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Repeating and replicating Sinan throughout the ages: continuity, nostalgia, or aesthetic consensus?

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Abstract

After his death in 1588, the architectural norms established during the time of Sinan largely persisted until the 1730s. The eighteenth century established its own aesthetic canons putting together local and Western forms. Throughout the nineteenth century, a long 'interludium' took place, while the Ottoman architects were experimenting with new forms deriving mostly from foreign (or intercultural) sources. With the emergence of a proto-nationalistic architectural Romanticism at the beginning of the twentieth century, the forms of the so-called Classical Age were included once again in the vocabulary of the late-Ottoman and early Republican architects. But it was only in 1945, more than two decades after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 that the references to the age of Sinan gained a new momentum, and more importantly, a more precise direction. Over the last seven decades, an almost massive production of replicas has transformed Sinan into into a sort of national territory marker all over the country, permeating even the most remote contexts where he never set foot. What was different, then, between these historical phases, and what has been happening from 1945 to our day? For how long was Sinan's direct influence active, and how did it dissipate? Are the replicas of the last decades copies with their own historicity? This essay will try to explore the multiple afterlives of Sinan's forms focusing on the mosque architecture.

Keywords

Post-Sinan Ottoman architecture, Revivalism, Architecture and ideology, Ottoman and Republican Turkey

On Sinan's legacy, once again

One might think that (almost) everything has been said about Sinan (c. 1488/1490-1588), the chief imperial architect of the Sublime Porte from 1539 to his death. Recent studies have focused not

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I am indebted: to Prof. Maurizio Ricci for the invitation and enthusiastic support of my research, to Prof. Aras Neftçi and to Prof. Uğur Tanyeli for the extensive discussions we shared on Sinan, which greatly helped me while preparing this paper. On Sinan and his legacy see, among others, Necipoğlu (2007 and 2005), Kuban (1987 and 2007 pp. 249-465), and Tanyeli (2020).

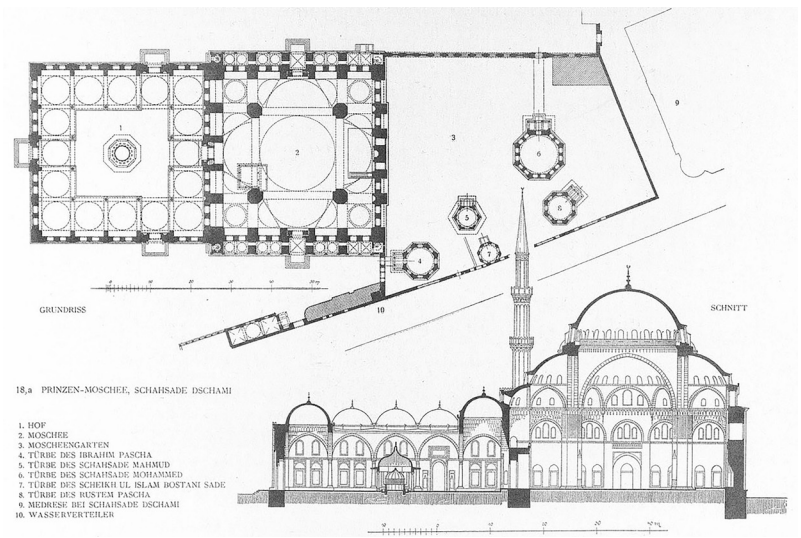
only on his work but also on the historiographical process by which he was rendered a national 'culture hero' throughout the republican period in Turkey (1923-to our day). His legacy on later Ottoman architects appears to be already discussed as well; however, as this essay will try to demonstrate, many aspects of this latter issue still await proper attention.

With no doubt, any Ottoman or pre-Ottoman architect operating in the area after the arrival of the Turkic tribes in Asia Minor in the eleventh century has enjoyed a comparable reputation during his lifetime nor a similar posthumous critical fortune. Even though during the last century similar culture heroes were created also in other former Ottoman countries neighboring Turkey, such as Nikola Fichev (1800-1881) in Bulgaria (Metin 2022a, pp. 315-317), the case of Sinan seems incomparably more far-reaching not only from the point of view of the vastity of the existing literature but at the same time from that of the material consequences of his legacy.[1]

Every new study on Sinan requires first a valid and solid justification. This essay will attempt to examine how after 1588 his fellow compatriots, the late-Ottoman and the republican architects in Turkey have dealt with the forms of his age. And my justification is the following: a definitive comprehension is yet to emerge regarding the nuanced implications of replicating, reimagining, reproposing or potentially repurposing Sinan's architecture over successive centuries and the intricate mechanisms that facilitated these processes within the realm of architectural composition. The state of art has quite thoroughly explored the developments over the past eighty years, which will be the subject of the last paragraph of this study; however, a more far-looking new consideration may prove instrumental for a better understanding of the matter in its multilayered and complex historical phases as well as its nuanced implications. Our focus will be exclusively directed towards mosques, as they encapsulate the comprehensive architectural discourse of each era, encompassing aspects such as the arrangement of the spaces, structural elements, decorative motifs, but also ideological underpinnings, socio-political significance, and urban approach, within their design and construction.

