatih district. The construction boosted the urbanization of the district as well as the general economic activities of the city. For example, the Saddler's market (*Saraçlar Çarşısı*), a few minutes' walk away from the *külliye,* was constructed in 1475 as a *waqf* commercial complex to support the *külliye'*s maintenance and daily expenses. The complex's maintenance was also supported through the endowment of thirty-five villages and hundreds of other stores in the city (Boyar and Fleet 2010, 145). Consequently, the *külliye* and the district played a significant role in reviving the socio-religious and economic life of the city through the numerous commercial properties endowed to it.

The construction of caravanserais and commercial complexes revitalized the district's everyday life. With the increased trade exchanges from Europe, traders from the Central European and Balkan regions entered through the Edirnekapi entrance of the Byzantine city walls, stayed in the *imaret* complex of the Fatih *Külliye*, and engaged in trade and commerce in the nearby markets (Kiper 2016, Ozcan 2016). Notably, the Horse market (*Atpazar*), located east of the *külliye,* and the Saddler's market emerged as busy centers of trade and urbanized the region a few decades after the conquest (Kiper 2016).

While the functioning of the *külliye* fulfilled the empire's need for scholarly bureaucrats, the neighborhoods that grew around the *külliye* became the religious and intellectual heart of Ottoman Istanbul (Unan 2003). The increasing number of students who came to study from the different parts of the empire at the *madrasa*s of the *külliye* transformed the district into a hub for scholarly learning and exchanges (İpşirli 2016). Over the centuries, starting from the Fatih district, the neighborhoods that grew around the *külliye*s of Süleymaniye, Beyazit, and Şehzade became the preferred residence of the empire's scholarly and political elite (ibid.).

The scholarly community in the district was not only involved in teaching and learning at the *madrasa*s of Fatih, but their affiliations with Sufi orders resulted in the emergence of various Sufi lodges in the neighborhoods they settled in. The district gradually became home to different Sufi orders, which transformed from a culture of 'mobile Sufism' during the late Selçuk and early Ottoman era into a well-established and institutionalized form of Sufism (Clayer 2003). While Mehmed II did not encourage or support the construction of Sufi lodges adjacent to the

*külliye*s and *imaret* complexes, during his son Beyazid II's reign and after, the number of lodges increased in the city, particularly in the Fatih district. Among them, the Halvetiye and Naqshbandi Sufi orders rose to become influential movements in the district, and their presence continues to shape the production of Sufi discourses and activities in the district to this day.

In the later era, the construction of *külliye*s such as Yavuz Selim (c.1527) and Mihrimah (c. 1570) and various other smaller religious complexes, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, and cemeteries transformed the district into a monumental space that reflected the enduring political and socio-religious presence of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman cartographer Matrakçı Nasuh's (1480-1564) miniature painting of the Galata region and the historical peninsula of Istanbul (c.1530) portrays the importance the complex played in transforming the built environment of the city in less than a century after the conquest. Nasuh's emphasis on portraying individual buildings demonstrates how the city was monumentalized with Islamic and Ottoman architecture. In particular, the representation of the Fatih mosque as equal to the size of Hagia Sophia in the painting shows how the Fatih district and its environs occupied a unique place in the urbanization of Istanbul (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: The historical peninsula of Istanbul portrayed in the miniature painting of the Ottoman cartographer Matrakçı Nasuh (c.1517). The Fatih *Külliye* is represented in the lower bottom of the painting. Istanbul University Archives

From the late 16th century, the district also became an important node on the Divan axis (*Divanyolu* in Turkish, the central Ottoman thoroughfare) along which imperial processions and ceremonies were carried out. The axis, which had its starting point from the Topkapi palace, passed in front of *külliye*s such as Beyazit, Şehzade, Fatih, Mihrimah, and various other religious foundations and ended at Edirnekapi gate (See Figure 7).[11] The pilgrimage site of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the Topkapi Palace, and the Fatih *Külliye* became sites where Ottoman urban rituals,

processions, and ceremonies evolved (Cerasi 2005). The Ottoman Sultans and viziers, on their way to the shrine of Eyup Sultan, would visit the Fatih mosque and the Mausoleum of Mehmed II. In addition, the Divan axis generated urbanization with the construction of several religious complexes, commercial markets, and residential quarters on its tract. The axis not only served as the stage for the rituals and ceremonies of the Ottoman elites but also emerged as a busy urban route of everyday life in Ottoman Istanbul (Cerasi 2005; Kiper 2016). Here, the important nodes that connected the Divan axis, the Topkapi Palace and the Fatih *Külliye*, played an instrumental role in meeting the political and socio-religious needs of the empire (Cerasi 2005). If the Topkapi palace symbolized the center of political authority and sovereignty of the empire, the Fatih district emerged to represent the center of socio-religious authority.
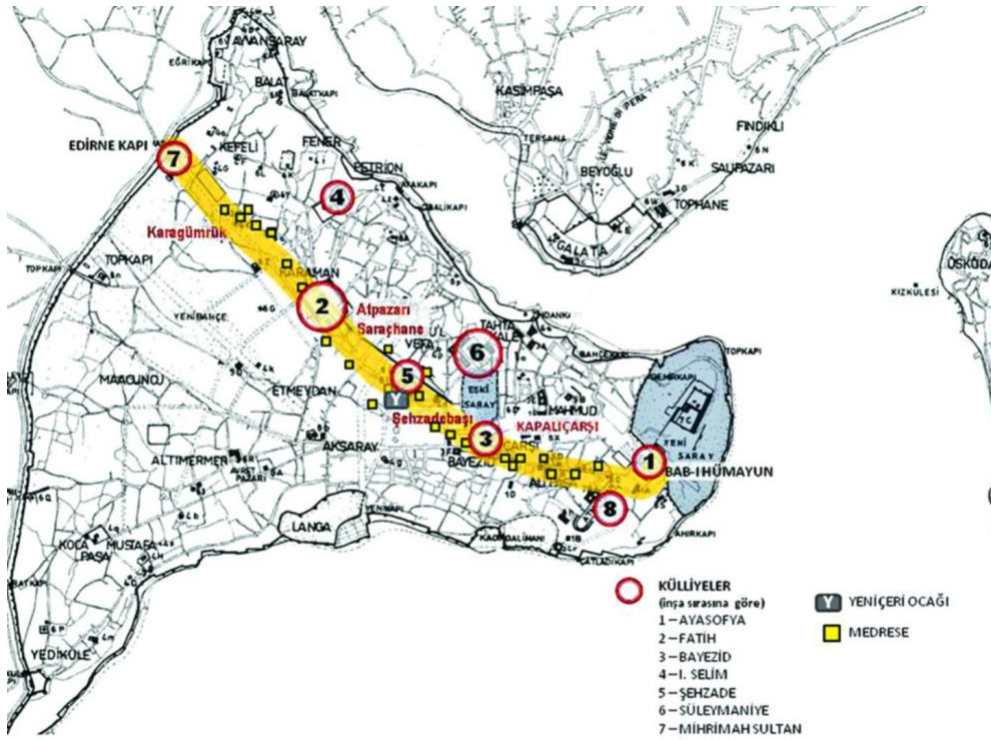
Figure 7: The Divan axis and the monumental religious complexes built on its tract.
Source: https://istanbultarihi.ist/21-osmanli-istanbulunda-kentsel-mekanin-degisim-sureci

Until the early 20th century, the district remained an important urban locality that hosted numerous religious institutions, mediated scholarly networks, and a lifeworld representing the Ottoman urbanity's religious and cultural discourses. The district gradually became known as *''Ulama' Semti'* (the district of religious scholars), with the settlement of Ottoman '*ulama*' class,

Sufi adepts, and other elites of the Ottoman bureaucracy. Mehmed II's Mausoleum and the Fatih cemetery's expansion since the second half of the 19th century have played a central role in preserving the imperial and socio-religious identity of the district to the present day. The late 19th century Ottoman diplomat and poet Abdulhak Hamid's (1852-1937) poem on his visit to the Mausoleum of Mehmed II ("Merkad-i Fatihi Ziyaret") captures the political and spiritual importance of the mausoleum to the people of Istanbul and Islamic history.[12] The poem, framed inside one of the Mausoleum's walls in 1916, played an important role in emphasizing the mausoleum as a spiritually blessed than any of the Ottoman lands (Akün 1956). Elevating the personality of Mehmed II to a saintly figure and the mausoleum as a site of veneration has eventually gave birth to a cemetery complex (Fatih *haziresi*) in front of the mausoleum where a number of important religious, political, and literary figures of the city are buried (Gürlek 2021). The complex gradually became the resting place of Ottoman Istanbul's grand muftis and viziers, religious scholars, saints, bureaucrats, calligraphers, writers, and poets- imparting a continuous spiritual aura and sacrality to the district (Ozcan 2007).

Figure 8: The Poem "Merkad-i Fatihi Ziyaret" of Abdulhak Hamid (1852-1937) framed inside the mausoleum of Mehmed II. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

The Negotiations with Ottoman Modernity

From the early 19th century onwards, Istanbul underwent significant changes in its built environment and everyday urban culture. The increase in trade and diplomatic exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and Europe triggered substantial impacts on the city. The emergence of new recreational and entertainment spaces, such as coffee houses, theaters, and public gardens, opened up new avenues for sociability and urban experiences (Hamadeh 2008; Boyar and Fleet 2010). The late Ottoman modernization project reflected an intensive process of adaptation to the urbanism of the new age dominated by European powers. With the gradual loss of external political domination and increased contact with hegemonic European powers and Western modernity, there was a pressing need for institutional and social reform within the empire. In response, the Ottoman state initiated the *Tanzimat* reforms, intended for broad changes within the bureaucratic, political, religious and cultural spheres of Ottoman society.[13]

One of the most important effects of the *Tanzimat* reforms was reflected in the urban administration and the attempts to reorganize the city's built environment according to the principles and needs of modern urbanism. Following Baron Haussmann's renovation projects for Paris (1853-1870), the Ottoman modernizers sought a centralized municipal administration (Ardaman 2007). In 1836, the Ministry of Pious Foundations (*Nezaret-i Evkaf-i Humayun*) was founded to centralize the administration of waqf-endowed properties and institutions. It led to the loss of financial independence and legal autonomy for the *waqf*s, as the task of collecting *waqf* funds became "the responsibility of the treasury, with only a percentage, at the discretion of the state, returned to the *waqf* system" (Altinyildiz 2007, 284). In 1854, with the founding of *sehremaneti* (municipality), the role of the *qadi* in overseeing the *waqf*s' administration was passed onto municipality officials. As a result, the urban administration primarily operated by *qadi*s through the *waqf*-endowed institutions gradually started losing its function (ibid.). The declining role of the *qadi*s and other religious authorities in urban life, who were the product of the *madrasa* education system, led to the perception that the maintenance of so many *külliye*s, *madrasa*s, and *imaret* complexes was unnecessary and expensive.

The *Tanzimat* plans to reorganize the city's built environment commenced with the founding of the Commission for the Improvement of Roads in 1866 (*Islahat-i Turuk Komisyonu*). The commission's main objective was to replace the 'irrational' street patterns and dead ends that characterized the urban landscape of the city with a more rational and geometrical

construction of roads and boulevards (Ardaman 2007, 113). The first step towards it was the widening of the Divan axis. Several religious and non-religious buildings that flanked the streets were demolished during the widening of the axis. For example, the *madrasa* and *imaret* complex of Atik Ali Paşa *Külliye* (c.1497) and several other tombs around the Çemberlitaş region of the axis were demolished, and the mausoleum of the Ottoman grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (1575-1661) was moved elsewhere (Altinyildiz 2007, 285).

Consequently, the political and social functions of the Divan axis were gradually reconfigured during the *Tanzimat* reforms. After the abolition of the Janissary corps in 1826, their chambers, taverns, and stores around the Şehzade *Külliye* were gradually converted to public use. The neighborhoods around Beyazit and Şehzade *Külliye* emerged as important sites of cultural entertainment with the flourishing of coffee and tea houses, theatres, and cinemas. The region also became popular for hosting various storytelling events and art performances during the month of Ramadan (Tosun 1994). More precisely, the region became the entertainment center of 'Muslim' Istanbul, outside Europeanized districts such as Pera and Galata (Cerasi 2017).

In contrast, with the passing of the Municipal Regulations Law (*Dersaadet İdare-i Belediye Nizamnamesi*) in 1855, the administrative boundaries of the Fatih district were redrawn to include several neighborhoods of the western tract of the Divan axis. The district, known as Sultan Mehmed since the city's conquest, was renamed to the Fatih district (Canatar 2016). While the eastern tract of the Divan axis started to experience changes in its built environment and everyday social life, the western side where the Fatih district existed, did not undergo any significant changes, and continued to retain its traditional Ottoman urban character (Mantran 1991; Unan 2003). The region also continued to have "relatively modest houses, religious establishments, gardens, cemeteries, and "mahalle life" typical of the more conservative Muslim quarters of the city" (Cerasi 2005, 191).

During the latter half of the 19th century, the increased centralization attempts of the Ottoman Empire, politically and socially, led to the construction of new mosque complexes and religious institutions in the district. For example, the construction of the Hirka-i Şerif Mosque in 1851 during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I (r. 1839-1861) played a central role in forming the district's spiritual connection to Islamic history. The main purpose of the mosque was to preserve and display the mantle of the prophet Muhammed during the month of Ramadan (gifted

by the Uwais al-Qarani family from Yemen)—a tradition that continues until today. The Ottoman historian Lale Can has observed in her recent work that in the late 19th century Central Asian Sunni pilgrims heading to Mecca would take the opportunity to visit mosques like Hirka-i Şerif in Fatih. The inclusion of the Fatih district in the pilgrims' itinerary has reinforced the identity of old Istanbul (historical peninsula) as an essentially Sunni Muslim space (Can 2010, 37).[14]

The construction of new religious buildings not only represented imperial aspirations to establish the district as an important center of the Muslim world but also led to its identification as an conservative Muslim space, in contrast to the other Europeanized and secularized districts and quarters of Istanbul in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, with the Ottoman loss of territories in the Crimea, Balkans, and Caucasus regions, the district became a place of temporary settlement for many Muslim immigrants. To accommodate the newly arriving migrants, numerous mosques, *madrasa*s, and *sibyan mekteb*s were utilized (Yaşayanlar 2016). The settling of many religious scholars, Sufi adepts, and public intellectuals from the former Ottoman territories reinforced the *'ulama'* identity of the district. Their scholarly activities and engagements played a significant role in the 20th century revival of various religious movements and discourses in the district, a topic that we will explore in the second and third chapter.

Encountering Secular Urbanism

If the primary concern of the *Tanzimat* urban reform was to adapt the Ottoman built environment to modern urbanism, the secular vision of the Republican era aimed at a simultaneously material and social rupture from the Ottoman past (Gül 2009). In particular, the founders of the new Republic implemented an urban vision that would exclude premodern Ottoman institutions and their functions. During the first few years of the Republican era, Istanbul was neglected due to its irreplaceable Ottoman heritage, as the Republic devoted all of its energy and limited resources to making Ankara a secular city and the new capital of the Turkish Republic.[15] Later, the secular reforms initiated during 1927-1928 profoundly altered the pre-*Tanzimat* Ottoman conception of urban spaces and built environment in Istanbul. The neighborhoods and districts that grew around religious complexes were deemed unviable for modern urban needs and functions (Behar 2003). The construction of wide boulevards and avenues to accommodate new modes of

transportation led to the deterioration of many *waqf* properties and institutions (Altinyildiz 2007).

The Divan axis, which played a significant role in the formation of the Ottoman urbanism since the 16th century, was finally fragmented and obliterated with the construction of new roads in the historical peninsula. The erasure of a larger part of the Divan axis signified not only the fall of the empire but also a rupture from the socio-religious function of the Ottoman built environment that evolved over the centuries around it. The opening of new roads isolated many of the religious complexes and buildings on the tract of the axis and led them to be mere open-air museums (ibid.). The *waqf-imaret* complexes, which functioned "as self-sufficient and integrated complexes, not only became functionally and administratively dispersed but would also be physically divided" (ibid., 291). If religious complexes shaped the built environment, helped in urbanization, and mediated everyday socio-religious lifeworlds during the Ottoman reign, then during the Republican era, they were neglected or, at best, approached as sites to be protected as historical monuments.

Although Ottoman modernization did not significantly impact the Fatih district's built environment, during the first few decades of the Republican period, the district gradually started losing its socio-religious function. The most important factor that helped to reengineer the built environment of the district and the city towards secularization was through the confiscation of the *waqf* properties. When the *waqf* properties lost their socio-religious and economic function, the city's built environment became an experimental ground for executing different urban development policies.[16] The restriction of activities in the mosques to daily prayers, the language reform, and the closure of *madrasa*s and Sufi lodges led to the reconfiguration of the religious lifeworld and spatial practices that depended on those sites. In addition, several incidents of fire in the early 20th century also caused significant damage to the district. The main regions affected by fire were the neighborhoods around the *külliye*s of Fatih, Şehzadebasi, and Beyazit (Kiper 2016). In particularly, the fire of 1918, which burned several hundred houses in the district, led to the displacement and dispersion of the *'ulama'* community (Ünver 1946). By the 1930s, the historical peninsula became an abandoned urban space due to state negligence, secular urban reforms, and tragic fire incidents. For the first time since the conquest of Istanbul, the peninsula's population decreased by half, and many neighborhoods remained empty and in ruins. Until the 1950s, commentators consistently described the historic neighborhoods and districts as being in

ruins and the revival of their old character physically and socially as near-impossible (Altinyildiz 2017).

Figure 9: The Fatih District viewed from the Findikzade region after the fire of 1918. The Fatih *Külliye* can be seen on the far right of the photo. Open Source

In the 1950s, during the multi-party era, an attempt was made to protect the Ottoman buildings by then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (ca.1899-1961). In one of his speeches, he promised to reclaim and preserve the Ottoman heritage of the historical peninsula:

> Is this how Istanbul should have been? A pearl of a city in the world? Our beautiful mosques are lost in [traffic] jams like antiques dumped into junk! They need to be brought out into daylight. Certainly, this is not merely the task of the municipality. It is a part of the great task of the state. (…) I consider myself indebted to Istanbul as one of the Republic generations (as quoted in Akpinar 2016, 57).

Menderes took a special interest in implementing the French urbanist Henri Proust's urban development plans, which aimed to reduce traffic congestion, construct large boulevards, and preserve the cultural heritage of the historical peninsula. While Proust's proposed project (1939-1950) sought to protect the sites and silhouette of the historical peninsula, it was also instrumental in the physical transformation of Istanbul into a western and secular city. For instance, the introduction of boulevards and public promenades sought to replace the Ottoman

sites for social gatherings, such as mosques and *imaret* courtyards. Proust's experience with the urban planning and transformation of North African Islamic cities in French colonies was one of the reasons he was assigned to develop a master plan for the city (Gul and Lamb 2004, 69).

The urban development projects carried out between 1956-1960, famously known as the 'Menderes Operation,' created controversies by demolishing numerous religious buildings and sites of old Istanbul, specifically around the Fatih district. Due to Republican urban policies and post-war economic recession, many Ottoman era buildings were in ruins and unattended. The growing traffic congestion also provided further incentive to justify the demolitions. As a result, the operation not only significantly changed the built environment of the city's historical peninsula but several Ottoman mosques, *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, fountains, and cemeteries in ruins were demolished completely.

The construction of Vatan Street and Atatürk Boulevard that cut through the Divan axis provincialized the district and transformed many closed Ottoman neighborhood structures into an open urban space. The development of Fevzipaşa Street into a wider boulevard also significantly impacted the built environment of the district. The street, initially expanded during the early Republican era to extend the Fatih-Harbiye tramway line up to Edirnekapi, led to the demolition of the preparatory *madrasa*s of the Fatih mosque complex. It has been observed that to divert reaction against the demolition, the street was named after the first General Commander of the Turkish Republic, Marshal Fevzi Çakmak (1876-1950), who was a popular figure due to his participation in the Turkish War of Independence (Göncüoğlu 2013; Ilter 2018). The demolition of an important learning center from the Ottoman era, without much opposition from the district's inhabitants, signified the gradual disappearance of a lifeworld mediated by such institutions in the past.

Figure 10: The Expansion of Fevzipaşa Street. The Sahn *madrasa*s of the Fatih *Külliye* are seen on the right (ca. 1958). Open Source

Becoming a Space of Ruins, Nostalgia, and Tradition

A few literary texts, memoirs, and essays written in the first half of the 20th century help us to understand how the urban transformation of the historical peninsula and the neighborhoods of the Fatih district were perceived and expressed. They also illustrate how the remnants of the Ottoman built environment and everyday life came to define the district's traditional and conservative identity in opposition to the modern and secular districts of the city.

Tahirül Mevlevi (Mehmed Tahir Olgun, 1871-1957), a Sufi adept of the *Mevlevi* order and a public intellectual from Fatih, takes the reader on a tour of the district, in a series of essays he wrote for a local magazine in 1936. The essay titled "A Historical Tour in front of the Window" ("Pencere Önünde Tarihi bir Gezinti") unveils an image of the district in the early 20th century, paying special attention to the buildings and institutions constructed during the Ottoman era. The author contemplates how the district has lost its Ottoman character after the great fire of 1918 and due to the ongoing urban development projects.

> After the Fatih fire, the lushness of the district no longer exists; instead, it has been replaced by stone and ash. The streets that once ran through the neighborhood can now only be seen on maps from that era. Moreover, since the construction of new houses has

been allowed, the old passageways of many neighborhoods have been permanently closed (...) I yearn to walk these streets as they were in older times, and I satisfy this desire by imagining a historical stroll through this limited area visible from my window. I stopped by the *madrasa*, commissioned by one of the old chief Ottoman physicians, Omer Efendi (ca. 1669-1724), which has now been replaced by the tramway (…) If we continue walking through the ruins of the city… and (when) we climb the hill and turn left again, the grandeur and magnificence of the Fatih Mosque will emerge before our eyes. The gate by which one enters the courtyard now only juts out; the side walls of the mosque have been demolished, and the courtyard has become a road (...) (Olgun [1935] 2016).

The author, who was born in the second half of the 19th century, before much of the urban transformation happened, recollects his childhood spent in the district, its buildings, and the inhabitants he had known in different neighborhoods. While he acknowledges the severe damage done by the fire in the district, he also criticizes how the construction of new roads, tramways, and modern apartments sacrificed the aesthetic elegance and premodern organization of many neighborhoods. The essay is also considered an important source on various Ottoman era religious institutions of the district and their founders before many of them were razed to the ground during the urban development projects of the 1950s (Ayvazoglu 2016).

This form of reflection about the urban transformation of the old Istanbul and its everyday life became a dominant theme among many literary figures who grew up in and around the Fatih district. For example, the 20th century Turkish novelist Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar's (1901-1961) fictional and non-fictional works critiqued Republican modernity and the French model of secularization, and often expressed his feelings for the loss of an urban spatiality and temporality mediated by the Ottoman era religious buildings and institutions.

When the inhabitant of old Istanbul looked at his face in a mirror of the time, it appeared like a shadow intoxicated with the smell of the hereafter, at a great distance, almost unreachable. The old Istanbul quarters lived as it were within this time, close to the dead who lay in the cemeteries of the *medrese*, and the little neighboring mosques, sharing with them their sorrows and joys, hardly breathing, like an ancient tree whose trunk is throttled by rings of climbing ivy. In these neighborhoods, the day moved through the

five phases of the *ezan*, or call to prayer, and according to the hour, resembled a colorful, grand, and sometimes diverting entertainment (Tanpınar [1946] 2018, 125).[17]

For Tanpınar, the modern and bureaucratic notion of time, a central theme of his satirical novel *Time Regulation Institute* (1961), is institutionalized in everyday life through transforming the urban space and its institutions. However, old Istanbul, especially the Fatih district, resisted such changes because of its built environment. Yet, for him, this built environment, made possible through the construction of grand architectural complexes, was neglected and in ruins (Tanpinar 2018).

> One after another, before our eyes, masterpieces crumble into a heap of dust and ashes like a heap of salt that fallen into the water, all over Istanbul, in every quarter, there are columns toppled, roofs collapsed, old religious colleges full of rubbish and charming little neighborhood mosques and fountains in ruins. It would take little effort to restore them, but they deteriorate a bit more every day (158).

Mehmed Akif Ersoy (1873-1936), Turkey's national poet and an early 20th century Islamic reformist, born and raised in the Fatih district, wrote about the importance of the district and the Fatih *Külliye* for Muslims in more than one poem in his poetry collection *Safahat* (1955). Akif lamented the district's ruinous, poor, and abandoned state in comparison to the clean, organized, and wealthy modernized and secular districts of Istanbul. For Akif, this ruinous state was not only a physical reality of the district but also pointed to the social and intellectual crisis of the Muslim community. Once, after he visited Berlin, he was asked about what was happening in Berlin. He replied, "What could happen? I went to Berlin. I saw our ambassador working on a translation of the Quran. Then, I returned to Istanbul; I saw the *'ulama'* of the Fatih district discussing politics. You would know well what could happen after this" (as quoted in Şeker 2009b, 37). Mehmed Akif was not only concerned with the ruins of the Ottoman institutions in the district but also the loss of the *terbiye* (manners), culture, and ethics that were nurtured through those institutions (ibid.).

Finally, the district and its dilapidated monuments not only became a space of mourning but also a metaphor to express the survival of a traditional way of urban life in opposition to modernity. From the late 19th century, the cultural binaries associated with spatial modernization started to appear among the residents of different quarters of the city. Regions like Pera and Galata were conceived as "full of Franks, Levantines, stone buildings, non-Islamic customs, and

sin" in opposition to "Muslim quarters of the capital where the neighborhood is the locus of a tight community marked by a pervasive togetherness" (Mardin 2006, 140). Consequently, with the secularization and the urban development projects of the early 20th century, where much of the historical peninsula of Istanbul transformed drastically, the Fatih district and surrounding quarters came to be imagined and viewed as a place that continued to represent the values and ideals of Ottoman-Islamic urbanity. For instance, this dichotomous representation is aptly captured by Turkish poet and novelist Payami Safa's classic novel *Fatih- Harbiye*, written in 1931. The novel portrays the Fatih district as a place that retains conservative religious and cultural values (Safa 2015). In contrast, the Harbiye district is European, modern, and secular. Moreover, by adopting the name of the famous tramway line that ran between Fatih and the Europeanized districts of the Pera-Beyoğlu region as the title of the novel, Safa juxtaposes the built environment, material culture, and everyday life of both districts to show how they existed as two separate lifeworlds within Istanbul.

While the intellectual orientation of the authors of each text is rooted in different scholarly traditions and literary discourses, they all express a common theme of nostalgia over the gradual disappearance of a lifeworld, and its institutions and spaces. Their reflections on the experience of loss are not merely literary exercises but further reveal to us the historical, social, and material contexts in which they were written.

The theme of nostalgia for the Ottoman past is a contested topic in contemporary Turkey. Many recent studies on Turkey have examined the emergence of a discourse of Ottoman nostalgia in the public sphere as a project instrumentalized for political interests (often termed as neo-Ottomanism) and the profit-making strategies of the neoliberal heritage industry (Balkan et al. 2005). This approach, however, often fails to understand the nuances and complexities of urban aspirations. Hence, an exploration of nostalgia for Istanbul's urban heritage demands us to examine the historically rooted intellectual, emotional, and affective relationship with geographies, architectures, institutions, and spaces by different actors in the city (Hirschkind 2020; Khan 2022). The following chapters of the dissertation complicate the assumptions about the political instrumentalization of the Ottoman nostalgia in contemporary Istanbul, drawing attention instead of how multiple connections to the past are articulated, shared and contested through various institutions and spaces of the district.

Conclusion

By focusing on the historical formation and transformation of the built environment of the Fatih district, the chapter has emphasized the relevance of examining Muslim urbanism's complex encounter with the modernization and secularization processes and how such encounters inform contemporary urban discourses in the city. The Ottoman architectural complexes and institutions, which emerged during the late Selçuk and early Ottoman eras, were crystalized and evolved into mature forms and produced innovative built environment and urbanism with the conquest of Istanbul. Such a built environment did not merely create a unique Ottoman-Islamic urban image and imperial identity for Istanbul. It also enabled a socio-religious framework through which Ottoman society functioned in the city. From the second half of the 19th century onward, the reconfiguration of political power and shifts in architectural and urban discourses led to the fragmentation of this built environment. However, the Fatih district has managed to preserve its socio-religious identity, thanks to the historical memory of the intellectual and material heritage embodied in its Ottoman built environment. Exploring both the macro and micro-histories of the Ottoman-era buildings, monuments, and institutions in the district allows us to comprehend the collective imaginations, urban aspirations, and contestations they mediate. Furthermore, it sheds light on the discursive and material transmissions of Ottoman-Islamic intellectual cultures and urbanities, a topic the next three chapters will explore in further depth.

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[1] The quote in Ottoman Turkish: "Hüner bir şehrin bünyad etmektir, Reaya kalbin abad etmektir."

[2] For example, see Erhan Erken, "Erhan Erken'in gözüyle şehir ve medeniyet" http://erhanerken.com/2020/05/01/erhan-erkenin-gozuyle-sehir-ve-medeniyet-i/.

[3] Even before the Ottoman conquest, mosques were built in Istanbul to accommodate Muslim prisoners and merchants. In the eastern part of historical peninsula, where Muslims largely lived, three mosques were built during the 8th, 12th, and 13th centuries. For more see Glaire Anderson, "Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople (Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.)".

[4] The conquest of Istanbul symbolized the realization of a Prophetic Hadith, which stated 'One day Constantinople will be conquered. What a good *amir*, what a good army is the one that will accomplish this' (as quoted in Inalcik 1990, 1). Many attempts to siege and conquer Istanbul by the Ottomans' predecessors had concretized the idea that Istanbul would become a Muslim city eventually (ibid.). Hence, to bestow the city with an Islamic identity as well as a spiritual patron and sanctity, Mehmed II established the burial site of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (known as Eyup Sultan in Turkish), the companion of the Prophet who died during the first Muslim siege of Constantinople in 668, as a site of veneration and pilgrimage (Inalcik 1990; Yalman and Ugurlu 2019; Hammond 2023).

[5] The planned transformation of Istanbul into an Ottoman-Islamic city also challenges the generally held Orientalist view that the cities in the Muslim world emerged spontaneously without any planning (Inalcik 1990).

[6] In some cases, the lands inside the city walls were also distributed to lower ranking members of his administration. For example, after the conquest a plot of land was gifted to Mehmed II's butcher Kasap Ilyas. Kasap Ilyas built a mosque, *hamam* (public bath) and other buildings, eventually giving birth to the Kasap Ilyas neighborhood. For more see, Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap Ilyas Mahalle*.

[7] There are several accounts on why Mehmed II decided to build the *külliye* on the ruins of the Church. One common opinion is that after the conquest, the Church was given to the Orthodox Patriarchate. However, since the Church was in ruins and unattended, the Patriarchate abandoned it. Mehmed II decided to construct the *külliye* there since the location already had an architectural foundation, as well as being far away from the imperial palace (Kafescioğlu 2009; Kiper 2016).

[8] Kenneth Hayes argues that Filarete's architectural treatise had also influenced the construction of the star shaped Yediküle Fort. The symmetric architectural design of Fatih *Külliye* and Yedikule Fort provides circumstantial evidence of Filarete's presence in Istanbul. For more on this see, Kenneth Hayes "Filarete's Journey to the East."

[9] For more on the evolution of mosque architectural designs in the Ottoman Empire, see Aptullah Kuran, *The Mosque in Early Ottoman Architecture*.

[10] The formation of the early Ottoman state in the 14th century is characterized as a frontier state of loosely held principalities ruled by different Seljuk Turkish tribesmen. The military configuration of these principalities was defined by a warrior or *ghazi* ethos, which involved constant raids against non-Muslims, especially Byzantine Christians. Unlike the later institutionalization of the Ottoman political hierarchy in the 15th century, the *ghazi* state was constantly mobile, focused on expanding the Ottoman political power. For more on the political and social foundations of the *ghazi* state see, Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age, 1300-1600*.

[11] Nilgun Kiper notes that "[t]he Divan Axis was the route for official ceremonies from the 15th to the late 18th century, though each ceremony followed a slightly different path. Major ceremonial processions included military parades held during campaigns, sword-girding processions departing from the palace to Eyüpsultan (or vice versa for the sword-girding ceremonies of heirs apparent), and Friday processions in which the sultan went to the mosque of his choice for Friday prayers, with the departure point being the palace. The first recorded Friday procession of this sort dates back to the reign of Mehmed II. Processions from Topkapi Palace to the Fatih Mosque undoubtedly shaped the character of the Divan Axis over the years" (Kiper 2016).

[12] "Agusi-maderiden haki-vatan eazdir; Andan daha muazzez bir nurdur gurbarin" (as quoted in Akün, 32).

[13] Although the experience of Istanbul would differ from the colonial encounter of other Ottoman provinces and cities, European hegemony was influential in creating various contours of urban modernity. The neighborhood structures based on religious institutions started to change and the Ottoman-Islamic culture that had hitherto structured the urbanism of the city was increasingly questioned. The role played by religious institutions and authorities in organizing the social life of the neighborhood gave way to modern administrative systems (Behar 2003). *Tanzimat* reforms also ignited new modes of urban life and gradually started to shift people's perception of public life around religious spaces.

[14] Another example is the construction of the last *Darul Mesnevi* Sufi lodge known as *Mesnevihane*, inaugurated in 1845 by Sultan Abdülmecid I.

[15] For more see Zeynep Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey: State, Space, and Ideology in the Early Republic*.

[16] Nada Moumtaz's recent work on the transformation of *waqf* properties in Lebanon has shown how modernization and secularization reconfigured its functions. "*Waqf*s that were tied in eternity to the particular purposes willed by founders had to be "liberated" for the benefit of the nation's economic progress. And since *waqf* created particular relations between founders, their inner self and God, their family, their neighbors, their city, and the Muslim world as they imagined it, these relations were also remade" (Moumtaz 2021, 3-4).

[17] The acclaimed Turkish novelist and Nobel laurate Orhan Pamuk explores in his autobiographical work the concept of a poetic melancholy and longing expressed by the people of Istanbul after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Pamuk borrows the Ottoman-Turkish word *hüzün* (originally in Arabic *huzn*) to describe the melancholic feeling carried by the people of Istanbul while living among the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and its legacies. He wrote about *hüzün* by recollecting the moods shared by the Istanbul inhabitants of his childhood, i.e., 1950 and 60s. While Pamuk is successful in conveying the inhabitants' nostalgia and melancholia, his attempt to craft this mood and concept through a secular literary tradition often fails to capture the diverse religious sensibilities and attitudes towards the loss of the urban religious heritage and built environment.

Chapter 2

The Reconfiguration and Revival of Scholarly Networks and Discourses

When you enter the Fatih mosque complex through the tomb gate, on the left side, you will see a small open-door entrance to the garden complex where the mausoleum of the Ottoman ruler Mehmed II is situated. One might see occasional visitors outside and inside the mausoleum, reciting supplications and making prayers for Mehmed II. A few meters away, opposite the tomb of Mehmed II, lies the mausoleum of Gülbahar Hatun (1432-1492), the wife of Mehmed II. Inside the same garden complex lies the Fatih mosque's cemetery. The Fatih cemetery, known as *Fatih Haziresi*, is the resting place of many who played an important role in the religious, intellectual, and political life of the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. To name a few: the cemetery holds the graves of the late Ottoman religious scholar and bureaucrat Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822-1895), journalist and literary figure Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844-1912), Şeyhulislam Mehmed Refik Efendi (1814-1871), the Cerrahi Sufi adept and the tomb keeper of Mehmed II, Ahmed Amiş Efendi (1807-1920), and journalist and Sufi writer Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (1865-1914). Additionally, the Hadith scholar Mehmed Emin Saraç (1929-2021), and Ottoman historians, such as Halil Inalcik (1916-2016), Kemal Karpat (1923-2019), and Mehmed Genç (1934-2021), were also buried in the cemetery.

The tombstones of *'ulama'*, Sufi saints and adepts, and scholars are a constant reminder of the district's scholarly identity (Gürlek 2021). The diversity in the *'ulama'*s intellectual engagements, discourses, and networks compels us to explore the shifting identity and functions of the Islamic intellectual class not only in the Fatih district but also in the city over the last century. The classical Islamic understanding of *'ulama'* might only indicate a class specialized in Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and related discourses. However, the shifts in the institutional and bureaucratic organization of the *ilmiye* (learned class) in Ottoman Istanbul since the early 16th century and the diversity in their responses towards Ottoman modernization in the 19th century produced multiple scholarly identities, functions, and discourses. An in-depth historical and sociological research into the life of various personalities who lived in the district reveals how the identity and function of *'ulama,'* broadly defined as the Islamic intellectual class, has transformed drastically since the late 19th century.

Figure 11: The Fatih Cemetery Complex.
Source: https://istanbultarihi.ist/184-istanbulun-tarihi-musluman-mezarliklari

The formation of a scholarly community in early Muslim societies and the institutionalization of their authority and discourses during the medieval and early modern period across the Muslim world has played an influential role in shaping Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy. According to Albert Hourani, the expansion of Islamic intellectual culture rested on "a body of knowledge transmitted over the centuries by a known chain of teachers that preserved a moral community even when rulers changed" (as quoted in Cooke & Lawrence 2005, 4). The fragmentation of their authority and the challenge to their discourses since the 19th century has led many to argue that the role and function of the *'ulama'* in the modern world has diminished or even died. However, a new wave of scholarship has questioned the assumption that *'ulama'* were essentially antimodern or agents who merely preserved Islamic tradition and orthodoxy. Instead, new studies have argued that the *'ulama'* continue to inform Muslim communities' everyday religious discourses, politics, and engagements in private and public spheres across the globe (Salvatore 1997; Moosa 2015; Zaman 2017). For instance, Skovgaard-Petersen remarks that "[a]lthough the '*ulama'* have lost control of their classical fields of operation, and non '*ulama'* have pioneered both Islamic activism and new Islamic ideologies, the former have been able to weather these challenges and carve out new roles for themselves (Skovgaard-Petersen 2018, 352).

Within the context of Turkey, it has long been assumed that the role and function of the *'ulama'* became increasingly insignificant following modernization in the 19th century. In the 20th century, many believed that after the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic, the *'ulama'* discourses had almost disappeared or came mainly under the control of the state. Additionally, major historiographical works of these periods have portrayed the '*ulama*' as a reactionary class that stood for traditionalism and religious orthodoxy.[1] However, recent research in Ottoman and Turkish studies has questioned this simplified approach to the socio-religious and political transformation of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and the declining role of the '*ulama*' (Bein 2013; Ahmed 2018). The shift from the state-centered analysis of late Ottoman history to examining the intellectual histories and individual biographies of late Ottoman '*ulama'* and intellectuals have brought new findings and insights (Hammond 2022b). Such works have also shown how the *'ulama'* reconfigured their function, identity, and discourses in the 19th and 20th centuries to the changing socio-political conditions.

Recent anthropological and sociological studies on Muslim societies have emphasized how the material culture of modernity has redefined the functions of traditional Islamic authorities. Such studies have highlighted how modern technologies such as the printing press, cassette sermons, television, and digital mediums facilitate *'ulama,'* Sufi communities, activists, and intellectuals in the Islamic world to reach their followers, audience, and interlocutors in myriad ways (Hirschkind 2006; Silverstein 2011; Eisenlohr 2018). On the other hand, historical studies have shown how inland and oceanic travel and trade facilitated the wide circulation of '*ulama*' and Sufi discourses, texts and networks (Cooke and Lawrence 2005; Ho 2006; Salvatore 2018; Green 2020; Kooria 2022). These studies have also provided important insights into how Islamic authority, practices, and discourses adapt to different cultural and political settings. While my chapter builds on these recent interventions in historical, sociological, and anthropological studies, it also explores the role of the built environments, architectures, and historic neighborhoods in the contemporary mediation of historically articulated Islamic intellectual discourses and networks. This chapter emphasizes that while *'ulama,'* Sufi saints and adepts did travel and network, circulating their knowledge-production throughout the wider Islamic world, the cities, towns, and neighborhoods they visited and resided in played a crucial role in mediating and preserving the intellectual culture of Muslim societies.

The practice of traveling to historically important cities in the Islamic world, such as

Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Tarim, Fez, Delhi, Istanbul, Madinah, and Mashhad, to train in the traditional Islamic sciences or take part in scholarly networks and intellectual exchanges continues to inform both Sunni and Shi'a communities to this day. Likewise, the Fatih district, once an important center of the Ottoman *ilmiye* class, continues to mediate the presence of scholars from both traditional *'ulama'* backgrounds and Islamic intellectuals, activists, and academics. Bruce Lawrence and miriam cooke observe that "the situated dialogue between scholars of very different backgrounds… [helps to] detect how it is that networks allow for the ongoing adaptation and re-articulation of Islamic norms" (Cooke and Lawrence 2005, 8). By exploring the well-known identity of the Fatih district as *'Ulama' Semti* (the district of religious scholars), this chapter will examine how the Ottoman built environment has mediated the intellectual culture and networks in the district over the last century. What transformation has the district witnessed in its intellectual culture after its encounter with modernization and secularization? In what ways are scholarly networks and discourses expressed and negotiated in the 20th and 21st centuries?

The first part of this chapter will explore how various 'ulama,' Sufi saints and adepts, and Ottoman bureaucratic officials came to be central in defining the district's scholarly identity and socio-religious discourses during the Ottoman era. The second and third sections will examine the transformation of the *'ulama'* identity and function in the district since the second half of the 19th century. The fourth section will turn attention to how the district became a locality for Naqshbandi affiliated '*ulama'* and Sufi adepts from the empire's peripheries since the late 19th century. This section will examine how the Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi order revived '*ulama'* networks and discourses in the 20th century, and how it contributed to the arrival and settlement of many '*ulama'* and *madrasa* students from the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia.

The *'Ulama'* in Ottoman Istanbul

During the state formation of the early-modern Muslim empires – the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals - the *'ulama'* had already become an important class in serving the community's educational needs and playing the role of urban and provincial administrators. In particular, they played a central role in supporting the political and social administration of the newly conquered regions and greatly facilitated the political consolidation of the empire's provinces in the early 15th century. However, one of the challenges the expanding Ottoman Empire faced was the

absence of an indigenous *'ulama'* community, as the conquered regions were previously ruled by the Byzantine Empire. Hence, the Ottomans primarily relied on scholars who were trained in Iran, Egypt, Syria, and Central Asia (Atçil 2017, 32). As a result, immigrant scholars from these regions played a significant role in providing "high-level scholarship" for the Ottomans up to the second half of the 15th century (ibid.).

As observed in the previous chapter, the conquest of Istanbul, and the subsequent centralization and institutionalization of the political and religious hierarchies, accelerated the development of an indigenous *'ulama'* community and a unique Ottoman educational system. Knowing the importance of the learned class in the governance of the empire, Mehmed II offered patronage and sent gifts, especially for *'ulama'* from the Timurid, Persianate, and Mamluk empires. He aimed to attract reputed scholars from other parts of the Islamic world in order to help produce scholarly discourses and also support the Ottoman empire's imperial claims (Atçil 2017, 64). Nonetheless, Mehmed II also arrived with indigenous scholars such as Molla Hüsrev (d. 1480), Molla Zeyrek (d. 1497), and Molla Gürani (d. 1488) (Ünver 1946). Their trans-imperial scholarly networks and connections with scholars from other regions of the Islamic world also facilitated scholars to settle in the Ottoman realm.

These multiple intentions and motivations led Mehmed II to invite scholars such as Abdurrahman Cami (d. 1492), Celaleddin Devvani (1426-1502), and Fethullah Şirvani (1417-1486) to be part of his educational project in Istanbul. Even though they refused his invitation, he sent them generous gifts (Atçil 2017, 64). He was more successful with the famous theologian, mathematician, and head of the Samarkand observatory, Ali Kuşçu (1403-1474). Kuşçu served at the court of Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) in Samarkand. After the passing of Ulugh Beg, he received the patronage of Uzun Hasan (r. 1452-1457), the ruler of the Akkyonlu principality and the rival of Mehmed II. Kuşçu, who traveled to Istanbul as a goodwill ambassador for Uzun Hasan, would later accept Mehmed II's patronage and return to Istanbul in 1472 (ibid.). Ali Kuşçu's acceptance of patronage demonstrates the appreciation among the *'ulama'* of the efforts made by Mehmed II in transforming the new Ottoman capital into a center of learning.

Since the late 15th century, with the construction of numerous educational institutions, the city witnessed the growth of a powerful indigenous *'ulama'* community. Gradually, the *'ulama'* of Istanbul attained a distinctive identity for holding prestigious positions in the empire, such as the Şeyhulislam (chief jurist), the grand vizierate, and the military and provincial judges. The

'*ulama*' became the backbone of the Ottoman political and socio-religious administration by institutionalizing a hierarchy of duties and tasks. The Ottoman '*ulama*' hierarchy was primarily known as the *ilmiye* or the learned establishment. The members of the *ilmiye* were educated mainly at the *madrasa*s established in the city. The level of training at *madrasa*s acquired by the members of the *ilmiye* depended on the profession they expected to accomplish within the Ottoman administration.

The role and functions of the *ilmiye* were extensive, and they maintained a network of institutions throughout the Ottoman domains. In addition to holding the prestigious positions mentioned earlier, the *ilmiye* also included the hierarchy of *madrasa* teachers, mosque employees, district and neighborhood administrators, and officials in charge of *waqf* endowments. The *ilmiye* played a vital role in shaping the empire's judicial philosophy and providing theological and jurisprudential interpretations relevant to its political, economic and everyday socio- religious affairs. The *ilmiye* also obtained "and transferred knowledge (and eventually culture) via the *madrasa*s, the mosques, and their guidance services, and thus influenced the mentality, conscience, and values of society as a whole" (Kara 2005, 64).

The Fatih *Külliyesi* and the wider district played a pioneering role in consolidating the *ilmiye* community in Ottoman Istanbul. The Sahn *madrasa*s attracted many religious scholars and students to the city from other parts of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world. The residence of '*ulama*' in the district significantly helped in the formation of scholarly networks and the production of religious discourses. Additionally, starting from the 16th century, the construction of monumental complexes along the tracts of the Divan axis, as mentioned in the previous chapter, resulted in the settlement and expansion of the *ilmiye*, and the region was specifically famous for the residences of the great '*ulama*' households (Nizri 2014; İpşirli 2016). The '*ulama*' of Istanbul formed the main body of the *ilmiye*. However, scholars from the Ottoman and non-Ottoman realms, particularly those who studied and taught at reputable *madrasa*s, were known to frequent the city and engage in scholarly discussions on occasion. They included scholars from Cairo, Damascus, and Samarqand, as well as North Africa and the Safavid and Qajar regions (İpşirli 2021).

As the Ottoman Empire came to be increasingly characterized by the political and administrative features shared by early modern empires, the identity and functions of the *ilmiye* likewise transformed. In the 16th century, a new identity of 'scholar-bureaucrat' emerged in

Ottoman Istanbul. The political and religious administrative functions during this period went through consolidation, and the hierarchy of professions for the *'ulama'* was institutionalized.

> Scholar-bureaucrats received education on the Qur'an and the Sunna and the traditional knowledge derived from them. They served as professors, judges, or jurists. In other words, they acquired the traditional qualifications of and fulfilled the usual functions of scholars. Thus there is nothing wrong in calling them scholars. At the same time, however, scholar-bureaucrats became affiliated with the Ottoman government through an institutional framework that was protected by laws and by established precedents. They pursued a lifetime career, accepting regular promotions to progressively better hierarchically organized positions. As legal experts, they fulfilled judicial, scribal, financial, and military tasks for the Ottoman government (Atçil 2017, 6).

Before the consolidation of this scholar-bureaucrat identity, the *'ulama'* had carried out financial and scribal tasks, alongside judicial and educational ones. However, the rapid expansion of the empire, covering North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, compelled the Ottoman rulers to recruit a large number of *'ulama'* to perform the above-mentioned tasks with special training and qualifications. This systematization of the training of the *ilmiye* opened up two apparent career paths for the *'ulama'*: the *ilmiye,* which carried out judicial and educational tasks, and the *kalemiye,* which performed financial and scribal tasks (ibid., 131).[2]

The diversification of the *ilmiye* had consequences for how scholarly networks were formed, and diverse forms of religious and other discourses were articulated through different institutions and spaces in the capital. The members of the *ilmiye,* in addition to carrying out judicial and educational functions, informed the institutionalization of the religious orthodoxy and Sunnitization of the empire. On the other hand, starting from the second half of the 16th century, the *kalemiye* played a significant role in representing the courtly *adab* tradition.[3] Beyond financial and scribal tasks, they pioneered the flourishing and promotion of Ottoman belletristic discourses through their contact with Persian high culture, producing important texts and discourses on the *adab* tradition (Findley 2012). Later, during the process of Ottoman modernization, many members of the *kalemiye* would become proponents of reform in the empire, often attempting to enrich the *adab* tradition with European cultural values and practices.

Within this context of the expanding role and functions of the *ilmiye,* the Fatih mosque complex and the district played a unique role as a center that mediated and debated religious

orthodoxy in opposition to the growing and influential role of certain Sufi orders such as Qalandaris, Bektaşis and Halvetis, and their heterodox discourses in the imperial capital from the early 16ᵗʰ century (Kafescioğlu 2021). As noted in the previous chapter, the absence of a Sufi lodge in the complex was instrumental in reordering the architectural functions and meanings of mosque complexes to institutionalize religious authorities and hierarchies in Istanbul. This is evident in the chronicles of the wandering Qalandari dervish Otman Baba when he faced *'ulama'* authorities in the 1470s, and a few other incidents recorded by adepts of the Halveti order.

> [Otman Baba's] Velāyetnāme portrays Meḥmed II's mosque as a locus of the religious establishment. The '*ulama'* confronting the dervish for what to them were scandalous acts hailed from that mosque, which clearly was not a place to be frequented by the *baba* who roamed the streets, squares, and marketplace of Istanbul, club in his hand and dervishes in tow. The confrontation between Sünbül Sinān (the shaykh of the Halveti lodge at the Ḳoca Muṣṭafā Pasha Mosque and founder of the Sünbüliye branch of the Halvetis, d. 936/1529) and Ṣarı Gürz Ḥamza Efendi (the kadi of Istanbul, d. 928/1522) on the permissibility of devrān (rhythmic bodily movements in a circle during the Sufi ritual), which took place some decades later in Meḥmed II's mosque and was related in the Halveti shaykh Ḥulvī's Lemeẕāt (1621), too, powerfully highlights the mosque as a locus of orthodoxy as articulated by the Ottoman religious establishment (ibid., 272).

While the intellectual discourses of the *ilmiye* were largely restricted to *madrasa*s, the public lectures and reading sessions at Fatih mosque and other imperial mosques in the district provided the common people with the opportunity to attend the sermons of influential '*ulama'* and popular preachers affiliated with the *ilmiye* and even Sufi orders. In the role of *dersiam* (*madrasa* teacher and a public mosque preacher), the '*ulama'* lectures intended for *madrasa* students given in imperial mosque spaces also provided an opportunity for the public to attend the discussions and debates on various religious topics (Zilfi 1988, 164). Many Sufi leaders often took the role of *vaiz* (mosque preacher, pl. *vaizan*), attracting many people to the mosques. The *vaiz* also included those at the margins of the *ilmiye* and often educated in provinces. Nonetheless, the *vaiz*'s ability to move the audience's emotions with their sermons helped them to preach at the imperial mosques (Le Gall 2004). After the closure of *madrasa*s and Sufi lodges in the 20ᵗʰ century, the role of *dersiam* and *vaiz* continued to play an important role in educating the common people in the district, a topic that will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.

The mosque spaces were also the center of debate and disagreement among '*ulama*' and *Sufi* adepts pertaining to the permissibility of certain religious rituals and practices. The Sufi orders, which rose to prominence in Ottoman Istanbul by the second half of the 15th century, held the position of *vaizan*. In particular, the Halveti and Celveti orders received patronage with the arrival of Beyazid II (r. 1481-1512) to power, and many of their members became influential *vaizan*s in the imperial mosques of Istanbul (ibid.).[4] The tension between the orthodoxy-minded '*ulama*' and the Sufi order became evident in the 17th century with the rise of the Kadizadeli movement (Zilfi 1988; Le Gall 2004).[5] The Kadizadelis, a current of the orthodox revivalist movement, grew popular in the city due to their ability to move the public through their speeches. Many Kadizadeli preachers who were not educated at the *madrasa*s of Istanbul, however, along with the Sufis, were given the positions of *vaizan* in many imperial mosques. Their primary opponents were the Sufis and '*ulama*,' who supported 'non-Orthodox' rituals and practices.

The Ottoman historian of the 17th century Katib Çelebi (1609-1657), relates an anecdote on the ability of Kadizade Mehmed (1582-1635), the leader of the movement, to hold a crowd when he was passing by Fatih mosque.

> One day, the author happened to be passing the mosque of Sultan Mehmed and went in to hear the sermon. [K]adizade was a good and effective speaker whose sermons never failed to move his hearers. For the most part, his words were an encouragement to the people to acquire religious knowledge and an exhortation to strive to escape from ignorance. On that occasion it was as if he had taken hold of the reins of his hearer's mind and driven him off in the direction of work and study (Çelebi 1957, 135).[6]

Later, Kadizade's student Ustuvani Mehmed Efendi of Damascus (d. 1661), rose to become an influential *vaiz* at Fatih mosque and other imperial mosques in the city at a time when the empire was experiencing political and social instability (Cavuşoğlu 1990). Although Ustuvani preached an orthodox discourse, he advocated for intellectual discussions and engagements with his opponents. On the other hand, some other preachers and followers of the movement attempted to crack down on Sufi orders and their lodges. While he was appointed as the *vaiz* of the Fatih mosque, the mosque complex and district were an informal center for their activism (Zilfi 1988, 147).

Two incidents that happened in the second half of the 17th century illustrate Ustuvani's growing influence and how the Fatih mosque became the center of clashes between *Sufi*s and Kadizadeli followers. On one occasion, a Halveti Sufi adept, Tatar Imam, wrote a critique of the influential Ottoman scholar Mehmed Birgivi's (1522-1573) work *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiya* ("The Muhammadan Path").[7] The Kadizadeli followers were known to revere Mehmed Birgivi as their intellectual predecessor, and they petitioned the Şeyhulislam to execute Tatar Imam (Cavuşoğlu 1990, 138). After their effort to convince the Şeyhulislam for the execution went in vain, Tatar Imam petitioned and challenged the Kadizadeli followers to a public debate, offering to accept his execution if they could counter his arguments at Fatih Mosque. Tatar Imam then carried his books on a mule and arrived at Fatih Mosque to challenge the Kadizadelis. A large number of people gathered to listen to the discussion. Tatar Imam then invited Kadizadelis to counter his criticism. However, fearing public disgrace, none of them appeared. This would significantly damage the reputation of the Kadizadeli movement in the city (ibid.).

Another incident took place on September 15th, 1656, on the occasion of the Friday sermon and prayer. During

> [t]he Friday prayer in the Sultan Mehmed Mosque, the muezzins began the usual melodic recitation of the eulogy for the Prophet (nat i-serif). A group among the Kadizadelis began to say insolent words in a reviling fashion to silence the muezzins. Upon the interruption of an opposing group, a noisy dispute started. The turmoil came to the brink of turning into battle… After this incident, the Kadizadelis decided to demolish all dervish lodges in Istanbul and its outskirts and to pour the rubble into the sea. The Kadizadelis also invited all Muslims to assemble in the Sultan Mehmed Mosque with instruments of war in their hands (ibid., 147).

The increasingly violent nature of the Kadizadeli followers eventually prompted Şeyhulislam Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (1578-1661) and other '*ulama*' to request the Sultan to execute them. However, upon the request of the Grand Vizier, instead of executing them, Ustuvani and a few other Kadizadeli preachers were deported to Cyprus (Zilfi 1988; Cavuşoğlu 1990). The Kadizadeli inspired enforcement of orthodox religious discourses peaked when Feyzullah Efendi (1639-1703), a Kadizadeli sympathizer and the son-in-law of Ustuvani, was killed during his tenure as Şeyhulislam (Zilfi 1988). Ultimately, Feyzullah Efendi was killed by a mob and Sultan Mustafa II was deposed by the Janissary forces. This was mostly in reaction to the growing

economic crisis and corruption and nepotism within the Ottoman bureaucracy. Nonetheless, Feyzullah Efendi's attempt to enforce an empire-wide moral discourse on Ottoman subjects had angered the diverse class of people in the Ottoman cities of Istanbul and Edirne (Shafir 2019). With Feyzullah Efendi's death, the Kadizadeli discourse would eventually face its demise. While most '*ulama*' and Sufis openly confronted and opposed the movement, the *kalemiye* class and more cosmopolitan Istanbulites also disliked their orthodox discourses (Zilfi 1988). Another reason for their demise was that their discourse primarily emerged from outside the *ilmiye* hierarchy dominated largely by Istanbul '*ulama*'.

The Kadizadeli movement was a proto-revivalist movement among the broader revivalist and reformist discourses emerging within '*ulama*' and Sufi communities in different parts of the Muslim world since the late 17th century.[8] Another form of such revivalist discourse was the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi movement. Inspired by the revivalist ideas of the 17th century Indian scholar and Naqshbandi master Imam Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order would spread across the Indian Subcontinent, Central Asia, and the Ottoman realms (Ziad 2021). The Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Order, also known as the Sufi order of '*ulama,*' played an important role in the revival of orthodox religious discourse and practices, especially when the Ottoman '*ulama*' faced challenges during the modernization of the empire. While the order faced repression in Central Asia during the Russian imperial expansion in the 19th century, they experienced a revival in the Ottoman Empire. This led many Naqshbandi-affiliated '*ulama*' from the Central Asia to migrate to Istanbul and settle down in the Fatih district. Their role in reviving the '*ulama*' networks and orthodox Sunni discourses in the 20th century will be explored later in this chapter.

The Reconfiguration of the *Ilmiye*: The *'Ulama'* as Reformists, Public Intellectuals, and Activists

The expansion of the Fatih cemetery in the second half of the 19th century gives some critical insights into the changing nature of *ulama* identity and functions in the district. It illustrates the transformation of the Ottoman *ilmiye* in Istanbul and how the state, religion, and social relations in the Ottoman Empire were reconfigured. Many imperial cemetery garden complexes in the historical peninsula, where previously only members of the Sultanic family were buried, began to accommodate members of the *'ulama,'* Sufi orders, military elites, *kalemiye* bureaucrats, and

the artisan class. This also demonstrates the shifting civil relations between the masses, the learned class, and the rulers, particularly in the Ottoman domains, but also the Muslim world at large (Salvatore 2016, 171).

In the late 18th century, the cemetery complex in front of the Fatih mosque and the mausoleum of Mehmed II was expanded. The expansion of the cemetery complex started in 1780 with the burials of a few members from the Ottoman Palace. During this period, special permission from the Sultan was required to bury anyone inside the cemetery. As a result, it was only occupied by members of the Palace until the second half of the 19th century. However, once the cemetery burial culture started to change in the city after the 1870s, non-Sultanic elites and civilians began to be buried inside the cemeteries of imperial mosque complexes, including various members of the *ilmiye* and Sufi orders, bureaucrats and civil servants, calligraphers, writers, and poets (Ozcan 2009).

As briefly mentioned in the last chapter, the most important reason for prominent figures to be buried in the Fatih cemetery was the scholarly and saintly characteristics attributed to Mehmed II's mausoleum (Gürlek 2021). The first non-palace member to be buried inside the complex was the Bosnian *alim* and Şeyhulislam Mehmed Refik Efendi (ca. 1814-1871). When he was buried at the cemetery, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (ca. 1822-1895) lamented: "Today, we are burying here a great scholar of *fiqh*" (Erk 1954, 240). Two decades later, Cevdet Paşa would himself be buried in the same complex. Today, his tombstone is one of the most easily recognizable upon entering the cemetery. His scholarly activities and engagements provide a window to the transformation of *'ulama'* discourses in the district.

Figure 12: The tomb of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa at the Fatih Cemetery Complex.
Source: https://www.kelambaz.com/Ahmed-cevdet-pasanin-gozunden-avrupa/

Mehmed Refik Efendi and Ahmed Cevdet Paşa were not natives of Istanbul but came from Bosnia and Bulgaria, respectively. In the 19th century, many students from different parts of the empire who aspired to study at one of the imperial *madrasa*s under prominent *'ulama'* in Istanbul came and settled in the district, reinforcing the district's scholarly identity. As such, in 1839, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa traveled to Istanbul at the age of eighteen. On his arrival in Istanbul, he was enrolled at Fatih *madrasa* and managed to find accommodation at the Paspasoğlu *madrasa* in the Çarşamba neighborhood of the Fatih district (Cevdet Paşa 1953). The Çarşamba neighborhood, the location of many *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, and *'ulama'* residences and mansions, played an influential role in the intellectual formation of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa.

His four-volume work, *Tezakir* (1953), a historical memoir recollecting the changing political and social culture of the *Tanzimat* era, also draws attention to the intellectual culture and the scholarly networks in the district. In the fourth volume of *Tezakir*, which is largely a biographical account of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's academic life in Istanbul, he writes about different scholars with whom he studied and the different texts he read under them. In the same volume,

he also reflects upon the crisis faced by the *ilmiye* during the *Tanzimat* era and some of the reasons for the crisis. He recounts that when he arrived in Istanbul to study at Fatih *madrasa*, the region encompassing Fatih mosque and Yavuz Selim mosque complexes and the Karagümrük neighborhood were occupied mainly by '*ulama*', the people of impressive *adab*, and the masters of Divan-inspired ornate poetry (ibid.).