[1] Among the most relevant examples are Toros Toramanian (1864-1934) for the Armenian cultural sphere and Turgut Cansever (1921-2009) for Turkey. The former, having appeared even on the stamps of the Republic of Armenia (2014), like did Nikola Fichev and Sinan in their respective countries, seems an extremely interesting personality for those interested in this kind of biographical studies from a sociocultural and political framework of the legacy. On Toramanian see Baladian (2002), whereas on Cansever, who still has not gained a comparable national veneration despite his vast recognition as a sort of late culture hero by many, the studies of Uğur Tanyeli are revealing (Tanyeli 2001).

For this purpose, our point of departure needs to be necessarily quite remote. First, a fundamental question about immediate recognition arises: was Sinan's work [Fig. 1] as quickly influential on subsequent constructions [Fig. 2] as that of his contemporaries Michelangelo and Palladio? It goes without saying that the formal conventions established during the prolific sixteenth century cannot be credited only to Sinan's own inventiveness, nor the continuity of those after the death of the chief imperial architect can be considered as mere copying. At this point a distinction – which is surely not easy to set up – is necessary between the general persistence of already established rules (whether by Sinan or not) and the act of deliberately citing his work in recognition of its architectural, urban, aesthetic, and structural qualities, even though in some instances this latter might result excessively 'faithful' to the references. I believe that the main (if not the only) criteria of distinction to be identified are the intentionality of the operation of citing and the clear manifestation of the sources in search of an intellectual recognition.



1. Plan and section of the Şehzade Mosque in Istanbul (1543-1548) (Gurlitt 1912, plate 18a).

One might associate the persistence of already established aesthetic and formal canons to a sort of inertia or resistance against linguistic renewal, particularly when it endures for several decades and leads to

a situation where later architects become rather 'anonymous'.[2] This appears to be the case in the Ottoman context, at least in the imperial capital. Many scholars concur that after 1588, local architects entered a phase of stagnation in terms of innovation, remaining overshadowed by the legacy of Sinan. To better understand this situation, a quick comparison with the Italian context, where we also find numerous architects who worked *alla maniera* (in the manner) of the masters preceding them, can be useful. Giacomo Della Porta certainly followed the path opened by Michelangelo, often directly incorporating his distinct architectural elements (such as windows, among many others). However, this emulation does not seem to have negatively impacted Della Porta's neither professional success nor later critical acclaim. Conversely, the works of Davud Ağa and Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa, both of whom became chief imperial architects (Kuban 2007, pp. 351-353), are rather difficult to distinguish from that of their master Sinan, and not only for laypersons. The lack of information about these figures could be explained by the general scarcity of evidence regarding architect biographies in the Ottoman sphere. Nevertheless, it is challenging to argue that they ever achieved the same level of recognition as their predecessor, particularly when considering the modest quantity of their works. They certainly did not attain a comparable level of popularity among architectural historians either. These aspects constitute major differences with the Italian context, where the so-called Mannerism was profoundly appreciated both in its time and still after the establishment of Art History as a well-codified field of study.

According to most scholars, this belated Ottoman "Classicism" lasted until the 1730s[3]. However, from the 1660s onwards certain buildings in the capital began exhibiting a subtle yet significant innovation. As Tanyeli underscored, the New Mosque (Yeni Cami) in Eminönü displays an unprecedented complexity in its external development (Tanyeli 2015, pp. 312-315), a topic to which I shall turn later [Fig. 3]. More interestingly, in some of the secondary buildings which shape a vast complex around the mosque, such as the sultanic pavilion *(ḳaṣr-ı hümāyūn)* and the elementary school *(ṣıbyān mektebi)*, a new building scheme was formulated.[4] With no doubt, these were important novel-

[2] See, among others, Kuban (2007, pp. 381-393).

[3] Despite being obviously very questionable, Classical and Classicism in the Ottoman context mean, according to the longstanding scholarly parlance, the prolific season which started around mid-fifteenth century and lasted till around the eighteenth century. See for instance Kuban (2007, pp. 381-392). Applied to the Ottoman architecture, these terms by no means imply their established connotation in the Western context.