Unlike many other *madrasa* students of his time, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa came from an affluent family that financially supported him during his education in Istanbul. Hence, during the summer, when other *madrasa* students went to the provinces to earn money by being a *madrasa* teacher or *vaiz*, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa stayed in Istanbul and spent time reading and learning Islamic texts under different scholars. This helped him to complete his education within five or six years instead of the usual eight to ten years (Aliye 1916). Besides learning classical Islamic texts, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa also spent time learning mathematics, logic, and Persian literature at the Murad Molla Sufi lodge in the Çarşamba neighborhood.[9] In addition, he also attended *Mesnevi* teaching sessions at Darul Mesnevi Sufi lodge in the Yavuzselim neighborhood. During the opening ceremony of Darul Mesnevi lodge in 1844, in the presence of Sultan Abdülmecid I (1823-1861), Ahmed Cevdet Paşa received his *icazet* (the license to teach/transmit a text or a corpus of text) from the Naqshbandi Shaykh Murad Molla to teach the *Mesnevi* (ibid.).[10]

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa classifies the '*ulama*' who lived in the district into four categories. The most famous and competitive scholars fall into the first three categories, whereas the fourth category, according to him, did not show the intellectual competence of the rest (Cevdet Paşa 1953).[11] One reason for their incompetence is that the reform-minded *madrasa* students often challenged them. According to Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, those students would later play a part in the empire's decline (Aliye 1916). Though Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's categorization of '*ulama*' could be considered an informal hierarchy based on his educational experiences (Chambers 1973), it demonstrates that only a few scholars were able to skillfully address contemporary issues when the traditional Ottoman education started to experience a decline in quality. Eventually, many '*ulama*,' including Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, would move away from *madrasa* discourses and become a part of the *Tanzimat* movement.

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa would later look back on his days of studying in the district and his friendship with its many intellectuals with nostalgia: "How beautiful were those days, and what a sweet life I have lived."[12] Simultaneously, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa also lamented the loss of the

intellectual vibrancy and debates that happened regularly at different venues in the district:

> Those days, in the Fatih district, while subjects related to Islamic knowledge and spirituality were being discussed, the debate on the question of *zahir* and *batin* were always present. But now, what is there? Nothing is left! All of those people have left this world. They have all departed! They vacated their positions! I wish there were a Shaykh Murad Molla to criticize, and a Hafiz to be criticized (as quoted in Aliye 1916, 50).[13]

A few months after Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's arrival in Istanbul, Sultan Abdülmecid I (r. 1839-1861) would ascend the throne and start to implement the *Tanzimat* reforms, a project in which Ahmed Cevdet Paşa would be fully involved. After his *madrasa* education, he was assigned bureaucratic roles in various provinces. During this time, he would gain first-hand experience with the limitations of Ottoman *ilmiye* graduates and their educational and professional skills within the context of a modernizing administration. Although Ahmed Cevdet Paşa was educated within the framework of the traditional *ilmiye* structure, his involvement with the state bureaucracy eventually led him to become a proponent of the *Tanzimat* reforms. His change in perspective on religious education, and mainly his role as the chairman overseeing the preparation of the Ottoman civil code (*Mecelle*), helps us to understand how the Ottoman '*ulama*' of Istanbul had to negotiate with the changing times.[14] This negotiation also meant the gradual fragmentation of the *ilmiye* authority and hierarchies and the emergence of diverse opinions and attitudes among the '*ulama*' in response to the modernization process.

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa became more active as a reformist '*alim*' and a public intellectual after returning to Istanbul. While teaching at the Fatih *madrasa*, his close friendship with Mustafa Reşit Paşa (1800-1858), one of the chief architects of the *Tanzimat* reforms, significantly impacted his intellectual transformation. He frequently visited Resit Paşa's mansion, tutored his kids, and, most importantly, Resit Paşa's reformist ideas eventually changed Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's outlook on religion, politics, and the future of the Ottoman state. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's daughter Fatma Aliye (1862-1936) recollects how her father reflected on this change in his intellectual orientation. "As my association with statesmen and dignitaries increased, I began to drift away from my old life, as I became accustomed to wandering around the promenades of the Bosphorus. I was heading north-eastwards in search of the Qibla" (Aliye 1916, 52). In other words, his increasing disillusionment with the *ilmiye* led Ahmed Cevdet Paşa

to drift apart from the *'ulama'* community, and instead gradually become more accustomed to visiting bureaucrats and officials who pioneered the modernization of the empire.

By the late 19th century, the *ilmiye* increasingly faced challenges with the emergence of modern educational institutions and the growing influence of a secular and nationalist intellectual class in the administration of the Ottoman state. It became apparent when different positions emerged among the *'ulama'*, who held opposing views on religion, politics, and the modernization of the empire and society. In addition, the centralization of *waqf*s during the *Tanzimat* reforms would significantly impact the autonomy and financial security of *'ulama'* and the running of many *madrasa*s. In parallel, by the early 20th century, the centralization and expansion of state bureaucracy opened up new career opportunities, where initially, *'ulama'* could find jobs as salaried officials (Bein 2011). However, *madrasa* graduates would eventually come to be replaced by graduates from modern institutions, which primarily focused on the professional training of skills necessary for the secular administration.

Considering these changing employment opportunities, many *'ulama'* preferred to send their children to modern schools (Bein 2011; Fortna 2011). For example, the Muslim reformist and intellectual Mehmed Akif Ersoy (1873-1936), the son of a religious scholar at Fatih *madrasa* and a Naqshbandi adept, was sent for a modern education. Mehmed Akif was born in 1873 and raised in the Sarigüzel neighborhood of the Fatih district, graduated from Veterinary Boarding School (Mülkiye Baytar Mektebi) in 1893 and was employed at the Ministry of Agriculture. Being a bureaucrat at the ministry provided him ample opportunities to travel and work in different provinces of the empire (Hammond 2022a). Akif was also known as a poet and a Muslim reformist. Though he did not have the opportunity to study at Fatih *madrasa* or any other *madrasa* in the district, the religious education he received from his father largely informed his knowledge of the Arabic language and Islamic sciences. Like Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Mehmed Akif's intellectual friendship with the *'ulama'* community in the district helped him gain further knowledge of Islamic theology, mysticism, and classical literary works in Ottoman Turkish. He also gained proficiency in Persian language and literature when he was a student of the Mevlevi Sufi adept Esed Dede (1843-1911), who held *Mesnevi* reading sessions at Fatih mosque. Finally, he also studied French and showed keen interest in the writings of French writers "such as Hugo, Lamartine, Zola, and Daudet" (Hammond 2022a, 91).

Given his cosmopolitan educational background, Mehmed Akif was critical of many of

the '*ulama*' and their discourse in an era dominated by Western knowledge and sciences. He showed deep interest in the ideas of Egyptian reformists such as Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and translated their works into Turkish. Like 'Abduh's and Rida's approach to '*ulama*' in Egypt, he strongly criticized the Ottoman '*ulama*' and their institutions as stagnant and dysfunctional. He argued that for the '*ulama*' and their institutions and discourses to stay relevant for Muslims, they should be ready to endure wide-ranging reforms (Sarıkaya 1997, 142). Both his prose and poetry would address the issues faced by the Ottoman state and society and the Muslim world at large. Though highly critical of '*ulama,*' his concerns were understood by many of his contemporaries as an internal attempt to reform traditional Ottoman education (Cemal [1939] 1986). In contrast to many Muslim intellectuals and modernists of his time, who were deeply influenced by European positivist philosophy and completely opposed the involvement of '*ulama*' in state and public affairs, he desired a reform of *ulama* discourse and their institutions. He was also keen in expressing his views with the scholarly community and the common people of Istanbul. For the same reason, "despite his status as an intellectual rather than a scholar of the '*ulama*' class, Akif gave three sermons in Istanbul mosques in February 1913: his theme was that Muslims of different ethnic-linguistic backgrounds have a duty to overcome division to save the Ottoman state as "Islam's last hope" (Hammond 2022a, 194).

Though coming from a traditional '*ulama*' background, another intellectual who opined views similar to the reformist ideas of Mehmed Akif was Said Nursi (1878-1960). Said Nursi arrived in Istanbul from the eastern province of Van a few months after the constitutional revolution of 1908, intending to convince the authorities of the importance of reforming educational methods and institutions in the Kurdish regions. During his visit, he stayed at the Şekerci Han complex, built next to the Fatih mosque in the 17th century, which was known to be an abode for many Muslim intellectuals in the early 20th century. The stay at Şekerci Han provided Nursi the opportunity to interact with Muslim intellectuals and modernists and also meet with the '*ulama*' community of Fatih. Thus, he hoped to establish himself as someone with a scholarly background to support his intention of submitting a petition to Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1842-1918) (Vahide 2003).

In her biography of Nursi, Şükran Vahide summarizes the petition for the educational reform he submitted in 1908:

The heart of Said Nursi's proposals lay in reconciling "the three main branches" of the educational system—the *medrese*s or traditional religious schools, the *mekteb*s or new secular schools, and the *tekke*s or Sufi establishments— and the disciplines they represented. The embodiment of this rapprochement was to be the Medresetü'z-Zehra, (…) Nursi attached the greatest importance to establishing this university where the religious sciences and modern sciences would be taught side by side and "combined," and pursued it till the end of his days (ibid., 45).

Though Nursi failed to convince the Sultan and related authorities to support his reform project, his presence in Istanbul and the district helped him earn a name among the Istanbul '*ulama*,' Muslim intellectuals, and common people.[15] This visit would also allow him to circulate his ideas on the need for Muslim educational reform to incorporate scientific reasoning. Later, his Quranic commentary, popularly known as *Risale-i Nur* (the Epistle of Light) would inspire a number of reformist socio-religious movements in modern Turkey.

The growing influence of the Young Turks, who sought to reestablish the constitutional assembly, and the radical modernization of the Ottoman state and society, created oppositional movements and political activism in support of the Islamic character of the Ottoman state and society. While understanding the need for socio-religious reform, some of the '*ulama*' took up political activism to defend the position of the traditionalist discourses. Their primary opponents were the CUP (Committee of Progress and Union) members, who vehemently opposed the involvement of '*ulama*' in politics and their being part of the decision-making class in the late Ottoman Empire.

The last Ottoman Şeyhulislam, Mustafa Sabri (1869-1954), became one of the most prominent and active among the '*ulama*' to take a different stance than reformists such as Akif Ersoy or Said Nursi. After graduating from Fatih *madrasa*, Mustafa Sabri was appointed as head librarian of Sultan Abdülhamid II's Yildiz Palace library. In 1890, at 22, he earned a teaching certificate and became a teacher at Fatih *madrasa*. He taught at Fatih *madrasa* until 1914 and granted *icazet* to 50 students (Karabela 2003). During this period, he became involved in the social and political issues of the time. He initially supported the CUP, against the growing authoritarianism of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and expected a revolution to happen and the constitution to be reinstated. However, after the revolution of 1908, he became a vocal figure

among the '*ulama*' in their opposition to the CUP's nationalist and secularist political project (Ahmed 2018).[16]

Moving beyond the role of traditional '*ulama,*' he would actively use his journalistic skills to defend the position of '*ulama*' and their affiliations within the bureaucracy. Being the editor-in-chief of Beyanul Hak magazine, the mouthpiece of the '*ulama*' association in Istanbul (*Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i İslamiye*), he critiqued the portrayal of the classical '*ulama*' as narrow-minded and backward by secular intellectuals and reformist '*ulama*' as unjust and unfair (Hammond 2022b). His concern was that these wild accusations against the '*ulama*' would eventually lead to the marginalization of Ottoman religious authorities and their discourses from the Ottoman public sphere. Hence, he constantly wrote and spoke about this growing negativity towards the '*ulama*' community, and constantly critiqued the CUP intellectuals and their agendas (ibid.).

After coming to power through a coup d'état in 1913, the CUP started to crack down on their opponents, especially '*ulama*' and activists like Mustafa Sabri. Sabri managed to escape from his home in the Çarşamba neighborhood, "climbing from a window onto the roof of the neighbor's carpentry workshop, then made his way to the house of a Greek Orthodox acquaintance in the Fener district before hopping on a boat to the Romanian Black Sea town of Köstence (Constanța)" (ibid., 41). Sabri returned to Istanbul after five years in 1918 and once again became active with the movement named The Freedom and Accord Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*). This party was initially formed during the post-1908 years to counter the growing influence of the CUP movement. In 1919, he was selected as a parliament representative for his hometown province of Tokat for the second time. During the same period, he also became a member of a platform known as The House of Islamic Wisdom (*Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye*), which addressed the education and social issues of Muslims. Mehmed Akif and Said Nursi were also members of this platform. While Mustafa Sabri disagreed with the nationalist struggle based in Ankara under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, Nursi and Akif supported it. For the same reason, this platform would be closed in 1922 after the abolition of the caliphate (Nam 2010, 104). Akif and Nursi traveled to Ankara hoping to revive the Islamic character of the newly founded Republic, while a disillusioned Mustafa Sabri exiled himself to Egypt.

The '*ulama*' and reformists hope to preserve the Islamic character of the new Turkish Republic ended with the educational reforms of 1924, which led to the closure of *madrasa*s, Sufi

orders, and their lodges. The establishment of The Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) to regulate the religious discourses and practices in public spaces and spheres significantly restricted the role of the '*ulama*' in social life. The new government took charge of the appointment of *imam*s and other responsible persons in mosques across Turkey. Though diverse intellectual perspectives and orientations emerged among the *ulama* during the 19th century, the early Republican authorities hoped to curb their influence. As a result, "the comparative diversity of the Ottoman intellectual heritage was pushed into the background or relegated into oblivion for several generations" (Ozdalga 2005, 17). After coming to this realization, a few years after the establishment of the Republic, Mehmed Akif also exiled himself to Egypt. The networking of Ottoman' *ulama*' and intellectuals in Cairo would later play an important role in the revival of Turkish Islamism in the 1970s, in which the Fatih district would play a central role.

Fatih Intelligentsia: The Inheritors of the Ottoman *adab* tradition

As we have seen in the previous section, the '*ulama*' and the *ilmiye* at large faced significant challenges starting from the second half of the 19th century. Their socio-religious function and influence became insignificant after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The section will draw attention to the network of intellectuals in the district who took a more accommodative and pragmatic stance towards secular modernization and nationalist projects. This intellectual class, who were mainly part of a modernizing empire and its bureaucracies, played an important role in transmitting the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Ottoman scribal class or the *kalemiye* after the Empire's collapse.[17]

Starting from the second half of the 19th century, the *kalemiye* became one of the central interlocutors in the empire's socio-religious and political reform. The *kalemiye* and their civil successors, who played a major role in expanding the scope of the *adab* tradition due to their specialized linguistic and administrative skills and their interaction with Persian high culture, were also subjected to changes with the increasing contact with the West (Findley 1989). In particular, during the *Tanzimat* reforms, the *adab* tradition would transform into a "larger and more inclusive cultural matrix that could help educate and civilize the political community (and deliver it from ignorance and error) better than a shari'a-based social discourse" (Salvatore 2019, 46). In addition, the diverse expressions of the *adab* tradition, articulated mainly within bureaucratic circles, would gradually diversify in scope and reach the larger public through an

expanding print culture. This would also lead to a growing interest in topics and books dealing with '*adab al-muashara*', the discourse on cultivating the practical know-how of observing proper civility, etiquette, and manners in everyday life (Tunç Yaşar 2016).

The *kalemiye* intellectuals not only tried to preserve the *adab* tradition at a time when the *ilmiye* and the *'ulama'* discourses "were in disarray" but also became agents of innovation, enriching it through their encounters with the West (Findley 1989, 174). Many *kalemiye* intellectuals worked as foreign diplomats and were at the forefront of the political and cultural negotiations with their foreign (mostly European) counterparts. Here, the diplomatic experiences and their narratives became an essential medium through which the *adab* tradition's scope expanded as they started to provide knowledge on everyday etiquettes and manners outside the Ottoman realm (Findley 1989; Tunç Yaşar 2016; Salvatore 2019). Consequently, we witness two broad intellectual approaches emerging within the *kalemiye*. While one approach pushed for radical modernization and secularization, the other leaned towards a moderate position and advanced a culturally conservative discourse.

The production and exchange of literary works were not the only genre on which the inheritors of the *adab* tradition focused. Since the *adab* tradition carved a soft secular space within the Muslim societies (Salvatore 2019), encouraging varieties of artistic expressions and cultural production, the *kalemiye* officials were also drawn towards calligraphy, painting, and music. In particular, calligraphy and music were two important forms of artistic production in various Sufi lodges and personal mansions of scribal officials in the Fatih district. In the early 20th century, Sufi orders such as Halveti, Rifa'i, and Kadiri, who had many members of the *kalemiye* and the artisan class, continued to engage with the *adab* tradition. However, many of them would follow a progressive interpretation of Islam and would reject the Sunni orthodoxy maintained by the *'ulama'*. Later, they would also concur with many aspects of Kemalist reforms (Taji-Farouki 2007, 71). Hence, it is not surprising that after the closure of Sufi lodges, a few of them were able to transform into cultural foundations in the district.

In this section, I will briefly explore how the Fatih district became a center for the *kalemiye* intellectuals, who preserved the *adab* tradition through their careful engagement with the late Ottoman modernization and Republican secularization projects. Over the last few years, the Fatih municipality has been interested in reviving the legacy of the many *kalemiye* intellectuals who lived through the transition from an empire to a secular republic. For example,

the municipality has organized exhibitions and public talks, as well as published biographies, on a number of intellectuals from diverse socio-religious backgrounds, such as Ibnülemin Kemal Inal (1870-1957), Cemalettin Server Revnakoğlu(1909-1968), Tahirül Mevlevi (1877-1951), and Kenan Rifai (1867-1950).

The exhibition on Ibnülemin Kemal Inal, which I briefly mentioned at the beginning of the introductory chapter, was one such event organized in the district. Ibnülemin, a public intellectual and historian of the late 19th century and early 20th century, played an important role in archiving the biographies of the late Ottoman bureaucratic officials, poets, musicians, and calligraphers. Born to Mehmed Emin Paşa, the scribal officer of the Grand Vizier Yusuf Kamil Paşa (1808-1866), he grew up in a family environment that had close connections with a number of *kalemiye* officials and intellectuals (Akün 2021). His publications, such as *Son Sadrazamlar* ("Biographies of Grand Viziers")*, Son Hattatlar* ("Biographies of Calligraphers")*,* and *Son Asır Türk Şairleri* ("Biographies of the Poets"), are considered to be important contributions to the late Ottoman intellectual history. As someone who joined the Ottoman Sublime Porte (the executive headquarters of the Grand Vizier) at a young age and worked until its closure in 1922, Ibnülemin was among the last generation of the *kalemiye* officials and an inheritor and preserver of the *adab* tradition.

Ibnülemin was closely associated with Mustafa Sabri and Mehmed Akif during the tumultuous years of the second constitutional revolution; however, he would take a different approach to revive the Ottoman intellectual and cultural heritage by being part of the secular bureaucracy after the establishment of the Turkish Republic (Şeker Fatih 2009). Though he was a critic of many secular reforms, he held various government positions, played a central role in founding the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in 1927, and served as its director for many years. As someone who lived through the late Ottoman and early Republican bureaucratic offices, he had connections with several *kalemiye* officials, intellectuals, and artisans in the district. This helped him in compiling the biographies of hundreds of acquaintances and friends and collecting important manuscripts and artifacts produced by many of them. His famous mansion, 'Darul Kemal' (the house of Kemal and the house of perfection), which he inherited from his father, would become a personal museum and an important meeting point of many '*ulama,' kalemiye* intellectuals, and artisans in and around the Fatih district (Şeker Fatih 2009; Gürlek 2020).[18]

Despite being actively involved in the Republican bureaucracy, Ibnülemin did not completely recover from the Empire's collapse. He suffered intellectual and emotional trauma, especially after World War I, when his mansion was raided by French troops (Şeker Fatih 2009). He later critiqued the manners and etiquette of the West by referring to how the French troops destroyed many valuable manuscripts and books in his mansion. Nevertheless, Ibnülemin's longing for the Ottoman intellectual tradition and his efforts in compiling the biographies and artistic contributions of many *kalemiye* intellectuals was one of the many attempts to preserve the vanishing Ottoman *adab* culture.

Even after the Turkish language reform in 1928, Ottoman Turkish and Persian continued to be the language of literary conversations and expressions of the *adab* tradition in many of the gatherings organized by Ibnülemin and like-minded intellectuals in the district. In this regard, the *Mevlevi* Sufi order and the influential role of the *Mesnevi* and other Persian literary reading sessions were invaluable.[19] In particular, after the closure of the Sufi lodges, two influential intellectuals from the district continued to teach the *Mesnevi*, the Mevlevi Sufi adept Tahirül Mevlevi and one of the last Rifa'i Sufi masters of Istanbul, Kenan Rifai.

 Mehmed Tahir Olgun, popularly known as Tahirül Mevlevi, was born in 1877 into a family of Mevlevi Sufi adepts. In his childhood, he grew up listening to his father reading from Faridudeen Attar's *Pendname* ("Book of Advice"), which would encourage him to learn Persian (Güngör 2009). Like Ibnülemin and many others who grew up in the late Ottoman era, he was sent for a secular education at the Gülhane Military School. After graduating from military school, he was employed at the Ottoman Ministry of War. In 1890, he started attending the *Mesnevi* reading sessions of Esed Dede at Fatih Mosque, along with Fatih *dersiam* Filibeli Mehmed Rasim Efendi (Şentürk 1991). After he received an *icazet* to teach the *Mesnevi* from Esed Dede in 1893, he gave up his job at the War Ministry and became a Mevlevi adept at the Yenikapi Mevlevi Sufi lodge. He gave *Mesnevi* lessons at Fatih mosque from 1923 to 1925 until he was arrested and sent to prison in Ankara for criticizing the secular establishment (Güngör 2009, 178).

Aside from his career in the late Ottoman and Republican bureaucracies, Tahirül Mevlevi had been at the forefront of establishing the printing press in Istanbul and publishing various magazines and journals. Of particular note is the *Mahfil* magazine, the longest in print in Turkey (68 issues, 1920-26), which covered many topics such as Islamic civilization, spirituality, and

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Persian and Turkish literature. He also published the translated works of Persian literature in other important journals and magazines of the time, such as *Sebilü'r-Reşad*, *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, *Beyanü'l-Hak*, *Mektep, Peyam-ı Sabah*, and *Yücel ve İslam Yolu* (ibid.). However, his most important publication is the four-volume *Mesnevi Şerhi* ("Interpretation of the *Mesnevi*"), a compilation of sermons on the *Mesnevi* delivered at the Fatih and Sulemaniye mosques.
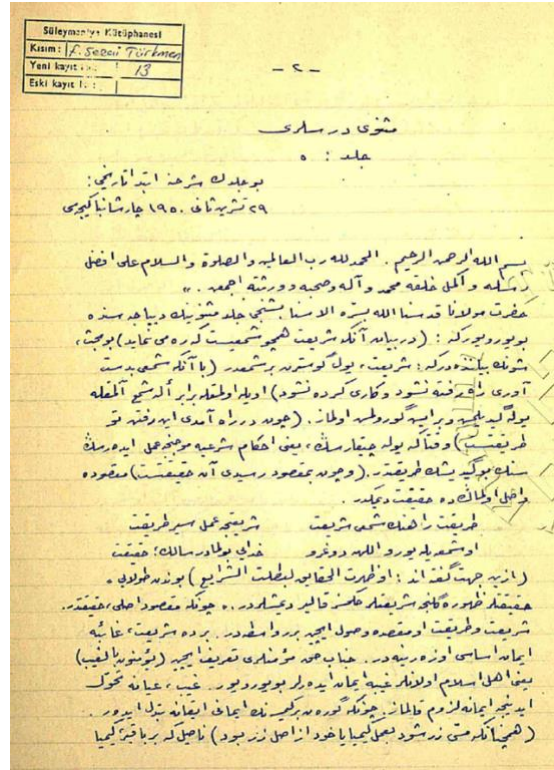
Figure 13: A manuscript of Tahirül Mevlevi's *Mesnevi Şerhi*. Süleymaniye Archives (Fethisezaiturkmen13)

According to Tahirül Mevlevi, the distinctive feature of the Mevlevi Sufi tradition is the importance given to the discourse of *adab*.

> In every verse, and in the entirety of the meaning of the Qur'an revolves around the discourse of *adab*. Mevlana has prioritized *adab* in the Mevlevi order. Therefore, in Mevlevi tradition, the goal is to maintain both physical and spiritual *adab*. That is why a Mevlevi adept while striving to preserve physical *adab* in their actions, never deviates from spiritual *adab* in their thoughts. As a result, the writers and poets who have emerged from the Mevlevi order are unmatched in any other Sufi order or even in any other profession (as quoted in Güngör 2009, 180-181).[20]

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Tahirül Mevlevi remained inclined towards an orthodox interpretation of the Mevlevi tradition despite many members of the Mevlevi order in Istanbul embracing a progressive and modernist approach to Islam from the late 19th century. According to him, without referring to the Quran and the prophetic tradition, it is impossible to understand the message of *Mesnevi* and the spirit of the Mevlevi tradition. In contrast, Kenan Rifai (d. 1950), who also closely associated himself with the learning and teaching of *Mesnevi*, would openly support many dimensions of the Republican-era secular reforms. Considering the context of the modernization of the Turkish state and society, he advocated for a private and inward-oriented *adab* discourses and practices. He believed that the traditional role and function of the Sufi orders and their institutions were complete. He expressed this understanding to a Mevlevi master in this way: "We are now, what we were earlier. Earlier we were in visible *tekke*s (lodge), now in an inner, heart, *tekke*. Allah wished so, and made it so. Everything from Him is fine" (as quoted in Taji-Farouki 2007, 71). Hence, much of his intellectual engagements differed from many other culturally and religiously conservative *kalemiye* intellectuals in the district.

Kenan Rifai was born in Ottoman Salonica, grew up in Plovdiv, and later moved to Istanbul when his parents settled down in the Hirka-i Şerif neighborhood of the Fatih district. After graduating from Galatasaray High School, he worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Later, he also worked as a director of the Directorate of National Education offices in various Ottoman provinces. During his assignment to Madinah High School in 1904, he was initiated into the Kadiri order and received *icazet* from the great Rifai Sufi Master, Shaykh Hamza Rifai of Madinah. After his return to Istanbul in 1908, he built a Sufi lodge named Ummi Kenan after his mother next to his family house in the Hirka-i Şerif neighborhood. As a Rifai Sufi master, he led Kadiri rituals and practices until the Sufi lodge's closure in 1925.

During the early Republican period, Kenan Rifai was among the *kalemiye* intellectuals who embraced a progressive approach to Islam and Sufism. Although he approved of the closure of Sufi lodges, he would host close friends and family members at his lodge to continue spiritual companionship (*sohbet*).[21] He expected the lodge to function like an academy that would promote discussions on religion and spirituality. His knowledge of Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and French literature helped him to engage with literary sources and figures of both the Muslim and non-Muslim world. His long-lasting engagement with the *Mesnevi* would lead him

to transcend his spiritual vision to advocate for a universal philosophy of humanity (Ayverdi 1951).

Kenan Rifai's charismatic personality and knowledge of Islamic spirituality and *adab* tradition attracted the district's young generation of intellectuals. His Sufi lodge, which functioned as an academy, significantly contributed to supporting women's education and their active participation in public life. Hence, many of his students and disciples were prominent Turkish female writers like Samiha Ayverdi, Sefiye Erol, Nezihe Araz, and Sofi Huri.[22] Samiha Ayverdi, known to be the closest disciple of Kenan Rifai, significantly advocated his discourse on spiritually-oriented social reform through her numerous fiction and non-fiction works. While being from a privileged and educated family of the Kemalist Republic, her works constantly searched for the role of Sufi discourses in the modern world, and their importance in shaping a moderate and syncretic Islamic identity (Müderrisoğlu 2014).

Figure 14: Samiha Ayverdi and Kenan Rifai. Open Source

Kenan Gürsoy, the grandson of Kenan Rifai, who is currently the director of Cenan Vakfi, an educational and cultural foundation established in 2000 to look after the Sufi lodge, continues to organize various activities inspired by the works of Kenan Rifa and Samiha Ayverdi. Kenan Gürsoy, who was a former Turkish ambassador to the Vatican and a retired professor of philosophy from Galatasaray University, seeks to revive the intellectual and cultural heritage of the district through the foundation. He recognizes the contribution of the bureaucratic and literary intelligentsia and this networks that have been active in the district since the late 19th

century and calls them the "Fatih intelligentsia." According to him, after the declining role of the traditional *'ulama,'* this intelligentsia preserved the Ottoman intellectual heritage of the district. While he appreciates the Fatih municipality's efforts in reviving the intellectual legacy of the district, he stresses the necessity of recovering the discourse of mystical conscience and wisdom (*bilinç* and *irfan*), which is deeply rooted in the *adab* tradition represented by the Fatih *intelligentsia*.[23]

The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi Order and the Revival of '*Ulama'* Networks

On February 19th, 2021, Mehmed Emin Saraç (1929-2021), a well-known theologian, Hadith scholar, and *vaiz* at Fatih mosque, passed away at the age of 92. The funeral prayer, held in the courtyard of the Fatih mosque complex, was attended by the Turkish President, ministers, religious scholars, academics, and public figures. Additionally, hundreds of common people who knew Emin Saraç through the Hadith lessons he had provided at the Fatih mosque for several decades also joined the funeral prayer. Upon the approval of the President and his cabinet council, Emin Saraç's body was laid to rest in the Fatih mosque's cemetery. Emin Saraç was the first Islamic scholar to be buried in the Fatih cemetery after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

Figure 15: The Grave of Mehmed Emin Saraç at the Fatih Cemetery Complex.
Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021

A year later, on June 23rd, 2022, Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu (1929- 2022), popularly known as Mahmud Efendi, one of the most influential Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi masters in 20th century Turkey and the leader of the Ismail Ağa community, passed away at the age of 93. Thousands of Mahmud Efendi's followers and other common people attended the funeral prayer held in the Fatih mosque complex. The funeral prayer was also broadcast live by various Turkish television channels. Mahmud Efendi's body was buried in the Edirnekapi cemetery outside the walls of the historical peninsula, next to his spiritual mentor and guide, Ali Haydar Efendi.

Ali Haydar Efendi (1870-1960) was the spiritual mentor of both Emin Saraç and Mahmud Efendi. He played an important role in reviving orthodox Sunni doctrines and Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi order in early Republican Turkey. He passed away six decades earlier, on August 1st, 1960. When Ali Haydar Efendi passed away, his disciples and followers insisted on burying his body in the Fatih cemetery, as he was one of the most eminent scholars of the Fatih *madrasa* before its closure. However, his body had to be kept on ice for two days, waiting for approval from the secular military elites who had come to power in a coup a few months previous. Later, the military elite's concerns about the consequences of burying an influential religious scholar, *imam*, and a Sufi master next to Mehmed II's tomb led them to deny permission for him to be buried in the cemetery. Ali Haydar Efendi's body was then taken to Edirnekapi cemetery (Kudoğlu 2020). Though many decades apart, the respective denial and approval of the burial of a Sufi master and his disciple illustrate the continuing significance of the Fatih district for conservative religious communities and Sufi orders in Istanbul.

Figure 16: The crowds at Fatih Mosque for the funeral prayer of Mahmud Efendi. Anadolu Ajansı

In the 20th century, the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order, an offshoot of the South Asian origin Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order, played a significant role in reviving the '*ulama*' networks and classical Ottoman *madrasa* education in the Fatih district. The Khalidi order became influential when Khalid al-Baghdadi (1779-1827) actively propagated the Mujaddidi tradition in the Ottoman lands, North Caucasus and Central Asia in the late 18th century. Khalid al-Baghdadi was not only a Sufi figure involved in the teaching and spreading of Naqshbandi spiritual discourses. He was also a politically active figure, and with the Ottoman authorities' financial help, he established numerous *madrasa*s across the Ottoman realms (Şenocak 2016). Since the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order had many followers from the '*ulama*' community in the 19th century, they would become influential within the *ilmiye* and Ottoman bureaucracy. The Ottoman Şeyhülislams of the 19th century, such as Mekkizade Mustafa Asim Efendi (1762-1846) and Mehmed Refik Efendi (1814-1871), and Kaziasker Mustafa Izzat Efendi (1801-1876) were members of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order (Şenocak 2021). In the late 19th century and early 20th century, many among the '*ulama*' who opposed the secular Young Turks and CUP were followers of the order. After the founding of the Republic in 1924, many members of the Khalidi order became *imam*s and *vaizan*s across Turkey. The Naqshbandi order's largely silent forms of rituals and worship helped it to survive during the Republican era.[24] Additionally, the order

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increased their influence in the Turkish public sphere when religious restrictions were relaxed in the 1950s.

While numerous studies have looked at the role of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order's role in the revival of Islamist discourses and movements in the district since the 1970s, no study has examined their role in reviving the traditional 'ulama' networks. When the *madrasa* education and 'ulama' activities were restricted and under surveillance during the early years of the Republican regime, Ali Haydar Efendi and his disciples played a crucial role (mostly secretly) in preserving the intellectual heritage of the Ottoman *ilmiye*. Ali Haydar Efendi's journey to Istanbul and settlement in the Fatih district provides important insights into how the district witnessed a revival of the 'ulama' community in the 20th century.

Ali Haydar Efendi was born in 1870 in the Ahiska district of the Batum province in Georgia. The dire state of *madrasa* education in the Caucasus region after the capture of Naqshbandi master Imam Shamil (1797-1871) prompted Ali Haydar Efendi to travel to the Ottoman mainland after completing his primary *madrasa* education in his hometown. Consequently, he traveled to the Ottoman Black Sea territories for higher studies in the religious sciences (Eryan 2010).[25] After spending some years at Bakirci *madrasa* in Erzurum, he came to Istanbul and enrolled himself at the Fatih *madrasa*. Upon completing his studies at the Fatih *madrasa*, he joined *Madrasat ul-Kudat*, which trained the Ottoman *kadi*s (judges). After his graduation from there in 1906, he was appointed as a *dersiam* of Fatih *madrasa*. Later, he was appointed as the head of the *huzur* lecture series held by the office of Şeyhulislam in 1916.[26] During his early years in Istanbul, he was critical of many Sufi orders and lodges in Istanbul, as he believed that they promoted doctrines and rituals that contradicted Islamic orthodoxy. However, later he became a disciple of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi master Ismet Efendi (1845-1904) at his Sufi lodge in the Çarşamba neighborhood.[27] After Ismet Efendi's passing, Ali Haydar Efendi became the master of the lodge.

Emin Saraç and Mahmud Efendi were among the few last religious scholars from the district who studied under Ali Haydar Efendi. Emin Saraç, after completing his elementary religious education in his hometown of Tokat, and from the *madrasa*s of surrounding regions, in 1943, came to Istanbul to study with Ali Haydar Efendi at Ismet Efendi lodge. Since Ali Haydar Efendi's religious activities and lodge were under police surveillance, he entrusted Emin Saraç with being the *imam* of Fatih mosque. During this time, he studied classical Islamic texts with

the Hadith and *fiqh* scholars living in Fatih, such as Omer Efendi, Hüsrev Efendi, Muhaddis Ibrahim Efendi, Süleyman Efendi, and Gümülcineli Mustafa Efendi (Güşen 2018). In an interview with one of Emin Saraç's students, I was told that due to police surveillance in the district at the time, Ali Haydar Efendi suggested to Emin Saraç to go to Cairo to pursue higher education in the Islamic sciences.[28] Consequently, in the 1950s, Emin Saraç travelled to Cairo to study at Al Azhar. In Cairo, he met the last Ottoman Şeyhülislam in exile, Mustafa Sabri Efendi, and other scholars from Istanbul, such as Zahid-ul-Kevseri and Ali Yakup Cenkçiler (Karaduman 2019).[29]

Figure 17: Mehmed Emin Saraç at Fatih mosque. Anadolu Ajansı

In 1958, after returning from Cairo, he started to teach at an Imam Hatip High School in Fatih and lectured at Ismail Ağa mosque as a *vaiz*. Since the 1960s, for almost six decades, he conducted Hadith and *fiqh* study sessions at Fatih mosque.[30] Following the curriculum and teaching methods of an Ottoman *dersiam,* hundreds of students studied under Emin Saraç, mainly in Islamic theology while focusing on Hanafi jurisprudence. Although Emin Saraç was not actively involved with any Sufi order or political movement during his lifetime, he played an important role in introducing the works of Islamist thinkers in Egypt and the Indian subcontinent, such as Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) and Sayyid Qutub (1906-1966).

In contrast, Mahmud Efendi played an influential role in reviving the Ottoman *madrasa* education, '*ulama'* discourses, and Naqshbandi networks in the district after being appointed as the *imam* of the Ismail Ağa Mosque in the Çarşamba neighborhood.[31] Mahmud Efendi was born in the Of district in the Black Sea region of Turkey. He briefly met Ali Haydar Efendi in 1952 in

the Bandirma district in the Izmir province during his military service. During the meeting, Ali Haydar Efendi invited Mahmud Efendi to study at the Ismet Efendi lodge. Later, Ali Haydar Efendi requested Mahmud Efendi to be the *imam* of the renovated Ismail Ağa Mosque.[32] Ali Haydar Efendi took a deep interest in Mahmud Efendi and considered him his spiritual successor. Often when people around Ali Haydar Efendi asked about his affection for Mahmud Efendi, he would reply by saying: "If I had 1000 children, I would sacrifice all of them for my dear Mahmud. A son for me isn't through my progeny, but the one who follows my path" (Eryan 2010, 34). Likewise, Mahmud Efendi showed respect and affection for Ali Haydar Efendi by regularly attending his reading sessions on classical Islamic texts. He also introduced many of his *'ulama'* friends of his generation to Ali Haydar Efendi. Eventually, many of them settled in the Çarşamba neighborhood during the 1950s (Eryan 2010).

Mahmud Efendi's followers believe that before Ali Haydar Efendi died in 1960, he passed on the Naqshbandi Khalidi order's leadership to Mahmud Efendi. Mahmud Efendi's charismatic personality and deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and spirituality attracted many students across Turkey to seek training in the classical Ottoman *madrasa* education with him. Until the early 2000s, when the restrictions on religious education loosened, he and his disciples ran informal *madrasa* education for many decades in the district. He often emphasized the opening up of *madrasa*s to whoever asked him if he wanted any services or favor. For example, he would say, "build two *madrasa*s in each neighborhood, one for boys and one for girls" (Şenocak 2016, 45). As a result, numerous informal *madrasa*s were opened in mosques and the residences of various *'ulama'* in and around the Çarşamba neighborhood. Over the last few decades, the relaxation of restrictions on *madrasa* education and the restoration of many Ottoman-era buildings facilitated the Ismail Ağa community in formally opening various religious institutions in the district.

The scholarly connections of Mahmud Efendi across different parts of the world have transformed the Çarşamba neighborhood and Fatih district into a center for students seeking *madrasa* education. For example, the *madrasa*s run by Mahmud Efendi have been a haven for many students from Central Asia where religious education was restricted and banned under Soviet rule. In particular, many scholars and students affiliated with the Naqshbandi order who faced repression traveled to Fatih to study at *madrasa*s run by Mahmud Efendi. For example, Habib, who is currently a student at one of the *madrasa*s in Çarşamba, said he was sent by his

teacher in Kazakhstan, who was a student of Mahmud Efendi in the late 1980s and 90s. Habib added that the Ismail Ağa community has also opened up *madrasa*s in Central Asia and has played an important role in the revival of the Ottoman *madrasa* education.[33]

Since 2011, civil unrest against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, along with subsequent political turmoil and civil wars, has prompted numerous religious scholars and students to migrate to Istanbul. As a result, the *'ulama'* networks based in many Middle Eastern cities have been reconfigured in the Fatih district over the last few years. The city and the district have emerged as an alternative hub for those who once sought classical Islamic education in places like Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo. This shift has transformed the Fatih district into an important place for religious learning and scholarly exchanges, attracting numerous scholars and students from the Middle East, Europe, and North America. In particular, many Sunni scholars based in Damascus and Aleppo have moved to the district after the start of the Syrian Civil War. They have opened up *madrasa*s, known as *ma'had*s (institute), and organize Quran and Hadith study circles in different Ottoman-era *madrasas* and mosques in the Fatih district.

The historical memory of scholarly connections between different regions and cities of the Islamic world is retrieved and recollected by many in the district. The scholarly networks between the '*ulama*' of Istanbul, Aleppo, and Damascus during the Ottoman times has also facilitated the establishment of Syrian scholars in the district. For example, Mujeer al-Khatib, a prominent scholar of Hanafi jurisprudence from Syria, is currently teaching at a *madrasa* in the Çarşamba neighborhood. His grandfather, who was a famous religious scholar in Syria, was invited to Istanbul during the reign of Sultan Reşad (r. 1909-1918) and was given a warm welcome at the Fatih mosque.[34] Similarly, the South Asian origin of Naqshbandi-Khalidi order has also led many '*ulama*' from India and Pakistan to the district to teach at *madrasas* run by both the Ismail Ağa and Syrian communities.

I learned more about the network of Syrian scholars and their activities from Yahya, a convert, who is currently studying under various Syrian scholars in Fatih. After converting to Islam four years ago, in 2016, Yahya arrived in Istanbul during Ramadan. His purpose was to experience Ramadan in a Muslim country. One day while he was sitting in one of the mosques in the Çarşamba neighborhood, he saw a small Hadith study circle. He went up to the teacher and asked if he could join them. The teacher was Shaykh Ibrahim Naqshbandi, a famous scholar of Shafi' jurisprudence from the city of al-Hasakah in Syria. Shaykh Ibrahim comes from a

Naqshbandi family, where his mother is a descendant of the famous Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi master Abdullah al-Mekki, the renowned disciple of Khalid al-Baghdadi. Shaykh Ibrahim invited Yahya to join his *ma'had*, which he planned to start soon at the mosque. Shaykh Ibrahim Naqshbandi's *ma'had* would become the district's first official Syrian *madrasa*.[35]

Many religious scholars from Syria also received help and assistance from Turkish students whom they had taught in the 1990s when *madrasa* education was restricted in Turkey. For instance, a Turkish student studying in Damascus in the late 1990s requested his teacher, Khaled Kharsa, a scholar of Hanafi jurisprudence, to accompany him and teach at the *madrasa*s run by the Ismail Ağa community. While Shaykh Kharsa received permission from his teacher, his father did not give him permission to go to Turkey because of the political crisis in Turkey at the time. After the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, Khaled Kharsa moved to Istanbul and requested the Fatih Mufti's Office (Fatih Müftülüğü) to provide him with mosque space or another teaching venue. He was directed to teach at a religious foundation affiliated with a mosque in Fatih. Upon visiting the foundation, he was surprised to find that the Turkish student who had invited him to teach in the 1990s was now the director of the foundation.[36] Khaled Kharsa has since become a prominent religious scholar in Istanbul, running *madrasa* education programs and Hadith study circles.

Mahmud Efendi and Ismail Ağa community's role in this recent revival of the '*ulama*' networks in the district is significant. In particularly, Mahmud Efendi's visit to Mecca and Madinah during the *Hajj* and *Umrah* pilgrimages, and the visits organized by the Ismail Ağa community to the sites of Naqshbandi saints in Central Asian and South Asia helped to retrieve the legacy of the historically articulated scholarly connections transcending geographical, ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Mahmud Efendi's emphasis on the promotion of the harmony between *shari'a* and *tasawwuf* (law and spirituality) has attracted a wide audience from the Muslim world. This is apparent in the words of Muhammad Mazhar al-Farooqi, the seventh grandson of the founder of Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order, Imam Ahmad Sirhindi: "I have travelled through the world, however, in this century I have never encountered an individual who lives full Islam, both external and internal (*shari'a* and *tasawwuf*) as Mahmud Efendi does."[37]

Figure 18: A poster put up in front of Ismail Ağa mosque advertising a spiritual tour to the tombs of Naqshbandi Imams in Uzbekistan. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2017.

Conclusion

Contrary to earlier views on the declining role of the '*ulama*' in modern Turkey, this chapter demonstrated that they continue to play an important role in shaping the intellectual culture of Muslims. Late Ottoman modernization and Republican secularization led to the emergence of various Muslim thoughts and attitudes. Hence, not only has the '*ulama*' identity and function transformed since the late 19th century, but the discourses they advocate have also undergone changes. By exploring the lives and works of various personalities who lived in the Fatih district, this chapter examined how the intellectual culture of the Islamic tradition continues to evolve with the changing political and socio-economic conditions. Additionally, by exploring the well-known identity of *''Ulama' Semti''* attributed to the Fatih district, the chapter emphasized how the historical production of the Ottoman built environment has significantly contributed to the consolidation of diverse scholarly communities and networks in different localities over the centuries. Therefore, the chapter argues that study of Muslim intellectual culture is inseparable from the spaces and institutions in which their discourses are articulated and expressed.

[1] For example, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey,* and Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*.

[2] In addition, an honorary *'ulama'* class or Efendi class, the *'ulama'* of non *'ulama'* origin, had also existed among the *ilmiye*.

[3] Salvatore notes that "*Adab* should be considered as a parallel knowledge tradition that the Islamic tradition inherited from Persianate court culture. Therefore it should be fully distinguished, at least in principle, from the core Islamic traditions of the '*ulama'* gravitating around hadith corpus instituting specifically Islamic patterns of probity and fair interaction based on the living example of Muhammad" (Salvatore 2018, 123).

[4] The *'ulama'* critique of certain Sufi discourses and practices does not mean that they existed as separate communities. Many *'ulama'* were also part of Sufi orders in the city. However, the tension between the *'ulama'* community and the Sufi orders reflects a theological and sociological reality within the Islamic tradition that existed since the early Islamic history. The "dynamic relation between the two core components of Islamic traditions also highlighted the productive tension between the spiritual dimension of thought, on the one hand, and its practical and juridical implications, on the other" (Salvatore 2016, 81)

[5] Mehmed Birgevi was a 15th Ottoman scholar who was critical of many religious innovations and corruptions in the empire. For more on Birgevi and his work *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiya,* see Katharina Ivanyi *Virtue, Piety and the Law*.

[6] Kadizade and his associates rose in the Ottoman administration and other offices through their close connection with some of the Şeyhulislams (Zilfi 1988).

[7] The book emphasized the principles of the Sufi path based on prophetic traditions, and critiqued the use of music and dance rituals in Sufi gatherings.

[8] See John Voll, *Islam, Continuity and Change in the Modern World*.

[9] A detailed discussion on the Murad Molla Sufi lodge as an important site of knowledge production and exchange in the district will be explored in the next chapter.

[10] *Icazet* is a license that allows the holder to transmit a specific text or topic granted by someone who already has the authority to do so. This license is commonly associated with the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge.

[11] The most famous among the first three categories was Vidinli Mustafa Efendi (d. 1885), whose teaching sessions at Fatih mosque as a *dersiam* gathered almost 300 students (Aliye 1916).

[12] Cevdet Paşa's "interest in Islamic mysticism, or sufism, brought him into contact with a third outstanding contemporary individual in that field, Kusadah Ibrahim Efendi. The konak of this great *alim* and exponent of Sufism was located opposite the Papasoglu *Madrasa* and was one of the several gathering places for literati in that vicinity. It was said that vezirs and other men of importance waited their turn on the porch in order to be presented to this venerated scholar. Cevdet Efendi came to Kusadah with problems which he encountered in his study of mystical literature. Kusadah Ibrahim Efendi was impressed by the young man's intelligence and learning, showed him every consideration, and gave freely of his time and his knowledge" (Chambers 1973, 458).

[13] Cevdet Paşa recollects in his biography that Murad Molla and Hafiz Syed, two reputed scholars of the time, had a strong difference of opinion related to the question of *wahdat al-wujud* and related topics in Sufism. Besides their scholarly differences and the debates they engaged in, they respected each other, and Murad Molla financially assisted Hafiz Syed in getting hold of some books and manuscripts (Cevdet Paşa 1953).

[14] For a detailed discussion on the socio-religious context of the codification of the Ottoman civil code, how it was shaped by Hanafi jurisprudence, and Cevdet Paşa's involvement in it, see Samy Ayoub, *Law, Empire, and the Sultan*.

[15] Vahide shares an important anecdote from Hasan Fehmi Başoglu, who was a student at the Fatih *madrasa* and later a member of the Consultative Committee of the Department of Religious Affairs. He recollects the time when he had the opportunity to meet with Nursi during his visit to Istanbul, and how he was impressed by Nursi's intellectual caliber.

Around the time the Second Constitution was proclaimed I was studying in the Fatih *Medrese*. I heard that a young man called Bediuzzaman had come to Istanbul and had settled in a hostel, and that he had even hung a notice on his door that said: "Here every problem is solved, all questions are answered, but no questions are asked." I thought that someone who made such a claim could only be mad. But hearing nothing but praise and good opinions concerning him, and learning of the astonishment of the many groups of '*ulama*' and students who were visiting him, it awoke in me the desire to visit him myself. I decided to prepare some questions on the most difficult and abstruse matters. At that time I was considered to be one of the foremost members of the *medrese*. Finally one night I selected a number of subjects from some of the most advanced books on the theological sciences, and put them into question form. The following day I went to visit him, and I put my questions to him. The answers I received were quite astonishing and extraordinary. He answered my questions precisely, as though we had been together the previous evening and had looked at the books together. I was completely satisfied. . . . Afterward he got out a map, and explained the necessity of opening a university in the Eastern Provinces, emphasizing its importance. At that time there were Hamidiye regiments in the Eastern Provinces. He explained to us convincingly the deficiencies of this form of administration and said that the region had to be developed through education, industry, and science. He explained that he had come to Istanbul to realize this aim, and he said: "The conscience is illuminated by the religious sciences, and the intellect is illuminated by the sciences of civilization"" (as quoted in Vahide 2003, 49).

[16] In 1908, the CUP members and oppositional '*ulama*' led a revolutionary movement against Sultan Abdülhamid II to reinstate the constitution of 1876. "The Constitutional Revolution was a culmination of a prolonged oppositional intellectual campaign by the Young Turks and opposition *ulema* in exile as well as dissident activity in various parts of the Ottoman provinces, reaching its apex in the guise of a revolutionary movement from the Macedonian provinces in the summer of 1908/1326." (Ahmad 2018, 220). In 1909, a counter-revolution was organized by those discontented, including '*ulama*', by the CUP policies. Mustafa Sabri played an influential role in this counter-revolution movement. In 1913, the CUP members orchestrated a coup d'état, and regained power.

[17] The *kalemiye* or the scribal class came to be known as the *mulkiye* or the civil officialdom from the 1830s. In this section, I will be addressing them as the *kalemiye* since the *adab* discourse they nurtured goes back to the 16th century. For more on the organizational and professional transformation of the *kalemiye* to *mülkiye,* see Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922.*

[18] Huseyin Vassaf, the biographer of Ibnülemin, recollects the diverse intellectual class who attended the gatherings at the mansion: "Mahmud Kemal Beyi'n, tecrube-i ilmiyesi, zevk-i irfaniyesi tezayud ettikce nes'e-i feyz yuz gostermeye baslamis ve meclis-I sohbetine gelenler cogalmistir. Mesayih ve ulema-yi kiramdan, seyhulislamlardan, urefa-yi rical-I fihamdan, suara-yi benamdan bircoklarinin konaga gelerek hem-sohbet- olduklarini ve ulumu-I zahire vu batinyaya ve eslafin biraktiklari asara dair-cereyan eden vakifane ve mudekkikane mubahaseye moharrir-I aciz sahit olanlardanim" (Vassaf, 147).

[19] Hüsamettin Çelebi, the closest disciple of Jalaludheen Rumi, was the first person to recite the *Mesnevi* after the death of Rumi, and he was accepted as the first *Mesnevihan* (the reciter of *Mesnevi*) in the Mevlevi tradition. After him, Sultan Veled, the son of Rumi, continued this tradition. During the Ottoman reign, many other Sufi orders adopted the practice of reading *Mesnevi* as an essential part of their spiritual gathering. In Ottoman Istanbul, the reading practice would eventually become common in Sufi lodges, mosques, mansions and other venues (Okay 2002).

[20] "(Âyet âyet heme-i ma'nâ-i Kur'ân edebest) yani Kur'ân'ın bütün âyetlerindeki mâna edepten ibarettir. Mevlânâ tarikatı için edebi esas tutmuştur. Bu itibarla Mevlevîlikte gâye hem sûrî, hem manevî edeptir. Onun için bir Mevlevî dervişi sûrî edebi de muhafazaya çalışır, kâl ve hâlinde edepten ayrılmamaya gayret eder. Bunun tesiriyledir ki Mevlevîlerde yetişen edipler ve şairler hiçbir tarikatta, hatta hiçbir meslekte yetişmemiştir"(Güngör 2009, 180-181).

[21] Kenan Gürsoy, interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, September 13, 2021.

[22] Sofi Hori published the first translation of Muhammad Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* into Turkish.

[23] Kenan Gürsoy interview.

[24] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, July 6, Istanbul.

[25] When Imam Shamil, a Naqshbandi Shaykh who resisted the Russian expansion in to the North Caucasus, was captured, it led to the collapse of the *madrasa* education system in the region. Hence, many students who aimed to train in higher religious education started migrating to the Ottoman provinces like Erzurum and Trabzon.

[26] The *huzur* lecture series were organized in Ramadan in the imperial mosques of Istanbul. The opportunity to lecture was considered very prestigious as the Ottoman Sultan would be in attendance. For more on the tradition of *huzur* lecture series, see Mardin *Huzûr Dersleri.*

[27] Ismet Efendi was the disciple of Abdullah el-Mekki, who in turn was the disciple of Khalid al-Baghdadi. During Ismet Effendi's visit to Mecca for pilgrimage, Abdullah Mekki appointed Ismet Effendi as the *khalifa* (representative) of Khalidi order in Istanbul. Ismet Efendi built the first Khalidi lodge in 1857 in Istanbul, and it became a popular Naqshbandi venue in the district. Sultan Abdülmecid II would provide endowments, and give *vasiyet* ('will') to recite Hatm-i Hacegan Khalidi (Khalidi *dhikr* rituals) to Ismet Efendi and his 10 disciples (Şenocak 2021).

[28] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, July 13, 2023, Istanbul.

[29] Ali Yakup Cenkçiler had a similar path as Emin Saraç. He came from Kosovo to study at the *madrasa*s of Fatih and later went to Cairo. Ali Yakup later returned to Istanbul, and settled in Fatih district.

[30] Fatih, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, July 13, 2023.

[31] Ismail Ağa mosque, the center of Ismail Ağa community, was constructed under the supervision of Ottoman Şeyhulislam Ebu Ishak Ismail Efendi (1645-1725). After his death, he was buried next to the mosque, which later became a shrine space and pilgrimage center.

[32] The Ismail Ağa mosque was closed from1922-1952 due to uninhabitable conditions. It was decided to renew the mosque in 1952, when the eldest son of Ali Haydar Efendi, Serif Ağabey dreamt about the need for the mosque's restoration. The Ismail Ağa community narrates this dream accordingly: "Serif Ağabey in the dream saw that a hand appearing from the grave of Ismail Ağa, the founder of the mosque, and asked, "What are you waiting for? Why don't you repair this mosque?." When Ali Haydar Efendi got to know about the dream, he ordered to repair the mosque."

[33] Habib, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, July 6, 2021, Istanbul.

[34] Field Notes, November 11, 2021.

[35] Yahya, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, October 10, 2021, Istanbul.

[36] This incident was narrated to me by a student who is currently reading Hadith and *fiqh* texts under various Syrian scholars in the district. Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, November 10, 2021.

[37] Ḥayat al-'Ulama'. "Shaykh Mahmud Effendi." Accessed on February 22, 2022. https://hayatalulama.wordpress.com/2012/12/06/shaykh-mahmud-effendi/.

Chapter 3

Institutions and Spaces of Knowledge Production and Learning

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, three laws brought a significant rupture in educational approaches and practices central to the Ottoman Empire's socio-religious and political constitution. Firstly, the Unification of Education Law (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu), implemented in 1924, centralized all educational activities under the Ministry of Education (Maarif Vekaleti), and led to the closure of the *sibyan mekteb*s (Ottoman-era elementary schools), *madrasa*s and Sufi lodges. In the same year, the Abolition of *Waqf* Law, in order to restrict the function of religious institutions, brought all *waqf* properties under the control of the Turkish state. The Language Reform Law of 1928, which replaced the Arabic script with the Latin script, aimed to separate Turkish society from the Arabic and Persian heritage, the role played by the Qur'an, and other foundational sources of the Islamic tradition. Finally, with the establishment of the Diyanet (the Presidency of Religious Affairs), all religious activities in the public sphere were brought under the control of the Turkish state.

It is important to note that the laws mentioned above and the other Kemalist secular reforms enacted in the early 1920s were not instant revolutionary acts but were the culmination of a century-long modernization and reform attempt initiated by the Ottoman elites. In the last two chapters, we have explored how the reforms since the *Tanzimat* era reconfigured the built environment and the intellectual culture of the Fatih district. Similarly, the Ottoman institutions and spaces of education and learning, primarily established through *waqf* properties, underwent transformations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Following the centralization of the *waqf* properties in 1826, several *sibyan mekteb*s and *madrasa*s faced financial challenges and struggled to keep up with the changing educational needs of late Ottoman society. Though the centralization attempt aimed to reform educational curricula and pedagogy, those institutions would eventually be sidelined by the newly established schools and colleges that did not necessarily center their curriculum around religion. Due to the Ottoman Empire's military and political challenges, reforms in military education would also see the gradual emergence of a distinction between religious and secular education. "This movement was epitomized by movement from a religiously infused construct to a much more practical one symbolized by the term *maarif*, which means the learning of useful things, or knowledge" (Fortna 2018, 50). Consequently, the

introduction of secular military schools placed the traditional religious authorities, their institutions, and learning spaces in a subordinate position.

The emergence of new venues of learning and exchange, along with technological advancement, reconfigured the intellectual orientations and the material infrastructure of Ottoman education. Instead of mosque spaces, *madrasa*s, and Sufi lodges, new civic venues, such as personal mansions, coffee houses, bookstores, and modern libraries, started hosting intellectual gatherings for both the elite and masses. By the second half of the 19th century, Ottoman Istanbul had the largest number of printing presses and publication houses in the empire, which played an essential role in shaping a new reading public. The new reading public also debated the role of religion in the public sphere, the need for a constitutional Ottoman parliament, socio-economic and educational reforms, and so on. By the early 20th century, the secular and nationalist elites, who were part of the Committee of Union and Progress movement led by the Young Turks, overcame the conservative and reformist Muslim voices and eventually gained the power to determine the future of Turkish society.

It is an undeniable fact that religious authority and its establishments faced political, legal, and institutional challenges in preserving the Ottoman-Islamic framework of education, knowledge production, and intellectual exchange in Republican Turkey. However, besides the Turkish state's efforts to open institutions such as Imam-Hatip schools, Quran schools, the Higher Institution of Islamic Learning, and theology faculties in the universities, there have been attempts by various non-state religious actors to preserve or revive Islamic education. The scholarship on Turkey observes that Muslim civil society organizations affiliated with Islamist movements have played an important role in reviving Islamic education (Ozgur 2012; White 2012). The increase in the number of civil society organizations or *waqf*s as pious welfare organizations since the 1980s is seen as resulting from the Turkish state's adoption of free-market capitalism and a neoliberal model of governance. Over the last two decades, the neoliberal political regime of the AKP has been instrumental in portraying Muslim civil society organizations and NGOs as the true representatives of the Ottoman-era *waqf* discourse and philanthropic activities (Zencirci 2024).

Without dismissing the political and economic impact on the transformation of Muslim civil society organizations, and the neoliberal welfare discourse in contemporary Turkey outlined by the aforementioned studies, the chapter attends to the multifaceted intentions and motivations

that inform the educational activities of different individuals, institutions, and organizations in the Fatih district. This requires not only examining how the late Ottoman state or the Turkish Republic took part in transforming the educational experience of their subjects but also how traditional authorities, institutions, and spaces negotiated with modernization and secularization previously, and currently do so with neoliberal globalization. Drawing upon archival and ethnographic research on various Ottoman-era buildings and spaces, this chapter examines the historical and sociological reconfiguration of the educational approach, knowledge production, and learning practices in the district.

The first two sections of the chapter specifically explore how various groups restored *waqf* properties to advance their educational and cultural programs rooted in Ottoman-Islamic intellectual and mystical discourses. While some religious groups in the district run their *madrasa*s and Qur'an schools largely following the Ottoman curriculum and pedagogy, various other platforms organize lectures, seminars, and workshops on Ottoman *madrasa* heritage or Sufi discourses within a framework of academic research. Hence, some of the specific questions this chapter addresses are: How do various groups in the district trace the history of the institutions and spaces of intellectual heritage in the district, and what forms of revival activities are they involved in? How does their approach to education and learning differ from that of the Ottoman era?

The last two sections of the chapter delve into the examination of how institutions such as *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, and the Ottoman libraries were gradually replaced by new civic venues of intellectual exchange and learning with the introduction of the print medium in late Ottoman Istanbul. To what extent did print culture contribute to the emergence of a new reading public in the district? How did venues like personal mansions, teashops, and bookstores assume a pivotal role in shaping new learning experiences for this reading public? How did this phenomenon pave the way for the evolution of modern civic associations and civil society organizations or '*waqf*s' within the district?