[4] In both cases, the structure functions as a city gate, facilitated by a monumental vaulted public passage that occupies the central area of the ground level see Metin (2022c), pp. 182-184. this architectural configuration, frequently repeated during the eighteenth century, represents an Ottoman adaptation of the triumphal arch scheme. This

ties; however, they were limited to volumetric and urban arrangements. On the other hand, the vocabulary of the architects (from both formal and planimetric points of view) appeared to remain largely unchanged until the so-called Tulip Age, after which it was entirely supplanted by a Westernizing repertoire: a transformation that began most concretely in the 1740s and was later labeled as the Ottoman Baroque.[5]

Learning from Sinan

Davud Ağa, who inherited the role of chief imperial architect immediately after his master, managed to complete only middle and minor scale buildings. The architect passed away just a few months after the beginning of the aforementioned New Mosque project in Eminönü [Fig. 3], and the construction got interrupted in 1603 when the patron, the queen mother Safiye Sultan, was sent to the Old Palace following the enthronement of Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617)[6]. Only in 1661 a second phase of construction was initiated by another powerful sultana, Turhan Hadice (or Hatice). The building was completed under her patronage towards the end of 1664, and finally inaugurated in 1665. Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa's best-known work was the only mosque of monumental dimensions in the capital to be built by a sultan in his own name between Sinan's death and the construction of the Nuruosmaniye Complex (1748-1755) [Fig. 2]. Commissioned by Ahmed I and better known as Blue Mosque, it was built between 1609 and 1617. Both mosques prominently adhered to the architectural principles set forth by Sinan (Kuban 2007, pp. 361-380; Düzenli 2015, pp. 224-232 and 237-240). A quick analysis reveals how the planimetric and volumetric arrangements remained faithful to that of the Şehzade Mosque (1543-1548) (Necipoğlu 2005, pp. 191-206; Kuban 2007, pp. 270-275), the central dome being surrounded by four semidomes

scheme was extensively studied and reinterpreted by early modern architects within the Western context, notably in the Italian sphere.

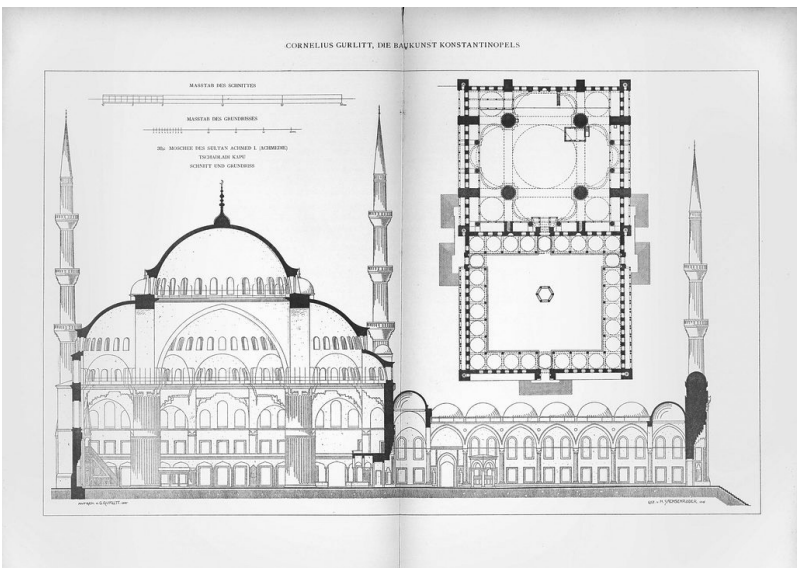
As I have argued in Metin (2024), pp. 132-136, the connection between these two realms likely emanated from the concurrent conquest of Crete. One of the Veneto-Cretan city gates in Candia (today known as Heraklion), commonly called *Voltone*, possessed similar characteristics. The Ottomans were well familiar with this gate since following the city's conquest, they continued to utilize and restore the building. See Metin (2022b) for the generalities on this cross-cultural traffic.

[5] Much has been said about these periods. For the most recent studies, see Metin (2022b), Rüstem (2019), Hamadeh (2008), and Kuban (2007, pp. 497-570).

[6] The most exhaustive study on this complex, which however does not take into account the ties with Crete, is Thys-Şenocak (2007, chapter 5).