Reviving the Ottoman *Madrasa* Heritage

On a Friday afternoon in 2018, a week before the beginning of Ramadan, the opening ceremony of the Sahn-i Seman *madrasa*s (hereafter Sahan *madrasa*s) *of* the Fatih mosque complex was held. The Sahn *madrasa*s were reopened to the public after several years of restoration work

jointly carried out by the Ilim Yayma Cemiyeti (Association for the Spreading of Knowledge, hereafter Ilim Yayma), the Director General of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü), and the Istanbul Governor's office. Historian Muhammad Qasim Zaman delivered the keynote lecture of the opening ceremony on the topic of "Madrasas and Islamic Learning: A Historical Perspective." The conference room, beautifully renovated and equipped with modern teaching technology, was filled with academics and students from different universities in Istanbul. Zaman presented the history of the institutionalization of Islamic scholarly authority, the development of *madrasa*s in South Asia, and how religious knowledge and ideas were transmitted through these institutions. Following the lecture, a central theme that dominated the discussion was the relevance of classical *madrasa* education in modern times. The difference in opinion among the participants served as a microcosm of the diverse perspectives on the modernization of education in the Muslim world.[1]

Two years later, in 2020, I had the opportunity to visit the Sahn *madrasa*s to learn more about their educational programs and activities. The *madrasa*s, now named the Fatih Sahn-i Seman Education and Research Centre (Fatih Sahn-i Seman Eğitim ve Araştırma Merkezi), are run by Ilim Yayma, a civil society organization established in 1951 to spread Islamic knowledge and education. The Sahn *madrasa*s lay out three primary objectives of their educational programs: a) provide courses, seminars, and conferences on the Islamic tradition of knowledge, b) organize academic research and projects, and c) promote historical and comparative analysis of Muslim intellectual culture with a special reference to the Ottoman educational system. Ilim Yayma has also been instrumental in the establishment of Imam-Hatip high schools, which provide education and training for mosque *imam*s in modern Turkey.

Figure 19: From one of the seminars on classical Islamic texts organized for graduate students. Source: https://www.fatihkulliyesimedreseleri.com/

The *madrasa,* now turned into a research center by Ilim Yayma, functions as an academic institution that closely resembles the research programs of Islamic theology faculties in Turkish universities. During my visit, one of the research center's academic coordinators made it clear that they aim to revive the intellectual heritage of Ottoman *madrasa*s within a modern educational framework and its needs.[2] Furthermore, their curriculum for different programs conveys that they mainly aim to support theology faculty students in their study and research along with training in classical Arabic and Ottoman-Arabic texts. The undergraduate and graduate students who attend the center's research programs are affiliated with the departments of theology and other humanities in various universities in Istanbul.

The restoration and repurposing of the Sahn *madrasa*s highlight how religious education and methods have been transformed (or were forced to adapt to the secular educational framework) in modern Turkey. After being an important center of religious learning in the Ottoman Empire for over six centuries, the Sahn *madrasas* faced closure in 1923, putting a

formal end to the Ottoman *madrasa* education. Eventually, teaching some basic religious sciences based on the Ottoman curriculum was largely restricted to the Fatih mosque. A theology faculty graduate, and a student of Emin Saraç (1929-2021), remarked that after the closure of *madrasa*s in the early Republican years, religious scholars were allowed to teach Hadith and Quran recitation lessons to the public in the mosque space. In addition, during the multi-party era in the 1950s, when some restrictions on religious activity in the public sphere were lifted, scholars were also allowed to teach a few religious texts related to Hanafi jurisprudence. Restrictions were reapplied after the 1960s coup d'état, but following another relaxation of restrictions on religious activity during the 1970s, the mosques once again became active centers for the teaching of Hadith and other religious texts.[3]

It was during this period that the Foundation for the Revival and Restoration of Old Monuments (Eski Eserlerin Ihya ve Koruma Derneği) carried out the restoration and reopening of Sahn *madrasa*s as a student dormitory. One of the residents of the dormitory noted that the majority of students, who came from different provinces of Turkey to study at Istanbul University, became involved not only with the religious learning activities in the mosque but also played an important role in the rise of Islamist intellectual discourse and activism in the district.[4] The student dormitories were closed after the 1980 military coup d'état, when political clashes and violence increased between leftist and nationalist groups in the district and surrounding regions. From the late 1990s until its closure in the early 2010s due to restoration work, the Sahn *madrasa*s functioned as a government-owned primary school.

This brief historical portrait of Sahn *madrasa*s in the 20th century, and its current function can help us understand how Ottoman-era buildings have been used for various purposes within shifting political and economic conditions. With the Fatih mosque complex being an important imperial monument, it was closely regulated by the secular state, meaning its functions were largely limited by mechanisms of state surveillance and control.

While the recent restoration and revival of the Sahn *madrasa*s as a research center demonstrate the successful integration of an Ottoman-era religious institution into a modern educational framework, the *madrasa*s operated by the Naqshbandi-affiliated Ismail Ağa community in the district offer a contrasting example in their approach to preserving and continuing Ottoman-era educational methods and learning practices. Instead of modernizing *madrasa* education, the followers of Mahmud Efendi have been instrumental in reviving not only

the Ottoman curriculum but also the traditional modes of learning and transmission that closely resemble the premodern embodied ways of learning. For example, a day before the inaugural ceremony of Sahn *madrasas* in 2018, a large number of people gathered at Yavuz Selim mosque in the Çarşamba neighborhood after the evening prayer. The Ismail Ağa community had invited the senior Deobandi scholar and Pakistani jurist Muhammad Taqi Usmani to present on a Hadith related to financial transactions for which he had received an *ijaza* and to have a general discussion on the Hadith tradition.[5] Unlike the academic audience at the inaugural ceremony of Sahn *madrasa*s, the people gathered at Yavuz Selim mosque were largely traditional '*ulama'* and students who were part of various *madrasa*s programs run by the Ismail Ağa community in the district.[6]

Figure 20: The crowds gathered for the talk given by Muhammad Taqi Usmani at Yavuz Selim mosque. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2018.

In the last chapter, I briefly discussed how Ali Haydar Efendi (1870-1960) and Mahmud Efendi (1929-2022) played an important role in the revival of the traditional '*ulama'* discourses and networks in the district. An institution that played an important role in the revival of *madrasa* education by the Ismail Ağa community was the Quran School (*Kuran Kursu*). This helped

Mahmud Efendi and his followers offer *madrasa* education informally at the Qur'an Schools they operated in the district since the late 1960s. The Qur'an Schools were opened by the Turkish state, since the Imam-Hatip courses, and theology faculties only trained religious officials working at mosques and religious institutions under the control of Diyanet.[7] The growing need for teaching the Qur'an to children led to the opening of summer Qur'an courses and eventually the legal institutionalization and opening of the Qur'an Schools as full-time programs in the 1960s.

In 1979, the Ismail Ağa community opened the first Quran School under the direction of the Fatih Mufti's Office. The school was initially run in the *madrasa* complex of Ismail Ağa mosque, famously known as the Taş *madrasa*. The Qur'an School was moved to a new building in the Çarşamba neighborhood in the 1990s, which eventually became to be known as Ismail Ağa Qur'an School. While the Qur'an School was operated under the guidelines of the Diyanet, it was an important catalyst in the revival of classical Ottoman *madrasa* education in the neighborhood. This revival was accompanied by the emergence of several informal *madrasa*s operating in the residences of many religious scholars affiliated with the Ismail Ağa community.[8]

Figure 21: A poster put up at Tahir Ağa mosque in the Fatih district, detailing the locations of mosques and the Quran schools run by the Fatih Religious Affairs Office. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2020.

As mentioned above, instead of the academic approach to studying classical Islamic texts promoted by the Fatih *madrasa* and the theology faculties in Turkey, the Ismail Ağa community emphasizes the Ottoman *madrasa* curriculum and transmitting knowledge and authority through traditional means of learning. The teacher-student relationship in particular goes beyond the framework of modern education. They emphasize acquiring Islamic knowledge and seeking education as an embodied experience that transforms the intellectual and spiritual abilities of the students. However, reviving this method was not easy until a few decades ago. A former

madrasa student, and currently a mosque *imam* in the district, remarked how the Ottoman *madrasa* curriculum was preserved and taught,

> After the foundation of the Republic, generally two types of *madrasa* education existed informally. The Southeast school (of the Kurdish regions) consists of 10 to 12 years of training, and the Black Sea (Karadeniz) school can be completed in 5 years. Since *madrasa* education was prohibited, the Black Sea school became more pragmatic. This also helped complete the *madrasa* education in a shorter period and send students to different parts of Turkey as *imam*s and *vaizan* (public lecturers). They also became teachers at the Qur'an schools. With the effort of Mahmud Efendi, the Çarşamba neighborhood became the center of the Black Sea *madrasa* educational system. Until the late 2000s, *madrasa* education was difficult to carry out formally and openly. When I was a student at one of the Qur'an schools in the neighborhood in the 1990s, we often had to hide the Islamic books of jurisprudence and related subjects when police came to conduct searches.[9]

The *madrasa* curriculum used by the Ismail Ağa community too is a reformed version of the Ottoman curriculum due to the restrictions imposed by the secular state on religious education in modern Turkey. Hence, the students who opt for a more extended *madrasa* education travel to one of the scholarly circles in Southeast Turkey. Another student, Halil, who studied at one of the Qur'an schools in Çarşamba and later traveled to the Siirt province in the Southeast remarked:

> Today, the Islamic education provided by Ismail Ağa *Madrasa*s is not the real Ottoman one. The classic Ottoman *madrasa* education now only exists in the Southeast. They are also known as the Kurdish *madrasa*s. The curriculum of the *madrasa*s in the Çarşamba neighborhood have been shortened. As a result, 10 to 12 years of education have been reduced to five years. In Kurdish *madrasa*s, one would devote themselves to learning the Arabic language for many years before getting into the matters of theology and jurisprudence. I studied for 5 years in Siirt. Before that, I read for 5 years with a scholar in Çarşamba who came from the East. Now I will complete the Deobandi method. For young students, I would suggest the Deobandi method because it's a comprehensive method.[10]

The Deobandi *Madrasa* in the district was established in 2020 by a Pakistani-British religious scholar, Shaykh Hisham, following the Dars-i Nizami curriculum. Halil was generous enough to take me to this *madrasa,* introduce me to the faculties and show me around the different facilities they have set up to support the students. When I arrived at the office, Shaykh Hisham, who is currently serving as the director of the *madrasa*, was having a conversation with a religious scholar from Pakistan, who completed his training in one of the Deobandi *madrasa*s in Pakistan and had been teaching specialized topics (*ihtisas*) at the *madrasa*s of Ismail Ağa community. The director, who received both a Deobandi *madrasa* education from Pakistan and a university education in the UK, told me he is interested in developing an educational method that provides scholarly and leadership skills to Muslims.

> For example, what was the education during Ghazali's time, and what does Islamic education mean by today? Prophet Muhammed never set a model for the Islamic educational system. He focused on leadership. Now we have a lot of '*ulama*' but no leaders. The *Dars-i Nizami* method we use is because of the British Empire. When the British came to India, the '*ulama*' gathered and decided to devise a syllabus and an educational program so that we don't get colonized. *Dars-i Nizami* is now everywhere in the world. We use this in the UK. I think it works in Turkey as well. We can create '*ulama*' as well as leaders.[11]

Before I left the office, Halil showed me around the building that they had been renting to run the *madrasa*. They offered accommodation to both teachers and students. He emphasized that it is important for teachers and students to share the same space as it helps them to move beyond an instrumental relationship to instead facilitating and transmitting the *sunna* and *adab* of the Prophet Muhammad. He pointed out that the *madrasa* programs run by the Syrian scholars in the district (known as *ma'had*s) have more of a university method and are quite distinct from the *madrasa* curriculum and pedagogy used in Turkey.

> In Ismail Ağa and the South-East *madrasa*s, the teacher either lives in the *madrasa* or comes early in the morning and stays until the evening prayer. The teachers usually come to *ma'had*s during their lecture hours. They only teach knowledge to the students. They don't have much opportunity to teach moral values, lifestyle, or the etiquette of the *sunna* to the students. It's the same in Syria. There, they teach lessons in mosques, and people who want to attend join them. There are no formal *madrasa*s in Syria to teach classical

Islamic texts. They give lessons in mosques or Islamic universities, as I mentioned before.[12]

While Halil's observation about the Syrian *madrasa*s could be accurate in the sense that it does not adopt the method of Ismail Ağa *madrasa*s or the Deobandi *madrasa* in the district, it is important to look at how *madrasa* and religious educational culture was transformed in Syria and the wider Arab world in 20th century.[13] For example, in Syria, in response to the secularization and state control of religious institutions in the first half of the 20th century, the Syrian '*ulama*' successfully revived religious education through the establishment of private institutions and by adapting to new teaching methods (Thomas 2013). This echoes the observation of Yahya, a student at one of the Syrian *ma'had*s in the district,

> The *ma'had* is an institution that has embraced classical *madrasa* education in the modern context with reforms and adaptations. Turkish *madrasa*s try to keep the classical and conservative educational approach in their curriculum and pedagogy. The Syrian scholars with whom I am learning with at my *ma'had* also teach at Fatih Sultan Mehmed University. Since the scholars are part of both the *madrasa* and university education framework, they are often involved in the academic study of Islamic texts. Turkish *madrasa*s are sticking to the classical approach because of the history of secularization. They want to emphasize the importance of Islamic orthodoxy in the society.[14]

The residence of Syrian scholars in the district and the opening of numerous *ma'had*s has attracted many local and international students. Unlike the Ismail Ağa *madrasa*s, which are attended mainly by students from Turkey and Central Asian Turkic regions, the Arabic-medium instruction, the flexibility in the courses offered, and the popularity of many Syrian scholars in the Muslim world have brought in many students from Europe and North America to study at *ma'had*s. However, in the beginning, things were not easy for the running of *ma'had*s in the district as the Turkish authorities were not ready to approve the opening of educational institutions by the Syrian scholars. In addition, the infrastructural and legal challenges faced by Syrian scholars in the district regarding renting buildings and financial support also complicated the opening and running of *ma'had*s. Therefore, starting in 2013 and 2014, only Syrian students were permitted to enroll. As of 2016, this permission was extended to encompass students from non-Syrian backgrounds.[15]

Until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, students from various provinces of the Ottoman Empire came to study at the *madrasa*s of the Fatih mosque complex. However, today, as other spaces and venues in the district revive the classical *madrasa* education, the significance of the Fatih mosque complex might appear to have receded. Yet, the historical memory of Fatih *madrasa*s and the intellectual heritage it initiated centuries ago continues to resonate with many in the district. As remarked by a bookseller in the district, who publishes classical Islamic texts that are studied in different *madrasa*s: "Since the last few years we have been seeing the rebirth of Ottoman Fatih, and the realization of Mehmed II's visions to make it as the center of Islamic learning."[16] This is evident in all the *ijaza* ceremonies (graduation ceremonies) organized at the Fatih mosque by various groups in the district for the students who had completed their memorization of the Quran.

The Cerrahi-Halveti Sufi Lodge: A Place for Embodied Spiritualities and Socialities

On Thursday afternoons, the Cerrahi Sufi order's spiritual leader meets his disciples at their Sufi lodge in the Karagümrük neighborhood of the Fatih district. The lodge is fifteen minutes away from the Fatih mosque complex by foot. The lodge looks like a small business building premises from the outside. A long corridor takes you to the lodge's main building which you enter through the main gate. On the left side of the corridor, the grave of Cerrahi order's founder Pir Nureddin Cerrahi (ca.1678-1721), and the graves of a few other Sufi saints is located in the corner of a spacious room known as the *tevhidhane*. The *tevhidhane* is a space where people gather for the *dhikr* performance (collective remembrance of God), which consists of reciting Quranic verses and poems written by the Sufi saints. Before the closure of the Sufi lodges in 1924, the weekly gathering for remembrance was performed at the *tevhidhane*. The gathering had been often accompanied by musical performances that produced some of the finest *maqam*s (scales) in Istanbul's classical Ottoman music tradition (Şahin 2016).

The inside of the lodge's main building appeared like a labyrinth of rooms with multiple exits and entrances. The rooms were spread with beautiful Turkish and Persian rugs. The walls were decorated with works of Arabic calligraphy in one of the rooms used for the daily congregational prayers and *dhikr* performance. I was told that the famous calligraphers of the Fatih district had produced the works. The headgear (*tac*) of various Sufi orders were collected and displayed in another room. The calligraphy works, headgear, prayer beads, and other

materials related to Sufi practices were presented as important cultural artifacts central to the embodied learning and transmission of the Cerrahi tradition. They also had a functional purpose in meeting the government regulations on Ottoman-era Sufi lodges. In Istanbul, after the closure of Sufi lodges, a few lodges were reopened as museums or as centers for research on Sufism and the Sufi musical tradition.[17] Hence, the Cerrahi Lodge is today officially known as the Foundation for Turkish Sufi Music, Folklore Research and Preservation (Türk Tasavvuf Musikisi ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı).[18]

Figure 22: The works of calligraphy and headgears of various Sufi orders displayed at the Cerrahi Lodge. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

On a Thursday afternoon, a Macedonian friend arranged an appointment for me to meet with Tuğrul Efendi (1946-2022), who was then the spiritual leader of the Cerrahi order in Turkey. A lawyer by profession, Tuğrul Efendi was also a trained musician specializing in classical Ottoman and Turkish Sufi music and worked as the general manager of the Istanbul Historical Turkish Music Ensemble. In 1999, after the passing of Safer Efendi (1926-1999), he became the spiritual leader of the order.

When we arrived at the lodge, we were asked to wait in front of a salon where Tuğrul Efendi's office is located. All the rooms at the lodge were crowded with the followers of the Cerrahi order and other visitors. Every five or ten minutes, a visitor or a couple of visitors went inside his office seeking spiritual guidance and blessings (*baraka*). During this period, we befriended some of the visitors also waiting. One of them, a member of the order, suggested to my Macedonian friend not to wear his prayer beads around his neck as it contradicts Cerrahi *adab*. The wait prolonged for more than an hour. Meanwhile, Tuğrul Efendi's disciples served the visitors lunch and tea. The lunch was a simple menu of a small portion of rice, chickpeas with beef stew, and a dessert made of semolina. While serving the lunch, the disciples asked each other, "Did everyone receive *lokma*?" "Is one anyone else still waiting for *lokma*?" *Lokma* here is an old Ottoman Turkish expression referring to food served at a spiritual gathering, or a small portion of food that satisfies one's immediate hunger.[19]

After the lunch and afternoon prayer, we were ushered into Tuğrul Efendi's office. He welcomed us warmly in Turkish and asked us to take a seat. We sat on the floor and introduced ourselves. While my friend discussed with him the Cerrahi Lodge and their activities in Macedonia, I had a quick glimpse of the office. A small bookshelf in the room was filled with books on Sufism and other topics. The photos of previous spiritual leaders in the 20th century, such as Fahreddin Efendi, Safer Efendi, Muzaffar Efendi, were hung on the room's walls, reinforcing and reminding the visitors of the spiritual genealogy of the order.

During my brief appointment with him, we discussed the history of Sufi lodges and their activities in Istanbul. He said it was essential to know how and why the Fatih district and the surrounding region became the place with the most significant number of Sufi lodges and the graves of Sufi saints in the Muslim world. According to him, after the conquest of Istanbul, Mehmed II asked his spiritual mentor Akşemsettin (d. 1459) how to give the city religious and spiritual sanctity. Akşemsettin suggested they visit the Sufi Shaykh of the Halveti order, Cemaleddin-i Halveti (d. 1494). On their visit, he advised: "Every day, if at least 70,000 *kelime-i tevhid* (recital of the oneness of God) touch the skies of Istanbul, this city won't be lost from the hands of the Muslims."[20]

In the first chapter, we discussed the reasons Mehmed II excluded a Sufi lodge during the construction of the Fatih mosque complex and restricted the influence of Sufi orders in the bureaucratic and religious hierarchy he developed. Nonetheless, he and other elites of his

bureaucracy provided patronage to various Sufi orders and in the construction of their lodges in the city to help Islamize Istanbul.

> In recognition of the significant role of the dervishes in the Ottomanisation of Constantinople, the sultans awarded them numerous Byzantine churches for use as *tekke*s. These buildings were modified to accommodate dervish functions: they altered, covered, or destroyed Christian decorations and architectural features; installed minarets, ablution fountains, chambers, and prayer niches; and provided residences for *shaykh*s and quarters for dervishes (Ephrat and Pinto 2021, 123).

In Ottoman Istanbul, the Naqshbandis and Halvetis were the two Sufi orders that grew to be influential with the establishment of numerous lodges. Sultan Mehmed II took a special interest "in Naqshbandi immigrants from Bukhara, who had gained a reputation as experts in the mystical teachings of Ibn al-Arabi, having a tekke built for one and commissioning another to write a commentary on the Miftah al-ghayb of Sadreddin Konevi" (Le Gall 2004, 35). One of the first Naqshbandi lodges was established in the Aksaray neighborhood of Fatih district for Ishak Buhari-i Hindi, and the expenses of the lodge were met through the income of Fatih mosque complexes' *waqf* income (Le Gall 2004). The lodge was popularly known as *Hindiler Tekkesi* ("The Indian Sufi Lodge"). Over the centuries, the lodge's ownership shifted between different Sufi orders, which include Kadiri, Kubrevi, and most recently in the 20th century, the Chishti Sufi order originated from South Asia (Choudury 2016). The lodge became a hub for Central Asian and South Asian travelers, traders, and the hajj pilgrims who visited Istanbul during their journey to Mecca. Furthermore, during the 18th century, Imam Sardar, a military chieftain serving under the South Indian ruler Tipu Sultan (1751-1799) and a Naqshbandi adept, sought aid from the Ottoman ruler Abdülhamid I (r. 1774-1789) to counter the advancing colonial powers in the South Asian subcontinent (ibid.). Notably, Imam Sardar found his final resting place in the cemetery of the lodge (as depicted in figure 23, with a sepoy headgear on the far left tombstone), underscoring the lodge's transnational importance during the Ottoman era.[21] Similarly, various Sufi orders and their lodges established in and around the district played an important role in meeting the spiritual needs of the inhabitants, institutionalizing mystical teaching and training, producing literary and artistic works, and forging trans-local and transnational socio-religious networks.

Figure 23: The Indian Sufi lodge (Hindiler Tekkesi), and cemetery. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

During the reign of Beyazit II (1447-1512), the Halveti Sufi order received special patronage as they assisted in his fight to protect the Ottoman frontiers. As a result, the order's influence grew, leading to the establishment of numerous Sufi lodges in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities until the 18th century. The Cerrahi order is an offshoot of the Halveti order, founded by Pir Nureddin Cerrahi (ca.1678-1721). The Cerrahi order, founded and established in Istanbul, boasts of being the only Sufi order with the shrine of its initiator located in the city. The lodge was built in 1703 under the patronage of Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736) and became an important place for Sufi gatherings in the district. Unlike the orthodox Naqshbandi order, the Cerrahi order incorporated non-orthodox rituals and treatises. Due to this non-orthodox feature of the order, the lodge was frequently visited by Ottoman bureaucratic elites, artisans, musicians, poets, and calligraphers and became an important center of diverse artistic and cultural production, and urban sociability.

After the closure of Sufi lodges in 1924, Fahreddin Efendi (1885-1966) and his disciples continued to secretly perform the *dhikr* on Thursday evenings at the Cerrahi lodge. Tuğrul Efendi hesitated to discuss how they practiced rituals in their lodge as the prohibition of opening or running Sufi lodges and rituals continues in Turkish law to this day. To keep the religious

activities of the order functioning, they encouraged and highlighted gatherings for *sohbet*, the spiritually rooted conversation between the Sufi master and his disciples.[22] Historically, *sohbet* emerged within the Sufi tradition to maintain "a binding pact between the master and his disciples, one that demanded that they observe mutual obligation" (Papas 2021, 17). In modern Turkey, across the traditional Sufi orders, and neo-Sufi movements, *sohbet* has become an important medium to preserve their tradition's historical memory and emphasize the cultivation of good manners and etiquette (Silverstein 2011; Jassal 2014; Vicini 2020). Hence, more than embodied *dhikr* performances, *sohbet* became increasingly important in the Cerrahi order and other Sufi orders in the district, such as the Naqshbandis and Rifais.

The Cerrahi order became more popular and active in the district when Muzaffer Ozak Efendi (1916-1985) became their 19th spiritual leader in 1966, after the passing of Fahreddin Efendi. As a manuscript and second-hand bookseller at the booksellers' market in Beyazit, he was popularly known as the '*Shaykh* of the Manuscript Book Sellers' (Özdoğan 2016). At the same time, he was also an *imam* at the Beyazit, Vezneciler, and Süleymaniye mosques. According to Muzaffar Efendi, after the passing of Fahreddin Efendi, he acted on a dream he had and opened the doors of the lodge to the public, disregarding the Turkish laws on Sufi lodges and their activities (Ozak 1988). His charismatic personality, the weekly *sohbet* and the embodied *dhikr* performances at the lodge, and the wide network he gained as a bookseller, drew many people to the fold of Cerrahi order and to their lodge. The open and welcoming attitude promoted by Muzaffar Ozak not only attracted Turks of diverse backgrounds but also led him to gain disciples in North America and increased the popularity and influence of the order globally in the 20th century.[23] This revival of the Cerrahi order with the efforts of Muzaffar Efendi is aptly noted by one of the translators of his works: "Muzaffar Efendi may be seen as having brought his Order, and the Cerrahi branch especially out of an exceptionally prolonged retreat: one of forty years rather than forty days" (Holland 1988, XX).

Figure 24: Muzaffar Efendi at his second-hand bookstore in Beyazit. Open Source

In the previous chapter, we observed how Kenan Rifai and his disciples repurposed the functions of the Rifa Sufi lodge following the abolition of Sufi orders in 1925. Today, having been transformed into a cultural foundation, Kenan Rifai's grandson, Kenan Gürsoy, coordinates academic studies, research, and cultural programs inspired by the spiritual treatises of Kenan Rifai and his disciple Samiha Ayverdi. In contrast to the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order, which emphasizes the *shari'a*-informed Sufi discourses and *madrasa* education, both the Cerrahi and Rifai orders continue to embody the mystical, intellectual, and cosmopolitan cultural heritage of Turkish Sufism in the district. However, unlike the Rifai order, which ceased performing their weekly *dhikr*s and other embodied Sufi rituals, the Cerrahi order emphasizes adhering to their foundational treatises, rituals and Islamic orthodoxy in various aspects. The mausoleum of their founder, Pir Nureddin Cerrahi, the graves of other significant Cerrahi saints, and the endeavors of Cerrahi spiritual masters in the 20th century are central to the spatial representation of Sufi socialities in the district.

New Spaces and Technologies of Learning

I visited Erhan when I heard about his second-hand bookstore and his interest in archiving the local history of different neighborhoods of the Fatih district. The bookstore is located on the ground floor of a residential apartment in the Derviş Ali neighborhood, close to the Theodosian wall, the Chora Church, and the public library recently opened by Fatih municipality. When I asked him why he opened a bookstore away from the center of the Fatih district, he said he expected people to make some effort to visit and spend some time at his bookstore. In addition, he said the neighborhood is a very calm and quiet place, away from the traffic and noise of the busy neighborhoods of the district. Erhan, who is in his mid-sixties, has worked with different publishing companies. He has also produced cultural documentaries for various Turkish television channels. After his retirement, Erhan has been engaged in archiving, writing, and offering talks to university students and the public on Ottoman urbanism.

Erhan runs a personal blog and often writes about the artisans who work next to his bookstore or the neighbors with whom he has recently made acquaintance. The blog also aims to preserve some of the unique neighborhood socialities informed by the religious and cultural values that he has been witnessing in the district, which has not disappeared with the fast-changing urban culture of Istanbul. Drawing upon these observations, he also offers online lectures for university students on the history of urbanism and everyday life in Ottoman Istanbul and how it has changed over the last century. He also did not hesitate to share his disappointment with what he saw as a lack of engagement and passion from students during the online lecture sessions.[24]

According to Erhan, the purpose of a bookstore is not just to collect and sell books but also to create a space to forge new friendships, discussions, and cultural events. He has arranged one section of his bookstore for customers and visitors to sit and read a book or chat with him about books or other topics. Whoever visits the bookstore, Erhan offers them tea or Turkish coffee. When I asked Erhan about his memories of the second-hand book culture of Istanbul, he recollected the time he spent at bookstores during his college days.

> At the basement floor of the Beyaz Saray building, next to the second-hand bookseller's market and the Grand Bazaar, there were a lot of Islamic publishing houses. One of the most famous among them was the Enderun bookstore. Ismail, the owner of Enderun, used to organize a meeting on Saturday evenings. The booksellers, lecturers from Istanbul

University, religious scholars, students, and the common people used to attend the meetings and participate in discussions on philosophy, religion, culture, politics, poetry, etc. The participants were also served tea and bagels. I could still recollect the taste of those bagels and the memory of attending those meetings. With my bookstore, I hope to recreate such a space.[25]

The Beyaz Saray building complex had been home to a large number of Islamic publishing houses between the 1970s and late 1990s and played an influential role in the revival of Ottoman-Islamic publications and the translation of various religious books into Turkish. In particular, the Enderun bookstore created a space for *sohbet* among religious scholars, academics, public intellectuals, and common people in the district.[26] According to Ismail Özdoğan, one of the founders of the Enderun bookstore, their place eventually became an important learning space. He notes that "similar to how French refers to the development of an intellectual school (Ecole), Enderun became an intellectual school over the years" (Özdoğan 2016, 86). For him, the transformation of their bookstore into an educational space becomes evident when observing how many of the initial attendees, who were mere listeners to the conversations among the academics, religious scholars, and other intellectuals at the bookstore, eventually evolved into becoming active writers and speakers themselves (ibid.).

The introduction of the printing press and publishing culture radically transformed the modes of knowledge production, transmission, and learning in the Muslim societies. This transformation is best understood as a development that brought significant rupture in the traditional modes of learning, as memorization and oral transmission gave way to the emergence of a mass reading public (Mahdi 1995; El Shamsy 2020).[27] On the other hand, this process can also be considered as an evolution of educational and learning practices as informed by the widespread impact of paper technology and manuscript production in early Islamic history (Gunther 2022).[28] Jonathan Bloom notes that "the introduction of paper in the eighth century had a transformative effect on medieval Islamic civilization, spurring an extraordinary burst of literary creativity in virtually all subjects from theology to the natural sciences and literature" (Bloom 2001, 12). The well-known Graeco-Arabic translation movement and intellectual 'Golden Age' in Baghdad between the 8th and 10th centuries was facilitated in large part by the production of numerous manuscripts and the establishment of libraries. Since then, scribal culture and manuscript production have been central to the transmission of knowledge in Muslim

societies. Both political and religious elites showed a deep interest in providing patronage and financial support for the establishment of numerous *waqf*-endowed libraries and employing scribes and manuscript copyists to produce and preserve Islamic and non-Islamic texts. Finally, the manuscript tradition also played a crucial role in developing Islamic art, such as calligraphy and geometric ornamentations.

When the Fatih mosque complex was built, Mehmed II gave the library a special status to collect and preserve Islamic manuscripts and make them available to the scholarly community. Unlike the *madrasa*s of Hagia Sophia and Zeyrek mosque complexes, the library complex of the Fatih *madrasa*s had a generous endowment and numerous staff employed to ensure its efficient operation and management (Erunsal 2022, 70). At the same time, manuscript libraries were established across Istanbul and other Ottoman cities. Until the early 20th century, Fatih and neighboring districts had the largest number of libraries in the empire. They included the libraries of the imperial mosque and non-imperial mosque complexes and the personal libraries established by the members of the *ilmiye* and *kalemiye* classes. Over time, the Ottomans also efficiently developed and applied the science of organizing and cataloging manuscripts, attracting scholars and students from other provinces of the empire to the libraries in the city (ibid.).

The 18th century introduction of the printing press profoundly impacted the manuscript tradition, scholarly authority, and the functioning of the Ottoman educational institutions in Istanbul. In 1727, under the patronage of Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736), Ibrahim Muteferrika (1674-1747), a convert Muslim from Hungary, and his associate Said Efendi (d. 1761) managed to open a printing press that printed in the Ottoman Turkish script for the first time (Sabev 2006; Wilson 2014). After providing a document that explained the ten benefits of establishing a printing press for the Muslim community and the empire, Muteferrika managed to secure a *fatwa* from then Şeyhulislam Abdullah Efendi and established the printing press at his house in the Yavuz Selim neighborhood of the Fatih district (Sabev 2006). As the *ilmiye* and the scribal class were not initially very fond of the use of printing technology for various reasons, the texts printed chiefly dealt with topics ranging from maritime history, geography, and political history, to be distributed to wealthy Ottoman elites in Muteferrika's network (ibid.).

The first attempt to promote the printing press ended with Muteferrika's death in 1747. Later in 1802, when the Muteferrika printing press was transferred to Uskudar, a district located

on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, a few religious texts were printed for the first time under the patronage of Abdurrahman Efendi (d.1807), a *madrasa* graduate, and a geometry teacher (Sabev 2018). This would eventually give way to more and more requests to the Ottoman authorities to permit the printing of religious texts. For example, in 1802, Mehmed Behiç Efendi wrote a memorandum to the Ottoman ruler suggesting to develop "printing regulations (*nizāmnāme*) for the Muslim religious functionaries in the provinces, as well as textbooks for a school, which would be designed to train clerks for the imperial bureaucracy. He further insisted on the printing and disseminating of a penal code in accordance with the *shariʻa*" (ibid., 101).

Though the Muteferrika printing press operated for a short period, it became a catalyst for the emergence of print culture in Istanbul. Starting from the late 18th century, the establishment of the printing press gradually increased, and by the late 19th century, at least seventy-seven Ottoman Turkish printing presses were active in Istanbul (ibid.). Consequently, when the education of the Ottoman subjects in religious and secular topics became an important concern for the rulers, printing was considered an important technology to address this challenge along with the *Tanzimat* proposals for educational reforms in the empire. It also necessitated introducing modern schools and libraries that used printed books.

The modernization of manuscript libraries was considered daunting and almost impossible as it was designed largely to fulfill the scholarly requirements of the traditional authorities. In addition, the centralization of the *waqf* properties heftily impacted the maintenance and running of the manuscript libraries, eventually leading many of them to be closed (Erunsal 2022). In the early 20th century, the British Journalist H.G Dwight aptly captured this inevitable decline of manuscript libraries in Istanbul. During his visit to the *madrasa* complex built by Şeyhulislam Feyzullah Efendi, Dwight remarked about the ruinous state of its library:

> They are all manuscripts, and some of them are illuminated or beautifully bound. I also saw a finely bound catalogue to which nothing has been added for two hundred years. For that matter the library does not look as if anyone had consulted it for two hundred years, though the librarian is supposed to be there every day except Tuesday and Friday. He accordingly spends most of his time in his book-shop in the mosque yard of the conqueror (Dwight 1915, 70-71).

Though initially suspicious of the changes brought by the printing technology and its benefits, many from the *ilmiye* eventually sided with print culture to support educational reform among the Muslims in the empire. In addition, to counter the increasing threat of secular Young Turk activism through print media, many *'ulama'* resorted to establishing publishing houses, printing journals, magazines, and newspapers. Furthermore, "[t]he role of calligraphers as teachers in the Ottoman state's new schools, including the Military School, the School for Learning (*Mekteb-i Ma'ârif-i Adliyye*), and the *rüşdiyye* secondary schools, and their role in preparing textbooks for lithographic printing" eventually integrated the scribal class into the emerging print culture (Başaran 2023, 100). During this period, many Sufi lodges also came to host printing presses, contributing to the publication of a wide variety of books that dealt with both religious and secular topics (Uzel 2019). In particular, Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi lodges affiliated with Uzbeks in the city were quite active in publishing books, since many of the adepts from Buhara, Taskent, and Samarkand were already familiar with printing technologies and publishing culture (Varol 2013).

Since the 19th century, these developments have transformed how religious knowledge is acquired and transmitted. While the development of the print medium significantly challenged traditional religious and spiritual authority in Ottoman Istanbul, after the establishment of the Republic, the same medium has enabled many conservative Muslims to preserve the Ottoman-Islamic intellectual heritage by bypassing the strict secularizing measures. The print medium contributed to educating the Muslim community in the absence or restriction on religious institutions and spaces. Since the late 1940s, the Republican efforts to open up theology faculties, and Imam-Hatip schools, increased public demand for religious books. In the 1950s, during the multi-party era, with the loosening of restrictions on religion, the publication of Islamic books witnessed a revival, especially with the efforts of the Imam-Hatip and theology faculty graduates. This revival was facilitated by an increasing number of translations from Persian and Arabic by graduates from the aforementioned schools, as well as by those who had acquired Islamic education from other Muslim countries in the Middle East, such as Egypt and Syria. They specifically translated the works of prominent 20th century Islamist intellectual figures such as Abul A'la Maududi, Muhammad Qutub, Sayyid Qutub, and Syed Ali al-Nadwi (Güngör 2020, 84).

The Fatih district played an important role in the revival of Islamic publications by establishing numerous publishing houses during the 1970s. The role of the Beyaz Saray building complex, which accommodated numerous Islamic publishing houses, played an integral part in this revival. Furthermore, the district's enduring Ottoman intellectual heritage facilitated a platform for networking among diverse Muslim groups and movements. The opening of the Fatih *madrasa*s as a dormitory for Istanbul University students, the restoration of the Ismail Ağa mosque by Mahmud Efendi and his followers, the Sunday gathering at the Iskenderpaşa mosque under the leadership of Mehmed Zahid Kotku, and the Hadith lessons at the Fatih mosque complex and various other mosque complexes all contributed to the revival of Islamic education in the district.

Over the past three decades, the rapid urbanization of Istanbul has resulted in the dispersion of the Islamic publishing houses previously concentrated in the Fatih district to other parts of the city. In addition, the district has witnessed a significant diversification of the publishing industry, with different religious communities publishing a multitude of books in various languages. In particular, over the last two decades, after the shutting down of the Beyaz Saray building complex in 1999, the Çarşamba neighborhood has gradually become the center of Islamic publications. The publishing houses owned by members of the Ismail Ağa community were pioneers in reproducing the classical Islamic texts used within their *madrasa*s in the district. Most recently, the settlement of Syrians has resulted in the establishment of Arabic publishing houses and bookstores in the district. These establishments publish and sell classical Islamic texts as well as contemporary books discussed in the Arab world.[29]

Figure 25: A bookstore in Çarşamba showcasing books such as Zamakhsiri's Qur'anic Exegesis, al-*Kashshaf*, Faridudeen Attar's *Memoirs of Sufi Saints*, and Turkish Historian Ismail Erunsal's work *Books and Libraries in the Islamic World*. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

Finally, in an era dominated by print and digital book culture, there are attempts to preserve the manuscript tradition in the district. For example, the recent restoration of the Murad Molla library by the Ismail Ağa community throws light on how the manuscript tradition is preserved not only through archiving for academic research purposes but also by making it relevant to the contemporary curriculum of *madrasa* education. The Naqshbandi Shaykh Damadzade Murad Molla established a Naqshbandi lodge in 1769, and a personal library was constructed adjacent

to the lodge in 1775. The library was built to preserve his book collections, and later a few other scholarly collections were also endowed to the library in the 19ᵗʰ century. The library also reproduced some important Islamic texts, such as the complete volume of the Hadith collection of Bukhari, and the *Book of Advice* ("Pendname") of the Persian poet Fardidudeen Attar. During the early 20ᵗʰ century, when many Ottoman libraries in the district fell into ruins, books from those libraries were also added to the library collection. In the second half of the 20ᵗʰ century, many books in the library, except the personal collection of Murad Molla, were transferred to other archival libraries in Istanbul.[30]

After the confiscation of the *waqf* properties, the library was abandoned for several years, and was later reopened as a children's library by the Istanbul municipality. Recently, the library underwent restoration with the support of the Fatih municipality, and the Ismail Ağa community has been permitted to reopen the library for the use of *madrasa* students involved in specialized research in Islamic jurisprudence (*ihtisas*) and for the print reproduction of many Islamic manuscripts that were part of the library collection. One of the research coordinators of the library noted that they aim to preserve the manuscript tradition not simply by cataloging and providing historical facts about the texts but also by making them relevant to the *madrasa* education in the district and elsewhere. In addition, the library also aims to collect books on Sufism and make them available to scholars and students of both academic and *madrasa* backgrounds.[31]

Figure 26: Murad Molla Library after renovation. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021

Muslim Reading Publics and the Emergence of New Civic Spaces

Mithat Cemal (1885-1956), the Turkish essayist, and literary critic, shares a remarkable anecdote about the venue where he first had the opportunity to become acquainted and form a lifelong friendship with the poet Mehmed Akif Ersoy (1873-1936). Mithat Cemal writes in the introduction to his biography of Akif Ersoy:

> In 1903, in the Mercan neighborhood of Beyazıt, there was a writing room in the house of Ibnülemin Mahmut Kemal Bey. Those who gathered in this room on Fridays were: Aziziye, who knew how many coffees Koca Reşit Paşa drank until the morning, of the night when the *Tanzimat* was announced; Aziz Bey, the grandson of Pertev Paşa (a member of the *Meclisi Evkaf*); Ali Emiri Efendi, the owner of the library in Fatih, who searched for Nedim's tomb in the *Sahaf* bazaar without his *Pertav* (Ottoman official's baton); Adanalı Hayret Hoca, the poet whose voice resembled a warning…
>
> On two of the room's walls, there were calligraphic writings in Ottoman Turkish and Persian scripts. Even the Turkish writings with Arabic letters gave me a sense of Arabic script back then, and I would not read them aloud for fear of making a mistake in their grammatical inflections. On the third wall, there was a library filled with decaying, spiritually bound book. Among them were manuscripts of Abdülhamid I and Selim II that Ibnülemin Mahmut Kemal Bey would take out and show to his guests from afar, wrapped in silk cloths.
>
> The dust on the pages and books in this room was as sacred as the particles of a saint's tomb. The servant could only touch these sacred objects with the host's permission once a month.
>
> Everything here was old: the poems being read were old, the cushions were old, the words were old, and even the sounds were old. When I left this room and went to the street, I felt I was returning from a funeral prayer of a bygone era. However, despite the antiquity of this room, which might be considered two centuries old, there was a spiritual brightness present.
>
> It was in this room that I met the poet, Akif, the author of *Safahat* (Cemal [1939]1986, 7).

The vivid picture of the intellectuals, poets, artists, and many other figures who gathered at the mansion of Ibnülemin at the turn of the 20th century portrays a cosmopolitan venue for intellectual networking, learning, and exchange. Their educational backgrounds and professions transcended the traditional Ottoman learned class of the *ilmiye* and *kalemiye*. Many of them were educated in modern schools established during the *Tanzimat* reforms. Their intellectual orientations straddled the Ottoman-Islamic and Western discourses. Hence, they sought spaces beyond the confines of the Ottoman *madrasa*s, Sufi lodges, and libraries. Here, Ibnülemin's mansion (*konak*), popularly known as *Darul Kemal* ("the House of Perfection"), played a distinctive role as a meeting point for intellectuals of various backgrounds in the district. Echoing Ibnülemin's famous saying, "No one resembles anyone, nor anyone their own self" ("Ne Kendi Kimseye Benzer Ne Kimse Kendisini"), the gatherings at his mansion became a space to articulate intellectual and artistic creativities rooted both in Islamic and modern conscience. This sense of conscience was nurtured not solely by one's interaction with religious authorities and the knowledge they impart, but also by the use of books and various material objects from both the past and the present. These elements took on a pivotal role in shaping one's intellectual and spiritual experiences in the late Ottoman Empire. As Mithat Cemal remarked poignantly, anyone who had the opportunity to spend some time at the mansion of Ibnülemin would be enveloped by a spiritual brightness emanating from both the people and the objects present.

A few weeks after the meeting at the mansion of Ibnülemin, Mithat Cemal would later encounter Akif Ersoy at one of the teashops in Direklerarasi, a neighborhood once dominated by the Janissary corps and their taverns (Cemal [1939]1986). After abolishing the Janissary Corps in 1826, the neighborhood became an entertainment center, especially for Muslims during the Ramadan evenings. In contrast to the westernized Pera-Beyoglu district, the Direklerarasi neighborhood grew into an important center of literary and artistic production of 'Old Istanbul'. The tea and coffee shops opened in the neighborhood became a meeting point for people of different classes and various intellectual and religious orientations. For example, during the early 20th century, intellectuals like Akif Ersoy, Ibnülemin, Halid Edib, and the musician Neyzen Tevfik, often met at the teashops in the neighborhood (Gürsoy 1996).

Within this context, the introduction of the printing press and the wide circulation of religious, literary, and other texts became a catalyst for an emerging reading public who found

these newly emerging private and public civic spaces essential for their intellectual and educational progress. While the emergence of coffee houses as spaces of leisure and intellectual exchange dates back to the 17th century in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities (Gürbüzel 2023), the formation of new civic spaces in the 19th century, facilitated by print culture, enabled both elites and the masses to access a wide variety of literature that extended beyond religious topics. For example, in the last chapter, we have seen how increasing contact with European modernity generated interest among the Ottoman urban publics in new understandings of civility, etiquette, and manners. Both the elites and the ordinary people were enthusiastic to take part in the newly emerging civic spaces beyond the traditional sites of gathering such as mosques complexes and Sufi lodges. The loss of autonomy and the increasing centralization of *waqf* properties gave further impetus to congregate in places beyond the traditional learning and education spaces.

Consequently, by the late 19th century, we see an increasing number of civic associations (*cemiyet*) established by Muslims and non-Muslims as locations for intellectual networking, learning, and political activism. The personal connections and interactions initially developed through venues such as personal mansions and coffee houses became institutionalized through the establishment of civic associations. These associations were not exclusively founded on premodern identities and ideologies but instead often emphasized the notion of free citizens collectively gathered to advance educational, cultural, political or commercial objectives. While many associations were founded to serve socio-religious and educational purposes, many others were created with secular and commercial objectives by the artisanal and guild communities (Toprak 1985).

But it is also important to emphasize that the shifts brought about by new technological innovations and the emerging civic spaces and associations in the social relations and everyday habitus were not a replica of the post-Westphalian civilizing experience in European societies. Instead, Muslim societies, especially in the late Ottoman context, gave birth to a civil society informed by both the *shari'a* and *adab* tradition (Salvatore 2016, 222). While the discursive frameworks of *shari'a* and *adab* were being gradually transformed by the conditions produced by colonial modernity in the Ottoman realm and elsewhere, the expanding scope and importance of the *adab* tradition became central in shaping new forms of disciplinary values and norms in the civic relations (ibid., 221).

The increasing influence of civic associational platforms in shaping public opinions and political activism led the late Ottoman rulers to institute a regulatory mechanism for their activities, known as the Association Law (Cemiyetler Kanunu). This law later became the underpinning for the laws and regulations that prescribed the conditions to establish nonprofitable civil society organizations or platforms in 1938 (Toprak 1985). Until the 1960s, such platforms were restricted to use the Turkish term *tesis* (establishment) or *dernek* (association). The numerous civil society platforms that emerged since the 1960s among conservative Sunni Muslims in Turkey established *tesis*' or *dernek*s to run various non-governmental socio-religious, educational and philanthropic activities (Zencirci 2015). After the 1967 *Waqf* Law, which allowed the use of the term '*waqf*' to establish nonprofitable foundations with certain tax exemptions (Çizakça 2000), the discourse of the Ottoman *waqf* gained popularity among various Muslim groups and movements in Turkey. This shift towards the use of the concept of *waqf* is evident in the case of the Ilim Yayma, which, initially founded as a *cemiyet* in 1951, later established a *waqf* (Ilim Yayma Vakfi) in 1972 to advance the objectives of educating Muslims. In addition, the economic transformation of Turkey in the last three decades and the restoration of many Ottoman *waqf* properties have led many to retrieve the older meanings and functions of *waqf* not only for educational and philanthropic activities but also everyday political activism, a topic that will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Necmettin, a senior resident of the Fatih district, explained the role of *waqf*s in reviving Islamic education and related activities:

When I was growing up in Fatih in the 1960s there were not many organizations run by Muslims, because the Kemalist secular reforms succeeded in restricting the role of religious activities. During those days, I was personally searching for more knowledge about Islam and started to think "Why are there no platforms for Muslims?" In 1964, a weekly magazine named *Yeni Istikal* used to arrive to the jewelry store I used to work at. It had a lot of influence on me, especially working for the education of Muslims. Later, a rich Muslim jewelry owner at the Grand Bazar started to publish a weekly Islamic magazine. Through this magazine, Muslims were encouraged to attend the early morning prayer at Fatih, Süleymaniye, and Sultan Ahmed mosques. Such gatherings created a space for intellectual and political networking and gave impetus for many Muslims to initiate *dernek* (associations) and later *waqf*s (foundations) in the district. As a result, by

the 1980s, a lot of *waqf*s were being established by Muslims. I was the founding director of Hirka-i Şerif Mosque *Waqf* and directed it from 1980 to 1986. Our *waqf* opened a hostel for the girls who came to study in Istanbul. We also provided scholarships and other support for the students. Later, I also worked with other different *waqf*s in Fatih.[32]

Necmettin's personal story highlights the reconfiguration of Muslim associations and activities into *waqf* platforms since the 1970s. His experience in founding and running different *waqf*s in the district also provides us with the socio-historical context in which many *waqf*s emerged. The discourse of *waqf* revival has a strong impact on how state and nonstate actors shape their presence in the Fatih district. As observed in the preceding sections, access to numerous Ottoman-era *waqf* properties in the district has served as an effective medium and space for various groups to advance their educational and cultural programs deeply rooted in the Ottoman-Islamic intellectual heritage.

Jeremy Walton's study of Sunni Muslim NGOs or *waqf*s that operate within the restored Ottoman buildings in and around the Fatih district notes that many such groups are involved in a restorative form of (often troubling) politics rooted in neo-Ottomanism. According to Walton, while the discourse of neo-Ottomanism resists Kemalist secular hegemonic spatial practices, it also excludes minority claims to belonging in the city and its spaces, and heritage (Walton 2017, 200-201). Similarly, Gizem Zencirci's recent work *The Muslim Social* (2024), observes that *waqf* discourse played an instrumental role in the neo-Ottoman civilizational revival rhetoric of the AKP. More specifically, this rhetoric, "gave legitimacy to the reconfiguration of the public welfare regime and the incorporation of private charitable giving into the governmental apparatus. The idea that Ottoman-Islamic waqfs provided an institutional blueprint authorized neoliberal rationalities of good governance" (Zencirci 2004, 96).

Without dismissing the exclusionary aspects and the political instrumentalization of neo-Ottoman discourses, this chapter underscores the historical transformation of the institutional spaces and practices of knowledge production and learning in the Fatih district. It highlights the complex and nuanced ways in which many actors engage with Ottoman institutions and their intellectual heritage. Here, the historical memory of *waqf* as a concept and practice, and its revival over the last decades, cannot be reduced to an exclusive reflection of neoliberal reforms and governance in contemporary Turkey.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how the intellectual heritage of the Fatih district continues to mediate the spaces of knowledge production and learning. Specifically, it examined how, after the abolition of Ottoman religious institutions and the centralization of religious education by the Turkish state, Ottoman-era *waqf* properties such as *madrasa*s and Sufi lodges facilitated the reconfiguration and revival of classical Islamic education and embodied Sufi socialities in the Fatih district. Different actors in the district have met the retrieval of the Ottoman *madrasa* heritage with various responses. While platforms like Ilim Yayma seek to incorporate the study of classical Islamic texts within a modern institutional framework, the Naqshbandi-affiliated Ismail Ağa community continues to promote classical Ottoman curricula and embodied modes of learning. Similarly, the Cerrahi Sufi order in the district continues to mediate embodied forms of Sufi discourse and practices. On the other hand, the emergence of a new reading public since the late Ottoman period has also produced civic associations that have been instrumental in shaping new modes of intellectual exchange and spaces of learning in the district. This chapter argues that the survival of many Ottoman-era *waqf* properties contributed to the retrieval of Ottoman-Islamic educational culture in the district. In this regard, instead of approaching the revival of the *waqf* discourse merely as a top-down political project to promote philanthropic services and neoliberal welfare discourse, the chapter explores how the historical transformation of *waqf* as a concept and practice continues to inform the diverse aspirations and educational activities of many actors in the district.

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[1] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, May 12, 2018, Istanbul.

[2] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, August 27, 2021, Istanbul.

[3] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, July 13, 2021, Istanbul.

[4] Huseyin, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, September 17, 2021.

[5] In classical Islamic knowledge tradition, an *ijaza* is generally understood as an authoritative oral license to transmit a Hadith or a specific body of Islamic knowledge from a teacher to a student.

[6] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, May 11, 2018, Istanbul.

[7] Rudolph T. Ware's seminal work, *The Walking Qur'an*, highlights the continuing relevance of embodied Qur'an learning and memorization in Muslim societies, with a specific focus on West Africa (Ware 2014).

[8] The Qur'an schools' role in the revival of *madrasa* education also reminds one of how early Muslim communities developed the institutional framework of *kuttab* to teach the Qur'an, eventually leading to the development and institutionalization of *madrasa* education in the Muslim world (Hefner 2010).

[9] Imam Abdullah, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 11, 2021.

[10] Halil, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, Istanbul, November 1, 2021.

[11] Shaykh Hisham, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 1, 2021.

[12] Halil, Interview.

[13] Thomas Pierret notes that in response to Baathist secularization, the '*ulama*' in Syria "adapted to new teaching methods through the establishment of modern private institutes, which have enabled them to produce young clerics

on a much larger scale than traditional methods. More unexpected was the fact that the old structures that were threatened by the dynamics of modernisation (the master–disciple relationship, study circles) were transformed, thanks to the flexibility given to them by their informality, into a powerful instrument of defence of the influence of the clerics" (Pierret 2013, 5).

[14] Yahya, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, October 10, 2021.

[15] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, October 10, 2023, Istanbul.

[16] Mustafa, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, August 19, 2021.

[17] Especially true of Mevlevi Sufi lodges, and other orders such as the Cerrahi and Rifai orders which incorporated Mevlevi whirling *dervish* practices in to their collective *dhikr* performances. The Mevlevi order was also represented as a cultural heritage of Anatolia in the 20th century with a special focus on promoting the whirling *dervish* performances. "Since the 1950s, several Mawlawī/Mevlevī tekkes were allowed to work as cultural associations where the ritual of the whirling dervishes was presented to tourists; public performances enabled these tekkes to recreate their religious life in a framework of cultural heritage" (Ephrat and Pinto 2021, 137).

[18] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Fieldnotes, November 11, 2021, Istanbul.

[19] This expression's historical and social significance can be traced to the dining culture of the heterodox Bektaşi Sufi order and the Alevi communities of Anatolia. For more see, Soileau "Spreading the Sofra: Sharing and Partaking in the Bektashi Ritual Meal".

[20] Tuğrul Efendi, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 11, 2021.

[21] Lale Can's recent work has explored in detail the transnational connections forged by Uzbek Sufi lodges in Istanbul. For more see, *Spiritual Subjects: Central Asian Pilgrims and the Ottoman Hajj at the End of Empire.*

[22] The term *sohbet* originates from the Arabic word *suhba*, which shares the same root with the *sahaba*, the disciples who learned from the Prophet Muhammad through companionship.

[23] His long-lasting companionship with his disciple Tosun Bayrak, eventually led to the opening of the first Cerrahi lodge in North America.

[24] Erhan, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, July 1, 2021.

[25] Erhan, Interview.

[26] The term Enderun was used for the Ottoman palace schools that trained the *devsirme* soldiers (slave elites).

[27] According to Francis Robinson, "person to person transmission was at the heart of the transmission of Islamic knowledge. The best way of getting at the truth was to listen to the author himself. Muslim scholars constantly travelled across the Islamic world so that they could receive in person the reliable transmission of knowledge. This custom grew up with the early collectors of the traditions relating to the Prophet. It was steadfastly maintained by later scholars." However, "Printing, by multiplying texts willy nilly, struck right at the heart of person to person transmission of knowledge; it struck right at the heart of Islamic authority. No Muslim was likely to adopt it until he saw a good in printing greater than the evil it might cause. In fact, Muslims came to adopt printing only when they felt Islam itself was at stake and print was a necessary weapon in the defence of the faith" (Robinson 1993, 239).

[28] Wadi Kadad notes that the Muslims encounter with paper, replacing the use of expensive papyrus and other materials, led to the emergence of "the culture of the book as a hallmark of Islamic civilization. Paper increased literacy among the populace and efficiency in the state's record keeping; most important, it enabled scholars to write large tomes and multivolume works. As a result, entire markets for books in big Islamic cities emerged, scribes constituted a recognizable professional group, and seekers of learning indulged themselves in the thrills of book culture" (Kadad 2020, 44).

[29] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, August 12, 2021, Istanbul.

[30] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, June 17, 2021, Istanbul.

[31] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, October 9, 2021, Istanbul.

[32] Necmettin, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 6, 2021.

Chapter 4

To Whom Does a Living Heritage Belong?
The Cosmopolitan Lifeworlds of Fatih

Introduction

On May 1st, 2012, a group of young conservative Muslim men and women offered a symbolic funeral prayer at the courtyard of the Fatih mosque complex for the workers who had died due to workplace accidents in Turkey. The group, who identified themselves as the 'Anti-Capitalist Muslims', marched to Taksim Square in the Beyoglu district after the prayer. The march was accompanied by banners and slogans such as "Ownership and property belong to God," "Bread and freedom come from God," and "Long live revolutionary Islam."[1] The event was identified as exceptional and perplexing for many across the Turkish political spectrum. Firstly, the conservative religious communities identified May 1st as a day celebrated by Turkish communists, whom they conventionally view as being atheists and opponents of Islam. Secondly, for the secular leftists, theological language rarely informed their political activism in Turkey. Hence, the event marked a significant shift in Turkish politics, especially among conservative Muslims in Istanbul, that it is indeed possible to bridge the secular versus religious public by offering solidarity for political and economic justice (Ekinci 2015).

A year later, on June 3rd, 2013, a protest erupted in Taksim Square against the government's plan to replace Gezi park with a shopping mall. The Gezi incident led to nationwide protests against the increasingly authoritarian nature of AKP rule. The protest marked an important political moment after a decade of AKP rule in the country, as it challenged the party's neoliberal urbanism that prioritized capital over the needs of the people. The Gezi protest also garnered attention for the active participation of the Anti-Capitalist Muslims and the solidarity they offered to protestors. They held a Friday sermon and prayer at the site with the protection of the secularists and socialists who had gathered there. Anti-Capitalist Muslims reaffirmed their political message that they would support any cause that questioned the inequalities and injustices brought about by global capitalism. The Gezi protest became another moment that blurred the lines between the secular and religious public spheres in Turkey and "the emergence of a Muslim political subjectivity striving to develop its own critique of capitalism and authoritarian neoliberalism" (Baykal 2016, 242).

The Fatih district provides an excellent case study for understanding the formation of diverse Muslim political subjectivities, publics, and counterpublics since the second half of the 20th century and its reconfiguration in the last two decades. In the previous chapter, we explored the emergence of new forms of Muslim publics in late Ottoman Istanbul and how they gave birth to modern civic spaces and associations. The chapter also examined how the Fatih district became a venue for the emergence of many Muslim civic associations and platforms, many of which eventually revived the discourse of the Ottoman *waqf*. The revival of *waqf* discourse intersected with political and economic shifts in the country, giving rise to conservative Muslim publics that challenged the hegemonic Kemalist secular conception of spatial discourses and practices.

Over the past two decades, the diversification of competing Muslim publics has prompted a reassessment of the secular versus religious binary that has traditionally dominated public and scholarly discourse on socio-religious and political changes in Turkey (Turam 2011; Gokariksel 2012). Berna Turam observes that placing too much emphasis on social and political movements and the implied dichotomy of secularism versus Islamism "obscures the ways in which different shades of the pious and the nonreligious are divided within themselves (rather than merely between each other) in the intricacies of daily life" (Turam 2011, 145). Hence, examining competing lifestyles, religious aspirations, and political discourses of the Muslim public will offer a deeper understanding of heterogeneous forms of belonging in the city. This chapter aims to provide broader insights into the evolving nature of Muslim urbanity by examining how different Islamic movements, communities, and individuals assert their presence and belonging in Fatih. While Islamic theological discourses and understandings provide a shared discursive medium for heterogeneous urban aspirations and imaginations, this chapter will investigate how these in turn are constantly shaped by shifting political, economic, and material conditions.

To explore the historical and sociological configuration of the Muslim public in Fatih in the 20th century, the chapter draws upon sociologist Muhammad Bamyeh's concept of 'lifeworld' (Bamyeh 2019). According to Bamyeh, the concept of lifeworld allows us to approach Islam as an experiential discourse of shared meaning that consistently reproduces and reinvents itself in response to changing times and geographies. A lifeworld encompasses a multitude of discourses, including mystical and social activities, "through which an old idea continues to generate voluntarily accepted meaning (rather than enforced rules)" (ibid., 6). While

Bamyeh emphasizes the hermeneutic and instrumental pragmatic approaches that broadly shape the public philosophy of Islamic movements and discourses in contemporary Muslim societies, the chapter highlights the role of historically produced religious built environments, institutions, and spaces in providing a shared material medium for articulating multiple lifeworlds of Islam.

Publics and Counterpublics of Fatih

During my fieldwork in Fatih in 2021, a colorized photograph of the Ottoman proclamation of the Great Jihad (Cihad-ı Ekber) and the official entry of the Ottoman Empire to World War I circulating on Turkish social media came to my attention. After being written and approved by Şeyhulislam Hayri Efendi (1867-1922) in the format of a *fatwa*, the proclamation was read to the public in the courtyard of the Fatih mosque complex on October 14th, 1914. The gathering at Fatih mosque was announced in various local newspapers published in Istanbul at the time, and the public was urged to attend it with great importance. Several newspapers published photos of the gathering and a detailed report of how the *fatwa* was prepared and announced to the public. After the noon prayer at the Fatih mosque, the *fatwa* was read on the mosque pulpit by the *Fatwa Emini* (*fatwa* keeper) Ali Haydar Efendi (1853-1935) in Turkish and Arabic. It is reported that around a hundred thousand people were gathered at the mosque complex, and many did not have a chance to hear the *fatwa*, and it had to be reread outside the mosque by Ali Haydar Efendi's deputy. After the second reading of the *fatwa*, communal prayers were made for the empire, the Muslim nations, and the soldiers who would participate in the war (Zurcher 2016; Kol 2017).