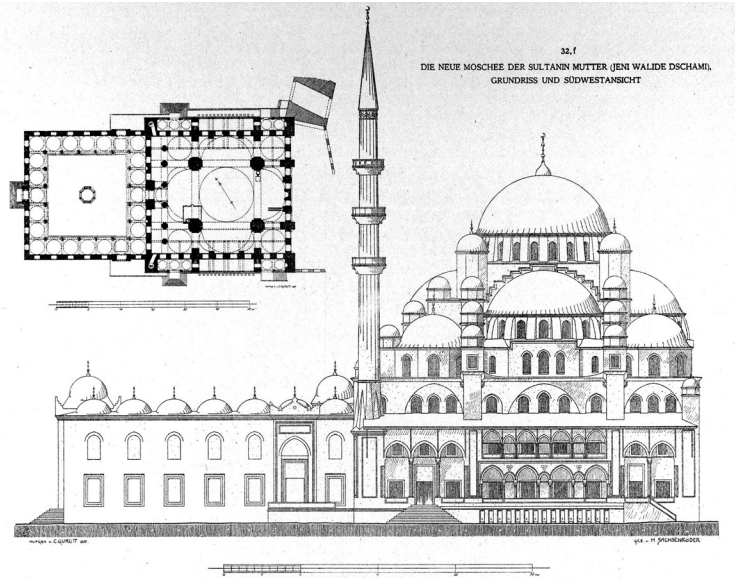
and the corners crowned by minor domes [compare with Fig. 1]. Furthermore, numerous secondary elements in the Sultan Ahmed (Blue) Mosque draw from comparable references. For instance, the two-tiered lateral porticoes, which were used in the Süleymaniye Mosque (while in the Şehzade they appeared for the first time but on a single level). Also the upper galleries, limited to the entrance wall in the Şehzade Mosque, encompass the prayer hall internally on three sides, mirroring the design found in several of Sinan's monumental mosques, including the Süleymaniye and Selimiye, among others[7].

At this juncture, it becomes crucial to distinguish between the two buildings, as the Blue Mosque [Fig. 2] was entirely constructed, whereas the New Mosque [Fig. 3] was merely initiated by an architect who collaborated with Sinan during his lifetime. This differentiation aids in understanding the extent of the impact and the chronological limits of Sinan's direct influence.



2. Plan and section of the Sultan Ahmed (or Blue) Mosque in Istanbul (1609-1617) (Gurlitt 1912, plate 30c).

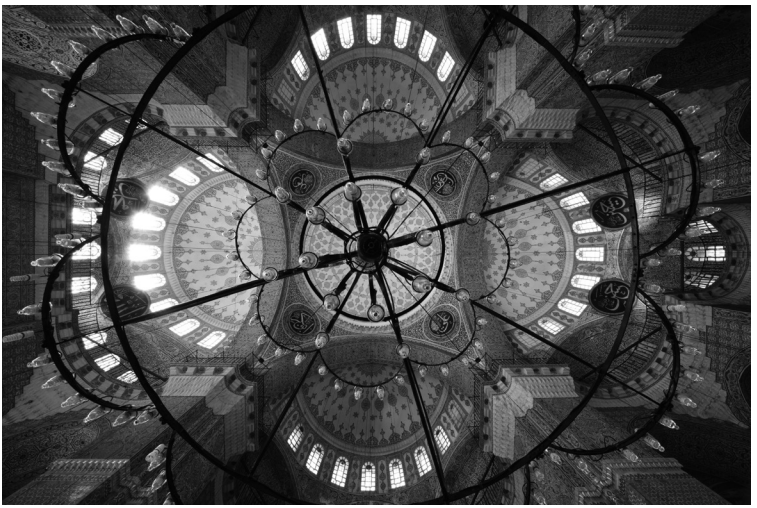
[7] On these monumental mosques see respectively Necipoğlu (2005, pp. 207-221 and 238-255); Kuban (2007, pp. 277-294 and 295-314).



3. Plan and section of the New Mosque in Istanbul (1597-1665) (Gurlitt 1912, plate 32f).

The overall design of the New Mosque was primarily established by Davud Ağa, as the initial phase of construction ceased after completing the first level of windows. Consequently, the walls and piers were already positioned, significantly influencing the arrangement of the dome and semidomes and dictating the supports for the lateral porticoes, thus determining their depth in a way that could not be easily altered. Doğan Kuban expressed skepticism regarding the bay that was certainly inserted by Davud Ağa to the main entrance, finding it to be lacking in harmony with the rest (Kuban 2007, pp. 370-378). However, this space has multiple functions: first, it prepares the visitor to discover the roofing arrangement in its integrity [Fig. 4]. In other words, by looking diagonally upwards, one discovers the whole 'tetraconch' and quincunx systems at once without having to turn the head. Secondly, the compressed and dark space underneath the gallery generates a powerful contrast with the ascending and lightful combination of domes and semidomes, increasing the sense of height and airiness. Finally, if in

the Şehzade Mosque the inner façade of the main entrance had the vertical structure and the fenestrated infill wall incorporated (with the massive piers attached to the wall acting like internal buttresses), exactly like the two lateral perimeters in the New Mosque, this wall was liberated from the structure becoming much neater and lighter. Looking the other way around, unlike the lateral ones which faithfully follow the Şehzade solution, the vertical structure of this perimeter was completely detached from the wall becoming drum piers with iron tie-rods.



4. Roof of the New Mosque in Istanbul (1597-1665).
Credits: Aras Neftçi, with permission.

In addition to the evident interest for differentiation of the inner elevations defining the one at the main entrance as a sort of counterfacade, this operation also introduces a sense of a privileged axiality in the direction of Mecca (SE-NW) to the otherwise central planimetric scheme. In his works based on the Hagia Sophia model, such as the Süleymaniye and Kılıç Ali Paşa mosques (Necipoğlu 2005, pp. 428-438), Sinan skillfully worked on this theme, where around the main dome only two semidomes can be found; one covering the entrance area and the other one at the opposite direction putting a visual focus on the mihrab. However, in

this case the privileged axis was added in a more subtle manner without interfering the centrality of the main dome which, being surrounded by semidomes in all directions, results crowning the entire prayer hall and not only the middle 'nave'. Within the evolution of his architecture, the interest of Sinan increasingly verged towards the predominance of the dome over the whole space (theme which will be fundamental to understand the eighteenth-century Ottoman mosque architecture, see below). Thus, only an architect who was a profound connoisseur of Sinan could have combined his experimentations in such a new and fine key. Moreover, in the New Mosque, the lateral perimeters with their incorporated piers compress the central space, whereas the 'counterfacade' dilates it towards the porticated courtyard, linking the interior and exterior spaces of the mosque more solidly.

The features we have analyzed so far must have depended on (or at least were strongly conditioned by) Davud Ağa's initial decisions. The architect(s) who took over the construction of the New Mosque in 1661 (under the supervision of Meremetçi Mustafa Ağa) introduced an unprecedented bravado in the external design solutions, further 'complicating' the building (Tanyeli 2015, p. 324). Notably, they incorporated a three-stepped extrados for the secondary arches that connect the central dome's canopy to the perimetral walls, each step crowned by a small dome. This solution multiplied the number of elements that a passerby would immediately recognize. Additionally, the lateral porticoes acquired a prominent role. Although two-tiered porticoes were present in the Süleymaniye, they lacked comparable depth, height, or similar eave projection. The depth seen in the Selimiye was confined to the lower level, as the upper level was enclosed by fenestrated walls. In this latter example the three sections of the lateral facades, aligned with the piers supporting the main dome's canopy, maintain an identical elevation. This contrasts with the design of the Süleymaniye, where differentiation exists between the central section and the flanking areas. Here, the flanking sections are constructed at a lower height, occupying a single floor with individually domed bays. However, in the New Mosque, a synthesis of various architectural experiments is evident. An uninterrupted and prominently projecting eave extends along the entire elevation, creating a distinct chiaroscuro effect when coupled with the substantial depth of the porticoes. Comparatively, the vertical proportion of the porticoes of the New Mosque significantly surpasses that of the Süleymaniye, almost reaching the level of the prayer hall's roof, akin to the Selimiye Mosque. The height and depth

of the porticoes, along with the pronounced shadows cast by the eaves, produce a visual detachment of the upper sections of the New Mosque, giving the impression of a lighter and almost 'floating' appearance. Furthermore, the three sections display distinct arrangements both in plan and elevation, with different numbers of floors and bays. This design decisively diverges from the conventional norms, eschewing the expectations of axial symmetry.

All these operations give a greater ascending impulse to the prayer hall and a major sense of dynamism to the ensemble of the mosque, introducing to the lateral façades major contrasts and plasticity and an immediately recognizable asymmetry and horizontal bipartition. Despite starting from Sinan's codes, the result reached a recognizably new character, beautifully materializing the 1660s spirit we have previously mentioned. In light of these considerations, I cannot refrain from speculating on how the building would have externally looked like had it been completed by Davud Ağa. Presumably, it would have more closely resembled its original reference without the 'interference' of 1660s' novelties. The nuanced nature of Davud Ağa's reevaluation of his master's experimentations, including the accompanying criticism in plan, section, and elevation, demands not merely a deep understanding of the referenced material but also an exceptional level of finesse, since deciphering it proves challenging without a meticulous and comparative analysis.