In the hope of defending the empire, the Fatih mosque played a symbolic role in being selected as the starting point of the proclamation to reinforce the historical memory of the conquest of the city and the necessity of the survival of the empire. The Fatih mosque and the streets leading to the mosque were decorated with the flags of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires to instill an atmosphere of carnival, celebration, and solidarity (Kol 2017). Following the proclamation at the Fatih Mosque, Ottoman authorities and the public paraded through venues of political and religious importance in Istanbul, including the Hirka-i Şerif Mosque, proceeding through the Divan axis, making a stop at the War Ministry office in Beyazit and the Sublime Porte in Tophane, and finally concluding in front of the consulates of the Ottoman Empire's allies in the war, the German and Austro-Hungarian consulates in the Beyoğlu district (ibid.). The news reports, eyewitness accounts, and photographs of the proclamation at

the Fatih Mosque and the parade through the historical peninsula of Istanbul were circulated in the press for several weeks as war propaganda to shape the collective conscience and memory of the Istanbul public, and the Ottoman subjects in the provinces (Lüdke 2016).[2]

Figure 27: The *Fatwa Emini*, Ali Haydar Efendi, proclaiming the Great Jihad at Fatih Mosque. *Donanma*, 1914, 50 (5).

The scholarship on the Ottoman entry to World War I identifies the role of the Ottoman press as a vital medium of propaganda in Istanbul and other Ottoman provinces (Köroğlu 2004; Sunu 2007). Recent studies have also been more attentive to the role of religious institutions and the symbols that were utilized at the time (Zurcher 2016). For example, the public proclamation of the Great Jihad at the Fatih mosque and later at other imperial mosques in Istanbul is identified as an important medium that psychologically impacted the Muslim public in Istanbul. Besides a simple proclamation, the authorities sought to create an affective atmosphere with the gathering of Muslims in large numbers (Kol 2017).

Ironically, the organizers behind the proclamation and propaganda were the CUP government (Committee of Union and Progress), as identified in previous chapters, who vehemently opposed the role of the '*ulama*' and religious institutions in determining the socio-political future of the empire. Hence, the use of religious language and spaces for the propaganda

of Great Jihad was done with the help of religious circles who were either sympathetic to CUP or who supported their intervention in World War 1 (Beşikci 2016). The CUP led the Ottoman state's 'instrumentalization' of religious scholars and institutions, facilitating in carving,

> a larger space of intervention in the realm of religion, as a result of which it produced a religious discourse according to its own definition of "correct" Islam. It can be speculated that this increase in the state's power of intervention in the realm of religion, which further increased during the mobilization of the National Struggle (1919–1922) of the Ankara government, was inherited by the Republican state (ibid., 109).[3]

Scholarship on the political history of the late Ottoman Empire observes how Islamic symbols, institutions, and spaces increasingly became instrumental mediums for the propaganda of various competing groups aiming to control the late Ottoman state. Sultan Abdülhamid II's centralization attempts, and later the CUP's use of religious language through *fatwa*s, institutions, and spaces such as mosques, are approached as developments in the politicization of Islam (Karpat 2001). This approach is also predominant in the study of the spatial expressions of Islamic revivalism in contemporary Turkey. However, viewing the relationship between Islam and politics in late Ottoman society and its impact on modern Turkish political culture as exclusively instrumental ignores how the discursive and material transmissions of Islam were central in shaping Ottoman political culture and the public sphere for centuries.

In the second chapter, we examined how many politically active Muslim scholars and reformists, such as Şeyhulislam Mustafa Sabri, Zahid-ul-Kevseri, and Mehmed Akif Ersoy, were exiled to Egypt after realizing that the Islamic future they had envisioned for modern Turkey would not come to fruition. Interestingly, given the Ottoman-Islamic intellectual and institutional heritage of the Fatih district, the ideological foundations of Turkish Islamism would eventually emerge a few decades later as a counterpublic discourse to Kemalist secularization. To this end, the Fatih mosque complex and other religious venues would play a significant role in reconfiguring Islamic movements and activism in the district. This section examines the continuing relevance of such spaces in the district in mediating the political culture of Muslims in contemporary Turkey.

The Sunday gathering at Iskender Paşa mosque in the Fatih district, led by Naqshbandi-Khalidi leader Mehmed Zahid Kotku (1897-1980), was considered to be one of the most crucial venues for networking among Muslim intellectuals and activists who sought greater involvement

in the Turkish public sphere and aimed to challenge the Westernization and secularization project of Kemalist elites (Mardin 1991; Yavuz 2003; Arsalan 2021). Unlike many other Sufi figures of the time who took a passive stance regarding involvement in the Turkish public sphere and politics, Kotku advised the followers of his Sufi order to engage in worldly matters to challenge Western hegemony. Building on the intellectual discourse of late Ottoman reformists such as Said Nursi and Mehmed Akif Ersoy, Kotku encouraged constructive engagement with Western technology to improve the material conditions of the Muslim world. This approach eventually gave birth to an intellectual discourse that sought to address the religious, political, and economic challenges faced by conservative Muslims in Turkey. "Kotku transformed the structure of the mosque-based community into a semipolitical movement…It became a center for shaping young people, and many of his students…came to occupy critical positions in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy" (Yavuz 2003, 142).

By the late 1970s, a robust intellectual groundwork was established for the rise of Islamism in the district, significantly impacting the transformation of Turkish politics since then. A native of the district recollected how the role of the Sunday gathering at Iskender Paşa mosque was indispensable in the formation and emergence of Turkish Islamism.

> Back in the 1970s, at the Iskender Paşa Mosque, there used to be a considerable gathering on Sundays due to Mehmed (Kotku) Efendi's sermon. People came for various community matters. The elected representatives of the people also attended. Mehmed Efendi, a charismatic leader and spiritual authority, successfully brought together Islamic intellectuals, activists, and politicians such as Turgut Özal, Necmettin Erbakan, and many other figures affiliated with Islamic movements in Turkey. Kotku attracted a broad spectrum of followers, from the educated middle class to the working class. He always aimed to focus on both the spiritual and material development of the Muslim community. Eventually, the Milli Görüş (National Outlook) movement originated in Fatih, against the oppression Muslims faced in modern Turkey. Within this context, the Iskender Paşa community is important.[4]

The dynamic relationship between the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order and the emergence of Turkish Islamism demonstrates the historical reconfiguration and revival of Sufi brotherhoods and their indispensable role in shaping contemporary Turkish politics and society (Mardin 1991; Karpat 2001). Within this context, it is noteworthy to mention that important political figures who

established the MSP (National Salvation Party, Turkish: Milli Selamet Partisi), the WP (Welfare Party, Turkish: Refah Partisi), and the AKP were affiliated with the Iskender Paşa Community. The first Islamist Turkish Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, and the current President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, were students of Mehmed Zahid Kotku in the 1970s (Yavuz 2003; Silverstein 2011).[5]

Beyond Turkish Islamism's intellectual and ideological development, everyday political and social activism also began to take root in the district. Two groups that were active in everyday politics were MTTB (National Turkish Student Union, Turkish: Milli Türk Talebe Birliği) and Akıncılar (The Raiders). In particular, MTTB, a Turkish nationalist and pan-Islamic movement established in early 20th century Istanbul, regained prominence when its leadership shifted to conservative Muslims active in the district. The shift was enabled by the increasing influence of traditional Naqshbandi and Said Nursi-inspired Nur movements, as well as the translations of Islamist works into Turkish, on the conservative members of MTTB (Bayraktar 2017). One of my interlocutors, the director of an Islamic foundation in the district, and once an active member of MTTB, recollected the role played by the group during the 1970s and 1980s:

> MTTB was a platform that nurtured the first generation of Islamist political activists in Turkey. In the spiritual realm, influential figures such as Sami Ramazanoğlu and Mehmed Zahid Kotku left their mark on MTTB. A large number of WP and AKP representatives were trained by MTTB. It educated high-quality and well-mannered Muslim individuals. In the 1970s and 1980s, the educational activities and programs of MTTB impacted the students residing in the *madrasa*s of Fatih mosque and other dormitories in the district. Movements like Milli Goruş and Akıncılar had MTTB as part of their infrastructure. For example, public intellectuals and activists like Cemil Meriç, Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, and Ali Bulaç grew up with MTTB. After 1965, when MTTB came under a more religious banner, we started using the concept of *ummah* instead of *millet* (nation). In the 1970s, the conflict between the right and left intensified, especially in the Fatih district and around Istanbul University. The Fatih district was under the influence of MTTB, and Akıncılar, the Beyazit district was under the far-right Grey Wolves, whereas the leftists dominated Kumkapı and the Vatan street neighborhoods.[6]

As mentioned above, during the late 1970s, the district and surrounding regions were also drawn into the intense physical clashes and street violence between the radical leftists and nationalist far-right Grey Wolves that had erupted across Turkey. Given the climate of polarization caused by the Cold War, eventually, Islamist groups were also caught in the middle and became the opponents of the leftist groups, though both opposed Western hegemony and American imperialism (Ingleby 2018). This also led to occasional clashes between the two groups. After the coup d'état in 1980, along with the leftist groups, both MTTB and Akıncılar were also outlawed by the military. However, when the primary concern of the Turkish military became the suppression of leftist discourse and movements, the restrictions and surveillance on Islamist groups in the district and elsewhere were relaxed.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Islamist groups were also in transition, informed by international political events such as the Iranian revolution (1979), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989), and the Bosnian civil war (1992-1995). Consequently, different intellectual and ideological responses were articulated by movements sympathetic to Turkish Islamism. Islamic groups with diverse intellectual and political orientations established numerous foundations (*waqf*s), especially in the Fatih district.[7] The eventual consolidation of a broader Islamist counter public in Fatih and other conservative localities in Istanbul led to a larger political mobilization that challenged Kemalist secularism. This provided a fertile ground for Islamist movements to eventually enter formal politics without making significant alliances.

In 1994, the current President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a member of the Islamist WP founded by Necmettin Erbakan, became the mayor of Istanbul. In 1995, the WP won a majority of seats in the national assembly, and Necmettin Erbakan became the first prime minister with an Islamist orientation. However, he was ousted through a soft coup d'état on February 28, 1997, as the military alleged that he and his ruling party were Islamizing the bureaucracy and normalizing the discourse of political Islam in the Turkish public sphere. This event marked a significant shift in Turkish Islamism, as the military intervention compelled Islamists to reconsider the intellectual and pragmatic dimensions of political activism. This, in turn, eventually led to the birth of the moderate conservative Islamist party AKP in 2001. Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül, the AKP promoted a bridge between moderate Islamist and pluralist liberal discourse, contributing to their success in the 2002 national elections (Yavuz 2003). After the success of the AKP in 2002, pro-Islamist groups and foundations run by

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conservative Muslims, both in the districts and elsewhere, greatly benefited from the gradual political reforms in the country that aimed to curb the influence of Kemalist secularism. In addition, the economic liberalism adopted by the AKP spurred dramatic economic growth during the first decade of their rule. The growing political and economic power of the AKP contributed to the creation of a hegemonic conservative Muslim public in the country.

However, by early 2010, the economic liberalization, rapid urbanization, and growing socioeconomic inequalities would eventually raise questions about the success of the AKP. Many Islamist groups that were once radical in their ideological opposition to Kemalist state authoritarianism and socioeconomic inequalities went remarkably silent during this period. This can be understood as a result of Erdogan's negotiations with these groups to adopt a more pragmatic political stance in support of the survival of the AKP and a conservative religious government in power, given that they were constantly under the threat of Kemalist military intervention. Additionally, since many of these groups' leaders were Erdogan's old friends from the early Islamist intellectual movement and network at Iskender Paşa Mosque and other venues in Fatih, he gained their consensus for support. This was especially important as the secular-versus-religious divisions were deeply entrenched in the political discourse of the country. In return, the AKP provided financial support to the foundations run by many of these groups. This mutual agreement is identified as one of the reasons for the absence of critique among Islamist circles against the authoritarian policies of the AKP.[8]

Yet, the heavy-handed response to incidents such as the Gezi Park protests created an increasing number of critics within conservative Muslim circles. This included groups with Islamist orientations as well as groups identified mainly as the "Muslim left" in contemporary Turkey (Baykal 2016; Ingleby 2018; Vicini 2018). They raised concerns about how AKP governance had fully embraced the neoliberal capitalist model and how it had betrayed the ideals of justice and equity rooted in the Islamist political discourse of the 1970s and 1980s. One group that has vehemently critiqued the capitalist absorption of Islamist political discourses and movements in contemporary Turkey is the Anti-Capitalist Muslim platform based in the Fatih district. Ihsan Eliaçık, the founder of the platform and one of the prominent Muslim left intellectuals in contemporary Turkey, is a vehement critic of AKP's political and economic policies. Eliaçık, who came to Istanbul in the 1970s, became a part of various intellectual circles with the Islamist groups that were active in the district. However, he eventually became

disappointed with the failure of Islamists to develop a political discourse critical of the economic and social injustices produced by capitalism. He notes that:

> Right now, most of Turkey is being governed by individuals who were active in Fatih. Many important figures around Erdogan hail from this area. Because Islamism thrived here, and the heart of the Islamists was in Fatih. Now, these Islamist circles have been embracing capitalism with ablution (*abdest*). Islamic activism and services have now lost their real purpose. It's all about securing business and making a profit. The old Islamic Fatih is disappearing. Many of them have also shifted towards right-wing politics. Their agenda has simply become about gaining control of municipalities, political power, and profit-making.[9]

Iliacik's observation resonates with many critics of the AKP who believe that the party's rule over the last twenty years has brought about a significant shift in socioeconomic and religious life in Turkey. However, his critique differs from that of many secular opposition groups' critiques of the AKP, as he draws examples from the Quran to understand how capitalism exacerbates socioeconomic inequalities and injustices. According to him, God's ownership of earth and heavens is a theme often repeated in the Qur'an, and it is as important as the proclamation of the oneness of God. He identifies economic injustice as the root cause of all other social issues, and the prophetic mission was challenging the wealthy elites of Mecca who controlled the religious authority through economic exploitation.[10]

Eliaçık and his platform not only develop an intellectual critique of the AKP but also urge political activism to fight for the cause of economic justice with a broad spectrum of political alliances. This would lead him and his followers to organize the first protest march from the Fatih mosque complex to Taksim Square with the slogan "Property Belongs to Allah" (*Mulk Allahindir*) in 2012. Over the years, their platform has also been active in organizing 'Earth Tables' (*Yeryüzü Sofraları*) in response to the expensive iftar dinners organized by the AKP and other conservative elites. The eventual adoption of Earth Tables as a practice of political and social solidarity by various religious and secular groups has demonstrated "that the Turkish socio-political landscape is open to the proliferation of new articulations between secularized and Islamic values and practices" (Damar 2014, 122).

There are other conservative Muslim groups in Fatih who raise similar concerns about the transformation of Islamic politics over the last two decades. They argue that the increasing

political centralization of the AKP has hindered the freedom they once had to develop a religious critique of contemporary political and socioeconomic issues and protest government policies. The Anti-capitalist Muslims and other groups critical of the AKP have constituted a counterpublic in the district, challenging the failure of mainstream Islamist discourse that has largely been absorbed by the hegemonic neoliberal model of governance and political authoritarianism.

Figure 28: Ihsan Iliaçık (second from the left) and other members of the Anti-Capitalist Muslims marching from Fatih Mosque to Taksim Square on May 1st 2023. Source: https://www.facebook.com/antikapitalmuslim

The Politics of Reclaiming the Ottoman Heritage

The success of the MP (Motherland Party, Turkish: Anavatan Partisi) in 1982 in the first parliamentary elections following the military coup d'état of 1980, resulted in the gradual liberalization of the Turkish economy. Under the banner of the MP, the elected Prime Minister, Turgut Özal, successfully formed a political alliance that included nationalist, conservative, and

center-right interests. This alliance significantly helped Özal to implement the new economic reforms without much opposition (Tuğal 2009; Baykal 2016). The transition from a state-controlled model to a privatization model influenced by neoliberal economic policies had far-reaching impacts on Turkish society's political, cultural, and religious spheres.

The new reforms would give an increasing role to local municipalities in urban governance and open the way for private investment in the business and tourism sectors (Keyder 1999). On the other hand, alongside economic liberalization, the growing influence of Islamist movements in the Turkish public sphere led to the emergence of multiple discourses regarding the restoration of Istanbul's Ottoman-Islamic heritage (Aykaç 2022). This shift resulted in a change in the attitude of the secular ruling elites toward Istanbul, which they had previously neglected in the early decades after the founding of the Turkish Republic due to its irreplaceable Ottoman-Islamic heritage. Caglar Keyder notes that the "liberalism of the 1980s had important political consequences for Istanbul, especially in the changing attitude toward urban autonomy, which led to Istanbul's local government acquiring funds for rebuilding the city" (Keyder 1999, 16). In 1984, after winning the Istanbul Municipal elections, the mayor of Istanbul, Bedrettin Daylan, proposed a strategic plan for the urban redevelopment of Istanbul to transform the neglected Ottoman capital into a global city (Aykaç 2022). The historical peninsula of Istanbul and the Europeanized districts of Pera-Beyoğlu were identified as ideal locations to be transformed into urban centers for tourism, cultural consumption, and entertainment (Bartu 1999). In addition, the business enclaves developed in the Europeanized districts sought to attract foreign investments and capital flows—all these developments aimed to secure Turkey's place in a rapidly globalizing world.

As Istanbul boasts of representing the architectural heritage of the Ottoman and Byzantine empires, promoting the city as a bridge connecting the East and West became increasingly prominent among Republican secularists, nationalists, and conservatives in the 1980s. However, this attitude would change in the mid-1990s when Islamist movements gained greater influence in the public sphere and the municipal governance of Istanbul. The Islamist discourse centered on defining and preserving Istanbul's historical and material legacy of the Ottoman past. They managed to develop a narrative where "Istanbul represents the organic unity and justice of Ottoman (read "Islamic") rule, embodying a pristine purity before the Westernizing reforms of the nineteenth century" (Bartu 1999, 39). This discourse gained

prominence during the Istanbul Municipal election campaign of Recep Tayyip Erdogan under the WP in 1994. One of the central themes of Erdogan's election campaign was the second conquest of Istanbul after it fell into the hands of Westernizing and secularizing Kemalist elites who undermined the centuries-long Ottoman legacy initiated since its first conquest by Mehmed II in 1453 (Baykal 2004).

In the first chapter, we discussed how the built environment of the historical peninsula of Istanbul gradually transformed, beginning with 19th century Ottoman modernization. Later, the Republican vision to secularize the city in the 20th century, as outlined in the plan by French architect Henri Proust, aimed to put an end to the discourse of urbanism informed by Ottoman and Islamic visions. Although Adnan Menderes sought to preserve the Ottoman heritage in the 1950s, his hasty urban development plans erased many historical buildings. During the same period, in response to Republican visions and attempts to secularize the city, Adnan Menderes, along with many conservative Muslims, developed a discourse centered on the second conquest of Istanbul ("fetih etmek"), with the goal of restoring the Ottoman-Islamic character of the city (Öncü 2010; Aykac 2022). The success of the WP in 1994 was identified as the first step toward fulfilling this discourse. While addressing issues related to urban governance, projects that reemphasize the Ottoman-Islamic identity and heritage also became central during the WP's metropolitan mayoralty of the city (Bora 1999). Hence, the politics of reclaiming the Ottoman legacy in contemporary Istanbul has to be understood as "critical interventions in public space, for they constitute grounds for Islamist challenges to cultural heritage policy of the secular Turkish state" (Baykal 2004, 22).

The concrete efforts to restore the Ottoman-Islamic character of Istanbul and other cities in the country accelerated with the success of the AKP in the 2002 national elections. The turn toward neoliberal economic growth relying on tourism and the construction sector has significantly influenced the politics of preserving and managing historical heritage sites in Istanbul over the last two decades. The AKP successfully implemented a drastic urban renewal model, emphasizing the increasing role of municipalities in restoring and managing local historical sites and monuments. In 2005, the approval of the Historic Peninsula Conservation Master Plan granted local municipal and state authorities access to funding to carry out restoration projects throughout the entire region of the historical peninsula (Aykac 2022). The restoration of Ottoman buildings demolished during various periods in the 20th century became

central. In Istanbul, two objectives were fulfilled through these restoration projects: firstly, to preserve the material legacy of the Ottoman past, which had been neglected since the fall of the empire. Secondly, to promote tourism by displaying the cultural heritage of the Ottoman and Byzantine empires. Consequently, Istanbul was selected as the cultural capital of Europe in 2010, along with the German city of Essen and the Hungarian city of Pecs (Bilsel and Arican 2010). The restoration also aimed to musealize specific districts, such as Sultan Ahmed and Eminönü, transforming them into an urban spectacle for global tourism by highlighting the Ottoman legacy. However, the musealization strategies designed to promote tourism often overlooked the Byzantine heritage of the historical peninsula (Aykac 2022).

The current scholarship on Turkey largely identifies the restoration and urban development projects undertaken by AKP as neo-liberal economic policies that serve to advance neo-Ottoman discourse. In addition, both narratives, the Islamists' narrative of how the secularists abandoned the Ottoman heritage and the secularists' narrative that Ottoman-era buildings were restored for the Islamization of urban spaces and profit-making, fail to comprehend the complex process of urban transformation in the late 19th and early 20th century, and its impact upon the Ottoman built environment and everyday life. Since the Fatih district is home to many Ottoman architectures and buildings, it provides much more nuanced insights into how various intersecting aspirations are played out in restoring the city's Ottoman heritage. Furthermore, contrary to the intense musealization and gentrification process experienced by districts such as Sultan Ahmed and Eminönü in the historical peninsula, the continuing presence of community life and religious activities mediated by the Ottoman-era buildings in the Fatih district in the 20th century provides an alternative perspective to the top-down approach of the discourse of Ottoman heritage preservation in contemporary Istanbul.

For instance, besides the urban development plans executed in the 1930s and 1940s by the Republican state, the increasing Anatolian migration to Istanbul in the 1950s and the mass construction of business and housing properties also significantly contributed to the transformation of the built environment of the historical peninsula. Especially starting from the 1950s, as there were no investments in villages and the countryside, people from rural areas in Turkey began to migrate to Istanbul. Nevertheless, as the historical peninsula of Istanbul—the epicenter of trade and commerce—faced challenges like an escalating population, housing crisis, and traffic congestion, then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, who portrayed himself as the

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advocate for conservative immigrants and the guardian of Ottoman-Islamic heritage, initiated the construction of new roads by demolishing old urban structures. Since the Republican state seized the *waqf* properties, numerous Ottoman historical structures had lost their religious functions, making their demolition easier to carry out. In the 1980s, with the liberalization of the Turkish economy, more employment opportunities and resources were created. Istanbul emerged as the epicenter of this economic transformation, triggering another wave of migration to the city.[11]

The migration and new settlement in the historical peninsula resulted in a boom in housing construction projects, often replacing historical buildings and heritage. Simultaneously, the settlement of conservative Turkish and Kurdish immigrant communities from Anatolia contributed to creating a hegemonic Muslim public actively involved in restoring the intellectual and material legacy of the Ottoman past. As observed in the previous chapter, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed increased activity by Muslim civil society platforms in the Fatih district and surrounding regions. The success of the WP in 1994 granted conservative communities greater access to repairing and restoring many Ottoman-era monuments in the historical peninsula. In preserving the intellectual and scholarly legacy of the district, the restoration of Ottoman-era buildings became a crucial medium. This development occurred alongside the continuous efforts of local residents and Sufi orders such as Naqshbandis in the district, who have consistently worked in the Republican period to preserve several mosques and *madrasa* complexes—a topic explored in the last two chapters. For many old residents of the Fatih district, who had witnessed the ruined and abandoned Ottoman buildings for many decades, the restoration projects significantly helped revive the district's Ottoman-Islamic identity. This fact is emphasized by one of the coordinators affiliated with an Islamic foundation, who run their activities at the Darul Hadis *madrasa* building of the Süleymaniye mosque complex,

> Before we moved to this building, it was in ruins and abandoned. It was used by some locals from the neighborhood for illegal activities. Many of the rooms were also used for storage purposes by nearby businesses. In 1999, we were permitted to open our foundation after some restoration works were carried out. Later, one of the rooms was also used by another foundation to facilitate the Hadith lessons provided by a scholar of Hanafi jurisprudence. Other restoration works were carried out over the last few years, and now most of the rooms are used by Ibn Khaldun University.[12]

The interests of the local municipality and the government intersect with the aspirations of numerous conservative communities in Fatih who are engaged in restoration projects. Since the Ottoman-era buildings are predominantly under the governance of the Directorate General of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü), the allocation of activities in these structures is closely linked to electoral support for the AKP. The construction firms undertaking restoration projects are also often closely tied to the AKP. Consequently, communities critical of AKP governance often find it difficult to obtain permission to host their religious or other activities in these restored Ottoman buildings. Furthermore, following the victory of the secular opposition CHP (Republican People's Party, Turkish: Cumhuriyet Halki Partisi) in the 2019 Istanbul Municipal elections after 24 years of AKP rule, various controversies have raised questions about the actual ownership and proper preservation of the Ottoman heritage in the historical peninsula.

For example, in February 2022, a public controversy erupted concerning the protection of the silhouette of the Süleymaniye mosque complex. The Ilim Yayma had been constructing a student dormitory a few streets ahead of the mosque complex, overlooking the Golden Horn River and the Bosphorus Straight. The construction was criticized by many for obstructing the historical silhouette of the Süleymaniye mosque, which had been admired since its construction in the 17th century. This controversy garnered local and national news coverage and sparked intense debates and discussions on social media.[13] According to the Ilim Yayma, the property had been donated to them by the owners on the condition that it be used as a student dormitory. They decided to demolish and reconstruct the building as it was not earthquake-resistant. The reconstruction project was approved by the Istanbul Board of Monuments.

Figure 29: The silhouette of the Süleymaniye mosque complex overshadowed by the construction of the student dormitory.
Source: https://twitter.com/mhrpolat/status/1488913278063587333

As the controversy continued, the property owners asked Ilim Yayma to stop the construction. The current Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoğlu, also promised during a press conference that he would do whatever was necessary to stop the construction and protect the silhouette. Eventually, Ilim Yayma had to stop the construction and make a public statement:

> Süleymaniye is the soul of Istanbul. The reason for the existence of the İlim Yayma Foundation is to protect this spirit. We will not advance any initiative that may harm the spirit of Süleymaniye. We declare that we are ready to make every sacrifice to preserve the silhouette of Süleymaniye.[14]

The controversy provides insight into contemporary Istanbul's intricate and competitive political landscape of heritage restoration and preservation. Furthermore, the incident illustrates that it is not just the preservation of the everyday functionality of Ottoman-era buildings that state and non-state actors are contesting but also the visual representation of the Ottoman built environment. Though AKP lost the Istanbul mayoralty in 2019, their success in the Fatih Municipality has led them to create a renewed interest in reviving the intellectual and cultural legacy of Ottoman heritage in the district. Many Ottoman *madrasa*s, fountains, and other buildings have been restored. In addition, new libraries, parks, and other social services buildings

are also being opened in and around the district. While many in the district appreciate the efforts of the current mayor of Fatih Municipality, Ergün Turan, some view them as publicity work aimed at repeating the AKP's electoral success in the 2024 Istanbul municipal elections. Interestingly, the municipality's investment in reviving the district's Ottoman heritage appeared to be successful, as Ergün Turan won the municipal elections again in March 2024, at a time when the AKP lost many other municipalities in Istanbul and other major cities that they had ruled for many years.

Shifting Cosmopolitanism: Ottoman *Millet* to Turkish *Millet*

On a Thursday afternoon, I took a ferryboat that operates between the Üsküdar and Eyüp districts, which briefly stops at the Fener, Balat, and Hasköy ferry stations. These neighborhoods, situated along the shores of the Haliç River, were famous for the settlement of Orthodox Greek Christian and Jewish communities. During Ottoman times, these ferry stations were busy with Muslim and non-Muslim merchants involved in trade and commerce with the port cities across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. When the boat approached the Fener station, I could see the dome of the 18th century Fener Greek Orthodox High School and the minarets of Yavuz Selim mosque standing out among the apartments of the Fener-Balat neighborhood. After stepping out from the ferryboat, I walked to Hasan's office in Balat, passing by the Fener Orthodox Patriarchate Church of St. George. Since the 17th century, the Church has been the center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, whose leader is revered by the Orthodox Christian population worldwide.

Figure 30: A view of Fener-Balat neighborhoods from the Haliç River. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2020.

Hasan was waiting for me at the office. He said he was taking a break in the afternoon from his daily activity of creating awareness about drug abuse among the schoolchildren in the neighborhood. Hasan is a familiar figure in the neighborhood for his volunteer services. After I introduced my research to him, he said he would share his memories of growing up in the neighborhood. He said that he could recollect both good and bad memories. While preparing the coffee, he started off the conversation by giving me some general information about the Fatih district and his memories of growing up with non-Muslim communities in the Balat neighborhood. He said he had heard from his parents that until the early 1950s, Muslims, Jews, and Christians had a warm relationship in the neighborhood. Festivals and other family events were celebrated communally.

> Even during my childhood, except the religious places of worship, we shared everything in the neighborhood. I remember our next-door neighbor and family friends, Aunt Eliso and brother David. We lived like one family…Unfortunately, in 1955, during September 6, nationalist violence was unleashed against the Greek Christians, while many of them were persecuted in the Pera-Beyoğlu district, in our neighborhood, they were protected by their Muslim neighbors, standing in front of their doors.[15]

Hasan acknowledges that Jews and Christians who had lived in the neighborhood for many centuries were forced to leave for other places where they felt safe. Many of the younger generations in the district I spoke with did not have any experience of living alongside non-Muslims. Many had forgotten that Istanbul once had a significant non-Muslim population that played an essential role in the city's social and economic life. In the nationalistic rhetoric of the early 20th century, Jews, Christians, and Arabs were all considered traitors of the Turkish state. By the second half of the 20th century, many families had to leave for other neighborhoods in Istanbul. Some of them left for Greece and Israel as well.

> After establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, a group of Jewish families had already migrated to regions like Bat Yam. After the 1974 Turkish-Cyprus war, another group of Greek Christian families left from here. Now, only one or two Christian families live in Fener-Balat.[16]

The region that constitutes the neighborhoods of Fener, Balat, and Çarşamba in the historical peninsula adjacent to the Fatih district is also known as the "Little Jerusalem" of Istanbul. The Muslim and non-Muslim places of worship in Fener-Balat remind one of the region's

cosmopolitan religious culture that thrived in the past. While the Ottoman-era mosques, *madrasa*s, shrines, and Sufi lodges continue to inform the everyday life of Muslims, the churches and synagogues of Fener-Balat have largely become touristic sites without any significant presence of the Orthodox Christian and Sephardic Jewish communities.