It comes as no surprise that the Blue Mosque exhibits more evident references to Sinan [compare Fig. 1 and Fig. 2], considering that its construction concluded in 1617 when the influence of the master was still strongly pervasive and determining. Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa's external architectural layout notably aligns closer to Sinan's solutions, with the inclusion of the roof balusters (already present in both Süleymaniye and Selimiye and lacking in the New Mosque). However, the most prominent departure from the architecture of the previous decades here is the exceptional inclusion of six minarets, whereas the maximum number previously achieved was four (in the Süleymaniye Mosque). Yet, this departure appears to signify more about the patronage than the architectural composition itself. In the Ottoman context, the number of minarets was strictly regulated, and an architect could not independently decide to increase them without explicit request of the sultan. On the other hand, the vibrant tile cladding within the interiors, often highlighted as a peculiarity, had already been experimented in the Rüstem

Paşa Mosque. Moreover, also in this instance, the choice likely depended more on the patron's desires and financial capabilities rather than other architectural considerations. Excluding these aspects strictly tied to patronage, it becomes evident that the structure, albeit on a different scale, is a faithful reworking of the Şehzade Mosque. The composition is further enriched by the incorporation of elements deeply rooted in the legacy of Sinan's experimentations.

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Contrary to the assertions made by many scholars, the active influence of Sinan appears to have been relatively short-lived and did not endure for centuries. While undeniably pivotal in shaping the architecture of his apprentices for a few decades, this influence notably waned by around the 1620s. In other words, it markedly faded after the initial generation of his immediate followers until the emergence of a renewed quest for innovation in the 1660s. Referring to our earlier distinction, it can be inferred that the period between 1588 and the 1620s was marked by a deliberate intent to incorporate the architectural forms and structural innovations of Sinan's era. It must be underscored that this incorporation was driven and enterprising, displaying in each work either a selective adoption from various references or subtle yet relevant criticisms of the original schemes. If we were to use very conventional historiographical labels (despite their obvious questionability), we could state that this phase reminds more closely of Italian Mannerism, although it did not attain a comparable strength and impetus.[8] Davud Ağa and Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa appear to have deliberately incorporated references to Sinan's architectural legacy, likely aiming to assert their own skills and sophistication as architects and to establish legitimacy in their positions within the imperial architectural milieu.

Conversely, within the realms of both architectural experimentation and patronage, a perceptible deceleration is observed in Istanbul between the 1620s and the 1660s, especially in the religious sphere[9]. Despite the construction of significant civic buildings, as well as several medium and smaller-scale religious and social complexes, the mosque architecture within the capital – traditionally the primary laboratory of innovative ideas – ap-

[8] Kuban frequently used this label, see for instance Kuban (2007, p. 378).

[9] Compared to the previous decades, this period is much less studied. See for instance Kuban (2007, pp. 381-386) and Düzenli (2015, pp. 235-237).

peared to be experiencing a decline in momentum during that period. As exemplified by the one commissioned by Mahpeyker Kösem Valide Sultan in Üsküdar (1638-1640), mosques erected in these decades exhibit a rather modest character (both in dimensions and architectural endeavor), far from the prior impetus for refined combinations or nuanced criticisms evident in earlier examples. Also in architectural types, a more direct adherence to pre-established norms and conventions seems prevailing.

This double loss of momentum can be explained in the realm of patronage with the compelling military and sociopolitical conjuncture in which the Ottomans found themselves. This includes prolonged conflicts with formidable adversaries such as the Safavids (1623-1639), the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (1633-1634), and ultimately the Serenissima (1645-1669), which severely strained the capacities of the Sublime Porte[10]. Furthermore, the reign of Murad IV (1623-1640) was marked by significant endeavors to reinstate internal order within the empire by suppressing numerous uprisings and ensuring the stability of urban life in big cities. Concerning the loss of momentum in architectural experimentation, it is pertinent to note the generation shift following the death of Sinan's two direct disciples: Davud Ağa in 1599 and Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa in 1617. Therefore, the relative inertia observed in mosque architecture during this period is significantly influenced by a confluence of factors regarding both the professional dynamics and the prevailing sociopolitical context. The timing of the 1660s' flourishing is thus not coincidental, in these precise years a solid internal order was established, the external military conflicts were mostly over (most parts of Crete were already conquered in 1645, except for Candia and three minor fortresses Souda, Spinalonga and Gramvousa) and the life in Istanbul was once again vivid. The victories in the Aegean, the last consistent and lasting conquests of Ottoman history – which motivated the ruling class to undertake new adventures against the Habsburgs, Russians, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the following decades – have also altered the construction dynamics of the capital.[11] Architects and builders from the region started progressively merging into Istanbul's already complex and cosmopolitan professional milieu and the construction materials (especially stones) coming from these areas increasingly enlivened the city's building market.

[10] On the military history of the period, see Aksan (2007, pp. 83-180).

[11] See, on the relations with the Italian sphere and the role played by the conquest of Crete, Metin (2022b).