The emigration of Christian and Jewish communities in the first few decades of the 20th century, due to shifting political developments and the increasing immigration of Anatolian and Kurdish migrants, has drastically changed the religious and ethnic demography of the historical peninsula and the Fatih district. This has also impacted the everyday religious culture of the region. It has been identified that starting from the second half of the 20th century, Istanbul witnessed a Turkification process, with the majority of the population becoming Sunni Muslims (Akpinar 2016; Ors 2018). Immigration also created two kinds of new identities: the old inhabitants of Istanbul, who were urban, cultured, and civilized, and the Anatolian immigrants who recently settled, identified as villagers, uneducated, and uncivilized.[17]

In addition to the impact of political developments and migration, the urban development projects carried out in the 1940s and 1950s played a crucial role in transforming the region's demography. The construction of new roads and boulevards opened the previously closed neighborhood structures, affecting the community-oriented life central to Ottoman urbanism. For instance, the urban development project undertaken during the term of Adnan Menderes, which led to the demolition of housing and commercial properties, significantly impacted both Muslim and non-Muslim communities' settlements. While many Muslims dispossessed during this period could be resettled in other parts of Istanbul, the non-Muslim communities faced challenges in finding new places for relocation (Akpinar 2016, 78).

Consequently, starting in the 1960s, immigration from Anatolia to the historical peninsula significantly altered the once cosmopolitan demographics that had survived for centuries. This shift also reflects how the Ottoman *millet*, a political and socio-religious concept that once embraced ethnic and religious differences, fostering coexistence in urban centers during the Ottoman era, has evolved into a much narrower Turkish *millet*. The new Turkish *millet* primarily considered citizens of Turkic origins and those loyal to Turkish nationalism and national identity as the true heirs of modern Turkey. The displacement of the non-Muslim population, Sunni Muslim immigration, and demographic homogenization since the second half of the 20th century raises questions and complicates the discourse surrounding the restoration of

the cosmopolitan Ottoman legacy on the historical peninsula. This discourse often neglects the memories of heterogeneous religious and ethnic identities and the everyday urbaneness it mediated. Hence, the contemporary initiatives to revive the city's cosmopolitan past and Ottoman neighborhood nostalgia and cosmopolitanism are complex, as they contain silences, absences, and erasures of minority histories and experiences (Mills 2010).

The increasing presence of conservative immigrant communities from other parts of Turkey, which created a division between old Istanbul residents and new residents, also led many old Istanbul residents to migrate from the historical peninsula to newly established districts in other regions of the city. The old residents, who had embraced middle-class values and were well-established in the city, perceived the immigration as an invasion from the provinces. Many old Istanbul residents often engaged in a discourse nostalgic of their experience of co-existing with non-Muslim communities (Ors 2018). They also considered the new immigrants to be disrupting the urban order and cosmopolitan social fabric inherent to the city (Ozet 2019, 47). In addition, many old residents were also urged to leave the historical peninsula in the 1970s due to the violent clashes that took place between right wing and leftist groups in the Fatih district and surrounding regions.[18] These shifts in internal migration have also contributed to reinforcing the conservative identity attributed to the Fatih district.

The economic liberalization and the urban renewal development projects over the last two decades have drastically transformed social life in many districts of the historical peninsula. The boom in the tourism sector since the early 2000s led to an increase in the number of housing properties being converted into boutique hotels, restaurants, and businesses. Many houses in Sultan Ahmed, Beyazit, and Eminönü districts were repurposed into hotels, now famously known as "boutique hotelization."[19] Additionally, as more students started coming to Istanbul University, the locals began renting their old homes and moving to the outskirts and suburbs. New apartment complexes started appearing, cafes, restaurants, and shopping complexes began to multiply, and the demographics of the historical peninsula were further impacted.[20]

The plans to construct new housing projects in the historical peninsula have led to demolishing settlements in many lower-class neighborhoods. In particular, in 2005, a controversial housing project by Fatih municipality was carried out in the Hatice Sultan and Neslişah neighborhoods of the Sulukule district, which led to the displacement of the Roma community who had inhabited the region for centuries. To develop the neighborhood in an

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Ottoman style, the Roma community was forced to relocate to Taşoluk, a neighborhood on the peripheries of Istanbul, away from their home and workplaces. Their displacement highlighted the broader implications of urban gentrification and its impact on poor and marginalized communities in the region (Aykac 2022).

Over the past decade, the settlement of a large number of Syrian refugees in the district has further altered the district's demography and cultural composition. Furthermore, immigrants from South Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African countries have also contributed to the diversification of the Sunni Muslim population. While various economic and political reasons are attributed to their concentration in the district, the built environment and the shared Ottoman and Islamic urban heritage with cities like Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo have been important factors. This was emphasized by an Egyptian resident in the district:

> I chose to live in Fatih because of its religious and cultural atmosphere. You may not find the same environment in other parts of Istanbul. As Arabs, we tend to be very emotional, warm, and social. We might not prioritize the quality of the apartment we live in, but we do value living in a place with mosques nearby, where we can hear the call for the prayer, and where it is easy to meet people and socialize.[21]

The demographic shifts in the district have contributed to the emergence of a new Muslim cosmopolitan culture by fostering interactions and engagements between Turkish and non-Turkish communities. On the other hand, the increasing presence of Syrian immigrants has led to anti-refugee sentiments in Fatih. The hate campaigns against Syrian communities became more pronounced during the 2019 Istanbul Municipal elections when Ilay Aksoy, the Fatih Municipality candidate for the Turkish nationalist IYI party, placed an election banner proclaiming, "I will not surrender Fatih to Syrians." In 2021, amidst rising anti-Syrian and anti-immigrant sentiment in the district, the Fatih municipality enacted a law that restricts the issuance of new permits for renting apartments to non-Turkish residents, following new migration and settlement regulations established by the Directorate General of Migration Management.

Figure 31: The banner put up by the IYI party candidate running for the Fatih municipality elections in 2019. Open Source

In his seminal work, *Fatih-Başakşehir* (2019), Irfat Ozet examines the transformation of the everyday Muslim habitus in the Fatih district and their migration to affluent and modern gated communities, such as Başakşehir. Similarly, many from the Naqshbandi-affiliated Ismail Ağa community, who came to dominate everyday social life in the Çarşamba neighborhood since the 1960s, have been migrating to the Beykoz district since their late spiritual leader, Mahmud Efendi, moved there in the late 2000s. This transformation is attributed to the economic changes of the last two decades and how they impacted the everyday lifestyles and aspirations of many of the conservative Muslim middle class (Ozet 2019). This shift has also coincided with the more recent arrival of many immigrant and refugee communities in Fatih, which provided affordable housing and employment opportunities. One of the residents from Fatih I interviewed observed that the district has always been where poor and middle-class immigrant communities come and settle down.

> Have you heard of the song 'In Fatih, a poor gramophone is played' (Fatihte yoksul bir gramafon çalıyor)? Fatih is still poor, aged, and tired. Many buildings in the district are very old. Many immigrants and refugees live here. It has been like that for many decades. At the same time, Fatih has a spirit that cannot be changed easily due to its historical heritage.[22]

If in the 1960s and 70s, it was Anatolian and Kurdish migrants, today it is the Syrian communities who found Fatih a place of religious and cultural affinity. While urban renewal projects have impacted many districts in the historical peninsula, the Fatih district continues to accommodate community life and plays an important role in producing and mediating new forms of social relations, practices and urban norms, a topic we will explore in the next section.

Negotiating Everyday Urbanities

On Friday afternoons, at the Fatih mosque complex, you can see hundreds of people dispersing through different gates after the noon congregational prayer. If you follow some of them exiting through the west gate, you arrive at a small market called Malta market. Right after leaving the west gate, on the left side, you will see people in a queue gathered in front of a Syrian sweet store famous for its *kunefe*. The stores selling ground Levantine coffee, shawarma and falafel restaurants, confectionary and perfume stores owned by Syrians have given the Malta an aura of the old markets of downtown Cairo, Aleppo, or Damascus. The signboards of many stores in the market are written in Arabic. The Malta market is now popularly known as 'Little Damascus' or 'Damascus Bazar'.

Figure 32: The crowd outside the Syrian sweet store in the Malta market next to the Fatih mosque. Fawaz Abdul Salam, 2021.

Exiting Fevzipaşa Street from Little Damascus, you will find yourself amidst a crowd of visitors from various parts of Istanbul. The complete silence you experience inside the mosque, the mausoleum of Mehmed II, or the cemetery is replaced by the noise of car traffic and pedestrians' chatter. Fevzipaşa Street runs parallel to the mosque complex and terminates at the Byzantine Theodosian Wall. As you walk along one side of the street, you pass by jewelry stores, bridal dress boutiques, perfume shops, beauty salons, renowned Turkish brands offering Islamic clothing, travel agencies organizing pilgrimages to Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, and busy coffee shops and restaurants serving their customers. A stroll through Fevzipaşa Street on the weekends provide a flaneur-like experience similar to walking down Istiklal Street in the Europeanized Pera-Beyoglu district. Over the last few decades, Fevzipaşa Street, has evolved into a busy locality that mediates the religious, political, and economic interests of the conservative Muslim community. The observation of everyday social life and interactions with

the residents who live in the neighborhoods in and around Fevzipaşa Street in the district offers a broad glimpse into the changing nature of everyday Muslim urbanity in contemporary Turkey.

Identified in the past as a center of Islamic activism with numerous Islamic *waqf*s, publication houses, and student hostels, the Fatih district has been transforming into a hub for entertainment and consumerism, thereby altering its conservative religious identity. For instance, Atpazar, located a few blocks from the Fatih mosque complex, is filled with numerous cafes and serves as a meeting point for young Muslim conservative males and females seeking leisure, entertainment, and socialization. While cafe culture is not new to Istanbul, places like Atpazar, offering a non-alcoholic alternative space for Muslim youth to socialize with tea, coffee, and hookah, illustrate how everyday life in the district is navigating the challenges posed by the neoliberal globalization of Turkish society over the past few decades.

In the 20th century, Fatih was envisioned and constructed as a place representing the values and ideals of Ottoman and Islamic urbanities. As we have seen in the first chapter, the renowned Turkish poet and novelist Payami Safa's famous novel, *Fatih-Harbiye*, portrayed Fatih as a location that retained a conservative religious and cultural identity, albeit in ruins. In contrast, the Harbiye district was depicted as European, modern, secular, and materially developed. The novel's characters reflected diverse cultural sensibilities and illustrate the constant clash between these sensibilities while negotiating the everyday realities of the two distinct lifeworlds. By juxtaposing the built environment, the material culture, and the everyday life of both districts, the author portrayed how two forms of distinctive urbanities co-existed in Istanbul in the early 20th century.[23] Does this dichotomous perception of spaces and identities in Istanbul still hold?

The transformation of everyday social life and material culture in the conservative districts of the city due to migration, political and economic shifts, and urban development projects has gradually blurred the boundaries between religious versus secular or spiritual versus material. The Fatih district is an illustrative example of how Muslim spatiality has changed within the context of Istanbul's urban transformation in the 20th century. The diversification of lifeworlds and the reconfiguration of Muslim urbanity over the last few decades, mediated by religion, politics, and the economy, are topics of discussion and debate in the district. While some view this shift as transformative and positive for the revival of an Islamic lifestyle, others believe that the top-down political and economic approach of the AKP in regulating Muslim

urban life has impacted the autonomy of various Islamic movements and communities. According to them, these developments have also been detrimental to preserving the moral and ethical foundations of Islam in everyday urban life.

Furkan, who was born and raised in Fatih, noted the changes in the district's conservative identity and everyday life in Fatih. He is an active member of Anadolu Gençlik Vakfı, a foundation affiliated with the Islamist Saadet Party, which resisted the AKP's intellectual and political shift towards a more pragmatically oriented moderate Islamism in the early 2000s. He shared that his colleagues in the office where he works give special consideration to him and other colleagues from Fatih. When there are discussions on matters related to religion, his co-workers would say they must seek the advice of people from Fatih, as they live in the socio-religious center of Istanbul. However, this attitude and perception are gradually changing as Fatih has transformed into a space of consumption and entertainment.[24]

In the 1990s, Fatih boasted of being an ideal space for conservative Muslims who resisted the increasing influence of shopping malls and new modes of consumer culture in the city. The clothing stores, restaurants, Islamic banks, and other enterprises in the district, owned mainly by conservative Muslims, were more cautious and slow to experiment with changing lifestyles and market culture after Turkey's integration into the global economy (Navaro-Yashin 2002).[25] However, some of my interlocutors remarked that the growth of many business enterprises from Fatih into the national and global capitalist market has gradually led them to compromise with the Islamic principles and ethics they once sought to uphold.[26]

The scholarship on Turkey that studied Islamic revivalism has identified that the political and economic transformations have provided a way for an emergent conservative Muslim middle-class subjectivity, which constantly negotiates for its representation politically and socially (White 2002; Özyürek 2006). The new visibility that appeared with the confluence of Islamic lifestyles and the making of pious spaces to produce religious sensitivities has challenged the normative secular urban imaginaries of Turkish modernity (Göle 2002; Navaro-Yashin 2002). Turkish sociologist Nilofer Göle notes that "the Islamic public display recuperates a phenomenon that has been repressed by secularism. This public display attempts to reconstruct the social link between subjectivity and public space through the reintroduction of religious self-fashionings, performances, and rituals" (Göle 2002, 189).

As the Fatih district represents an important locality in the shift of Islamic lifestyles over the last two decades, there have been diverse attitudes and approaches to it. A public intellectual from the district, Abdurrahman Arsalan, notes that Fatih is a good example of how a new form of representation of religion has taken the stage in the public sphere. This representation of Islam through consumption and entertainment has resulted in an increasing appearance of fashioned religious symbols in public life but less interest in following and observing religious practices, ethics, and principles.[27] Many other interlocutors echoed similar observations regarding the change in everyday habitus rooted in Ottoman and Islamic urban traditions. They identify this as a problem wherein, as Muslims gained access to political power and experienced economic mobility, they began to adapt their religion to new requirements and conditions.

> Our social relationships and practices should be influenced by religion. Once we lose that influence, capitalism can easily exploit us. If our ethics are guided by religion, we will not buy more than one car for our needs, even if we have a lot of money. Have I mentioned the open iftar events in Istanbul? In reality, a Muslim should not eat on the street. My mother never allowed me to go out with a slice of bread.[28]

Another interlocutor drew attention to how the class mobility of Muslims has impacted the individual as well as the collective religious responsibility in the public sphere.

> There is moral and economic corruption. For example, in municipalities, bribery or commission is forbidden. My friends work in the Fatih municipality. When a paper has to be approved by the municipality, some of them ask for a commission. Change affects everything – one's way of life, how one sits, how one stands, everything. Ahmed Davutoğlu (former prime minister) said interest-based loans should increase. In fact, from an Islamic viewpoint, it is a problematic statement. The people started to become entirely dependent on the state and their interpretation of Islam. You witness all these changes in Fatih. In the past, you could tell when it was Ramadan in Fatih. Most of the restaurants and cafes used to be closed, and a spiritual atmosphere existed. Now, during Ramadan, all are open. Ramadan has turned into a month of consumption and entertainment.[29]

Simultaneously, the changes in everyday Muslim urban life are also influenced by demographic and cultural shifts. The settlement of Syrian and other immigrant communities has diversified the everyday urban landscape of Fatih. Despite the growing anti-immigrant rhetoric in contemporary Turkey, the increasing presence of Syrian communities in the district has also generated tensions

over cultural differences and lifestyles. While historically rooted antagonism against Arabs could be considered as one reason for this tension, class differences also often lead to stereotypes against them. For instance, Furkan remarked, "the Syrians largely own the stores and come for shopping on Malta Street they talk loudly and are not disciplined. However, there are also upper-class Syrians who mostly settled around Akşemsettin Street. You cannot distinguish them from the Turkish population in the neighborhood. They are very silent and polite."[30] This observation replicates the attitude of old Istanbul residents when confronted with the Anatolian and Kurdish immigrants to the district in the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, some locals believe that Syrians have contributed to making Fatih a vibrant place. A jewelry owner in Fatih observed that:

> Sometimes, we don't get along with their culture. However, if we criticize them, we should think about Turkish immigrants in Germany. Malta wasn't a vibrant marketplace before the Syrians. There was only a hardware store, a painter, and a fisherman. Now, it has become a busy trading center. My friend has a shop there, and he said sixty percent of his customers are Syrians. Syrians have revived the Malta market.[31]

Considering the impact of recurring migration and the demographic changes in the Fatih district and other regions of Istanbul over the last few decades, contestations over every day urban norms, ethics, and values are inevitable. As explored in the previous sections, contemporary globalization, urbanization, and trans-local and transnational migration have transformed Istanbul into a cosmopolitan city with multiple lifeworlds. This change is significant in many ways as it reflects the urban diversity of Istanbul before it was transformed from a multi-religious and multicultural Ottoman capital into a largely homogenous Turkish urban culture in the 20th century. The diverse attitudes to these changes that we have seen above experienced by the inhabitants of the Fatih district provide a glimpse into how everyday urbanities are contested. In addition, it also paves the way for many to imagine and aspire to new modes of local urban discourses. Such local discourses are significant in resisting the large-scale urban development projects that have erased everyday community life in many districts of contemporary Istanbul. Here, the continuing relevance of the Ottoman architectural and intellectual heritage of the Fatih district stands as a strong reference point to the everyday sensibilities, aspirations, and belongingness that are shared and contested by the district's inhabitants.

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Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to comprehend how the Ottoman-Islamic heritage of the Fatih district serves as a medium for expressing various forms of political, religious, and cultural belonging, as well as aspirations in everyday urban life. The changing political, economic, and material conditions over the last few decades have diversified the Muslim public, giving rise to competing discourses on the appropriate forms of political and socio-religious activism and engagement in the district. While the intellectual heritage of the district significantly informed the emergence of the Islamist movement that challenged the Kemalist secularization of the Turkish public sphere, the district has also witnessed the emergence of platforms such as Anti-Capitalist Muslims that critically engage with the neoliberal absorption of conservative Muslim politics in contemporary Turkey. The chapter also proposes moving beyond a top-down instrumental approach that focuses solely on how political elites determine the nature of Muslim urban life in contemporary Istanbul. Instead, by taking into consideration shifting demography and migration, the chapter demonstrates how intersecting forms of practices and lifestyles have shaped the everyday urbanities of communities living in the Fatih district.

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[1] Haber Turk. 2023. "Antikapitalist Müslüman Gençler 1 Mayıs'ta." Accessed October 30, 2023. https://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/875433-antikapitalist-musluman-gencler-1-mayista.

[2] A news report published after the meeting captures the religious fervor and experience of the Muslim public in Istanbul:

> After yesterday's gathering, everyone talked about the value of jihad and the enthusiasm within their souls. This morning, while I was eavesdropping on a story of jihad being shared among the passengers on a ferry, I felt as though I was listening to a beautiful anthem. [...] Even as I write, I am moved. The person telling the story said, "Yesterday, I returned home from the Fatih Mosque. The view before me had instilled a profound sense of heroism. During the night, I brought a weapon that my old grandfather had left behind. It's a valuable sword. I slowly drew it from its sheath. Our ancestors attached great importance to swords. After the Surah Al-Fatiha, there is an inscribed Hadith. [...] The Hadith states that the fire of hell does not touch the feet of the soldier who remains within his own lands for jihad. [...] This is a true sword of jihad! [...] Now, spiritually, the nation has taken up that sword alongside its ancestors. We will be victorious" (quoted in Kol 2017, 88).

[3] Consequently, at the end of the War of Independence, Mustafa Kemal and his close associates affiliated with the CUP and the Young Turk movement successfully secured political power in Ankara to establish the Turkish Republic. The abolition of the caliphate in 1923 aimed not only to end the centuries-long Ottoman authority but also to restrict Islamic activism and movements centered in Istanbul and to redefine the role of religion in the Turkish public sphere.

[4] Ramazan, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, June 18, 2021.

[5] If Mehmed Zahid Kotku was the spiritual organizer of this newly emerging Islamist discourse, Necmettin Erbakan played an important role in the pragmatic translation of this discourse into the Turkish political landscape. Through the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi), he envisioned integrating religious, cultural, ethnic, and identities to form a broader political alliance in Turkish society. In addition, he also emphasized how medium-scale domestic business enterprises and strengthening the defense industry could support the national economy. While criticizing Western hegemony, Erbakan also proposed ideas for reconciling Islam with modernity. Hence, the movement problematized the Kemalist project of secularization and offered Islamically-rooted solutions to achieve economic and social justice (Yavuz 2003; Arsalan 2019).

[6] Huseyin, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, September 17, 2021.

[7] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, September 24, 2021, Istanbul.

[8] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, September 24, 2021, Istanbul.

[9] Ihsan Eliaçık, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, June 26, 2021.

[10] Iliacik Interview.

[11] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, October 6, 2021, Istanbul.

[12] Yusuf, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, July 25, 2021.

[13] The controversy gained public attention when the General Secretary of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Mahir Polat, tweeted: "This structure rising in front of Süleymaniye is the new building of the İlim Yayma Foundation. In April 2019, the IBB (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) of the time made the project, got it approved by the conservation board and started construction. Even though it is authorized, this is a persecution against a treasure like the silhouette of the Süleymaniye Mosque." Accessed November 10, 2023. https://twitter.com/mhrpolat/status/1488913278063587333/photo/2.

[14] Ilim Yayma Vakfi. 2022. "Public Announcement ("Kamuoyuna Duyuru")." Accessed November 10, 2023. https://twitter.com/ilimyaymavakfi/status/1490287848628625411/photo/1.

[15] Hasan, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, October 20, 2021.

[16] Hasan Interview.

[17] During the Ottoman period, neighborhoods were largely defined by religious and ethnic identities, where each maintained a culture specific to their locality. As discussed in the first chapter, the forced migration during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries aimed at maintaining the socio-economic balance of the city from Anatolian regions, also led to the formation of neighborhoods based on regional identities. The migration reflected the apparition of new lifestyles and local cultures, which in turn enriched the cosmopolitan character of the historical peninsula.

[18] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, October 6, 2021, Istanbul.

[19] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, June 9, 2021, Istanbul.

[20] Fawaz Abdul Salam, Field Notes, October 6, 2021, Istanbul.

[21] Ahmad, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 11, 2021.

[22] Semih, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, November 3, 2021.

[23] The dichotomous perception of two life worlds, religious versus secular, not only proved to be true in the 20th century in the case of Fatih and Harbiye but also in many other districts and neighborhoods in Istanbul. We can observe similar themes in the fiction written in the late 19th century, a period when Ottoman modernization began to influence the material culture and the everyday habitus of Istanbul's residents. For example, the famous novelist and bureaucrat Ahmed Midhat Efendi's work, Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi, (*Felatun'le Rakim Efendi*) contrasts two identities shaped by the Ottoman modernization and changing urban culture in the 19th century Istanbul. In the novel, Felatun is depicted as the son of a father who was drawn to the *alafranga* discourse and moved from the traditional district of Üsküdar to Beyoğlu. Growing up in Beyoğlu, Felatun is enticed by European goods and entertainment, leading an extravagant and purposeless life. On the other hand, Rakim Efendi, who was raised in a traditional Beyoğlu neighborhood, is characterized by Midhat Efendi as a man of morality and ethics. He knows how to responsibly combine Ottoman-Islamic values with Western technological progress.

[24] Furkan, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, June 9, 2021.

[25] Yael Navaro-Yashin's ethnography on the introduction of shopping malls in 1990s notes that they "were received in Turkey through the prism of a polarized politics of culture between secularists and Islamists, as played out in the domain of public life. Those secularists who might otherwise have criticized the advent of a new style of consumerism found themselves defending the malls visa-a-vis an Islamist critique. Likewise, well of Islamists who wanted to arrange their life habits to include the new malls ended up taking positions against them in their public discourses (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 92-93).

[26] Field Notes, Fawaz Abdul Salam, June 9, 2021, Istanbul.

[27] Abdurrahman, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, 13 July, 2021.

[28] Mustafa, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, October 6, 2021.

[29] Omer, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, August 24, 2021.

[30] Furkan, Interview.

[31] Sezgin, Interviewed by Fawaz Abdul Salam, Istanbul, August 14, 2021.

Conclusion

When I embarked on this project, my initial interest consisted of examining how the Fatih district mediates diverse spatial practices with a primary focus on the ethnography of Islamic movements in the district. However, further research into Ottoman architecture and the built environment revealed that contemporary space-making practices are rooted in historical institutional and intellectual discourses configured in the district. This led me toward a historical-sociological approach to better understand the role of material culture in mediating diverse forms of religious aspirations and belonging in the city. Consequently, this approach has also helped in rethinking the discussion centered on the 'revival' of Islam in Turkey, which has emerged to challenge Kemalist secularism in the last few decades. Additionally, archival research and fieldwork enabled me to comprehend the transformation of Fatih district's Ottoman-Islamic heritage as a window into the reconfiguration of Muslim urban life in 20th century Istanbul.

Shahzad Bashir in his recent work *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (2022) notes that "Islam is made of objects and narratives, moving and put into patterns, that converge on vanishing points. Pursued from evidence in time and space, Islam is an abstraction that we posit through reflecting on a vast net of interconnected traces. These traces project understandings of time that appear different depending on the vantage from which they are seen." For Bashir, the temporal and spatial dimensions of Islam are traceable through both discursive and material elements, enabling one to perceive the heterogenous experiences and belongingness of Muslims across different geographies. Such an inquiry helps to understand how multiple articulations of Islam in the present are in conversation with the historically rooted intellectual, institutional and material heritage. This dissertation arrives at a similar understanding by examining how the Ottoman-era built environment of the Fatih district became a significant force in shaping diverse forms of belonging to Islam. By exploring the historical configuration of an Ottoman-built environment in the Fatih district, firstly in Chapter 1, I examined how this built environment constituted the socio-religious institutions and spaces of the district. The Ottoman architectural visions and practices implemented in constructing various monumental religious complexes in the district reflected the religious and cultural interconnectivity and exchange of the early modern empires. In particular, the construction of the Fatih *Külliye* represented this cosmopolitan vision and became a foundational moment in instituting an Ottoman-Islamic framework for a new mode of urbanism in the city. Here, the

concept and practice of *waqf* played an important role not only in urbanizing the city but also in configuring the institutions of Islamic knowledge production and learning, religious authority and hierarchies, and in shaping the ethics, values, and norms of Ottoman urbanity. In response to the hegemonic European political and cultural domination across the globe, the *Tanzimat* reforms initiated by the Ottomans state would significantly affect the Ottoman built environment of the city. The new urban governance policies would not only significantly impact the physical organization of the city, but would also gradually reconfigure the role and functions of socio-religious institutions and authorities and their role in shaping everyday urbanities.

While Republican secularization in the early 20th century aimed to transform the Ottoman-Islamic heritage of Istanbul into a modern and secular city through the confiscation of *waqf* properties and the restriction of religious life in the public sphere, the Fatih district and its built environment resisted many of these changes due to the irreplaceable Ottoman institutional, intellectual and material heritage. Since the *Tanzimat* era, the centralization attempts of the Ottoman state reinforced the conservative identity of the district in opposition to Europeanized districts such as Pera-Beyoğlu. In addition, the district became a haven for many Muslim scholars who had migrated from the Ottoman peripheries during its political and territorial disintegration. This has led to not only reinforcing the religious scholarly identity of the district but also broadening the functions of the scholarly class. Chapter 2 specifically examined this transformation and explored multiple intellectual discourses articulated by the heterogeneous intellectual class of the district. Instead of approaching the traditional *'ulama'* versus modernist or secularist dichotomy, the chapter looked at how different scholarly circles and intellectual networks broadened and expanded the '*ulama'* identity of the district. Drawing on an ethnography of the Fatih Cemetery complex and biographies of the intellectual community in the Fatih district, this chapter explored how the scholarly class diversified into traditional '*ulama,*' Sufi adepts, academics, public intellectuals, poets, and calligraphers. As per the famous Ottoman-Turkish saying often recollected by the interlocutors from the field, "The spirit of a space is determined by the people who inhabit there" (*Şerefu'l mekân bi'l mekin*), the intellectual spirit of Fatih is preserved by the memory of the aforementioned intellectual community of diverse backgrounds.

*Waqf*s played an indispensable role in supporting the development of institutions for Islamic learning and knowledge transmission. Particularly since the medieval period, the *waqf*

has operated as a meta-institutional infrastructure in Muslim societies, supporting networking and exchange among the '*ulama*', Sufi communities and in enhancing long-distance trade. In Istanbul and other Ottoman cities, *waqf* properties crucially supported the operation of socio-religious institutions and the bottom-up urbanization of the Ottoman subjects. Despite the Ottoman centralization and Republican confiscation of *waqf* properties, the survival of a large number of *waqf* properties in Fatih district resulted in the retrieval of educational activities rooted in Ottoman-Islamic intellectual discourses by various Muslim civil society organizations. The resurgence of discourse on Ottoman *waqf*s in contemporary Turkey by both state and non-state actors is largely understood as resulting from the political and economic shifts the nation has witnessed since the 1980s. In addition, in the last two decades, the neoliberal and neo-Ottoman discourse of the ruling AKP has been recognized as instrumental in portraying Muslim civil society organizations as the true representatives of the Ottoman-era *waqf* discourse and philanthropic activities. However, by examining the multifaceted intentions and motivations that inform the Islamic educational activities of different individuals and civil society organizations in the Fatih district, Chapter 3 explored how the historical memory of *waqf*s is being retrieved by various actors in the district. Without dismissing the impact of top-down political projects on the transformation of Muslim civil society organizations, the chapter also argued that the intellectual and institutional heritage of the Ottoman built environment in the district plays an important role in retrieving the historical memory of *waqf* as a concept and practice.

Finally, in Chapter 4, the dissertation explored how the Fatih district is an important locality that provides a broader understanding of the diversification of Muslim publics in 20th century Istanbul. If the district became the epicenter of Turkish Islamist activism since the 1970s as a counterpublic to Kemalist secularism, the eventual transformation and incorporation of the mainstream Islamist movement into the neoliberal capitalistic logic after ascending to state power has produced critical Muslim counterpublics. Specifically, the emergence of platforms like Anti-Capitalist Muslims that critique the AKP's political authoritarianism and neoliberal urban governance has complicated the secularism versus Islamism binary that has long dominated Turkish political culture since the 1950s. The diversification of Muslim publics in the last few decades has also produced competing lifestyles, religious aspirations, and a sense of belonging in the district. While many in the district recognize the positive effect of these political and economic transformations in enabling conservative Muslims to become an active part of the

Turkish public sphere, others consider this transformation to have sacrificed the practice of Islamic ethics and values in public and private life. They view the transformation of Fatih into a center of entertainment and consumption as an excellent example of how Muslims have compromised with the neoliberal globalization of Turkish society.

In conclusion, the forces of modernization, secularization, and currently, globalization, have led to processes of social differentiation, fragmentation, and the formation of new religious discourses, identities and spaces in multiple ways. The current revival of Muslim discourses and practices in the public spheres and spaces of the Muslim world and the attendant complexities "reflec[t] an unfinished and particularly conflict-ridden process of transposing a religious and civilizational legacy into a modern context" (Arnason et al. 2007, 15). Hence, instead of reducing the Islamic 'revival' and space-making practices exclusively to the political and economic transformation of Turkey over the last few decades, throughout this dissertation, I have argued that exploring the historical and sociological reconfiguration of Islam in the 20th century provides us with a better understanding of the transformation of urban life in Muslim societies. Here, the built environment of Fatih district provided an important conceptual and empirical framework to apprehend the micro and macro transformation of Muslim lifeworlds in contemporary Turkey.

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