Emulating Sinan or Sinan après Sinan[12]

The following intense season for monumental mosque building in Istanbul started under the rule of Ahmed III (1703-1730), particularly with the Valide-i Cedid (New Queen Mother) Mosque in Üsküdar (1708-1711) whose patron was Emetullah Rabia Gülnuş Sultan. As already pointed out by the previous scholarship, the prayer hall faithfully follows the arrangement formulated by Sinan in the Rüstem Paşa Mosque that we mentioned for the tile cladding of its interiors. In both cases, the core of the space, the octagonal baldachin system of the main dome, was widened with the addition of lateral aisles transforming the layout into a transversally extended rectangle. Unlike its reference, in the Valide-i Cedid Mosque the corner bays of the lateral aisles are domed and the remaining ones vaulted, whereas in the Rüstem Paşa only vaults were used[13]. The inclusion of corner domes resulted in a return to the quincunx arrangement reminiscent of the Şehzade Mosque, and the treatment of the 'counterfacade' is also aligned with the same reference. Thus, this example reintroduced the active referencing of diverse Sinan works concurrently, with a new critical eye. Notwithstanding, in the wake of the New Mosque experience, the section and the exterior development considerably diverge from the canons established towards the mid-sixteenth century. The proportions became markedly more vertical and the drum of the central dome exceptionally tapered, enhancing the building's ascendant character both internally and externally. It is quite evident that the architects of the complex attentively studied not only the buildings of Sinan but also the New Mosque Complex, as also apparent in the design of the elementary school (Metin 2022c, pp. 183-184). With the central part of its ground floor hosting a vaulted urban passage of monumental dimensions, it faithfully adheres to the innovative scheme introduced by the elementary school added to the New Mosque Complex in 1663-1664 (see above).

Two decades years later, the hexagonal baldachin was adopted in the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Mosque (completed in 1734-1735), built by the charismatic grand vizier of the time who worked under two sultans, linking the architectural taste of the time of

[12] I am borrowing this expression from Jorga's "Byzance après Byzance".

[13] Neftçi sketched, in a brief essay, a quick framework to start thinking about the structural issues of the eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture (Neftçi 2000).

Ahmed III to the initial years of the reign of Mahmud I.[14] The hexagonal scheme was first experimented, before Sinan and even the conquest of Istanbul, at the Üç Şerefeli Mosque in Edirne (1438-1447), rightfully considered by specialists the forerunner of the future monumental-domed Ottoman mosque tradition (Kuban 2007, pp. 143-148). The first re-elaboration by Sinan dates to the mid-sixteenth century and manifestly echoes this building. Closely following its fifteenth-century reference, the Sinan Paşa Mosque in Beşiktaş (1554-1555/56) features a central dome flanked by two lateral aisles, each articulated in two bays crowned with minor domes. At this stage, semidomes were still not used, introduced in the mosques of Kara Ahmed Paşa in Topkapı (1565-1571/72) and Nurbanu (or Atik Valide) Sultan in Üsküdar (1571-1586). In these examples, four semidomes rotate around the main dome extending the space laterally. In the former these replaced the minor domes of the previous examples (while narrow galleries with vaulted bay appear flanking the baldachin), whereas in the latter both semidomes and minor domes were used rendering the prayer hall strongly rectangular. In the Sokollu Mehmed Paşa in Kadırga (1567/68-1571/72) the centrality of the main dome attained a neater expression, since all lateral spaces were eliminated. In this case, the upper galleries are hosted under the semidomes of the baldachin without adding lateral aisles to the plan. Moreover, in the Nurbanu Sultan the mihrab was inserted into a protruding rectangular volume, which adds a fifth semidome to the initial scheme. This autonomous projection hosting the mihrab (called *miḥrāb ṣofası*) was kept in later applications of this scheme, including in the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa. In the mosques of Semiz Ali Paşa in Babaeski (c. 1569-1575,1585/86) and especially Kazasker Ivaz Efendi in Eğrikapı (1585-1586) the single dome on hexagonal baldachin combined with projected mihrab niche reached its uppermost strength, crystalizing an idea of space which had a long evolution spanning over more than a century.

The Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Mosque largely follows the last example we have mentioned on a much larger scale. However, the presence of a continuous entrance bay corresponding to the counterfacade bonds this building even more closely to another mosque, that of Cerrah Mehmed Paşa in Avratpazarı (1593-1594), built shortly after the death of Sinan by Davud Ağa [Fig. 5]. Therefore, if in the cases we have analyzed so

[14] On this building, see Tanman (1996); Kuban (2007, pp. 523-526), and Rüstem (2019, pp. 104-105).

far, the references (faithfully reproposed, criticized with minor alterations or combined) were always to Sinan's own work, in this example the horizons of the eighteenth-century architects appear to be much wider, including also other authors. Despite stemming from earlier experiences of Sinan, the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Mosque was much closer to the Cerrah Mehmed Paşa than the other applications of the hexagonal baldachin: four of the piers are isolated while two of them at the mihrab niche meet the corners getting incorporated with the wall. Especially the eighteenth-century mosque strongly reminds Vignola's portal at the Villa Giulia (1551-1553, see Adorni 2008, pp. 61-65), precisely a quarter of the pier being engaged. Many other elements such as the disposition of the staircases and minarets or the robust external pilasters are identical between the two mosques despite 140 years of difference. These striking similarities are certainly not a coincidence. As Halil Ibrahim Düzenli highlighted, the two buildings are strongly bond also from the point of view of the patronage:

> Cerrah Mehmed Paşa Complex was the last one to be built in Istanbul by a statesman with a mosque, differently from those whose patrons were the sultans or imperial women. For about 150 years from this date on, no more mosques would be included in complexes built by statesmen, until that of the grand vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa built in 1734 in Davutpaşa (Düzenli 2015, p. 218).

The mosque furthermore features arches with three-stepped extrados crowned by turrets, which was among the most prominent novelties appearing in the 1660s at the New Mosque (see above). The library of the same complex strongly resembles the elementary school of the Valide-i Cedid, exemplifying not only the great influence of the New Mosque Complex on later constructions of the capital but also the vastness of references of Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa's designers.

5. Interior of the Cerrah Mehmed Paşa Mosque in Istanbul (1593-1594). Credits: Aras Neftçi, with permission.

Even if our case study is closer to Davud Ağa's successful reinterpretation, and features elements deriving from the New Mosque, direct references to Sinan could not miss. Unlike the Cerrah Mehmed Paşa, the piers of the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa share the same plan and dimensions, recalling the Selimiye (even though this latter is an octagonal baldachin)[15]. The polygonal form of the piers resembling a circle is a direct reference as well. The one quarter engaged piers which we have just mentioned also derive from Sinan's vocabulary. At this point, I

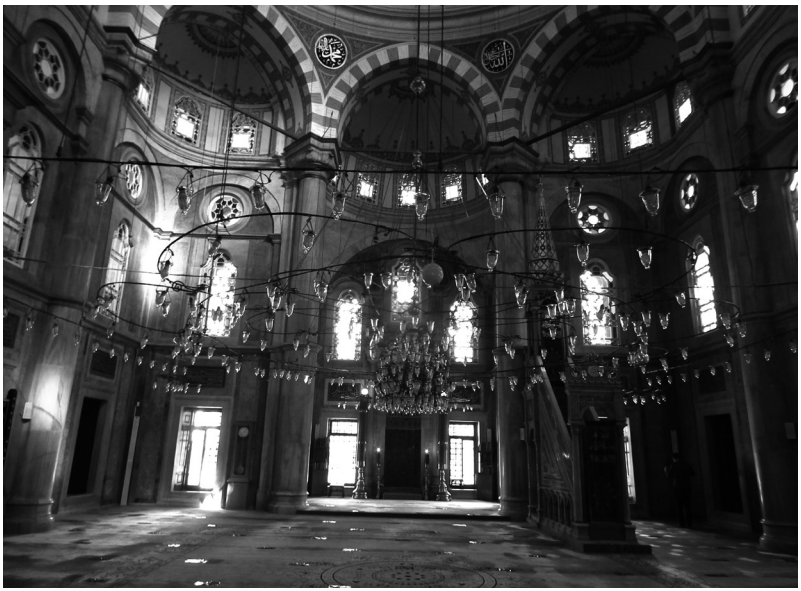
[15] On the structural solutions of Sinan's domes, see Kuban (1987), Necipoğlu (2005 pp. 17-19), and Kuban (2007, pp. 257-261).

believe that it would not be superfluous to point out that the Selimiye was built between 1568 and 1574, fifteen years after Villa Giulia and shortly after the first edition of Vignola's *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura* (1562) (Adorni 2008, pp. 211-214). Given the abundance of indications which suggest a cross-cultural interaction between Sinan and the Italian architectural culture as Gülru Necipoğlu frequently reminds (Necipoğlu 2005, pp. 90-103), the ultimate source of the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa's piers might be Italian. As I have thoroughly discussed, the Italian influence on the eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture, independently from Sinan, is also much more relevant than what the previous scholars believed (Metin, 2022b). Lastly, also the structural conception of the baldachin as seen from outside evokes the Selimiye, thanks to the insertion of turrets concluding the piers. These turrets greatly help both structures against thrusts, functioning as counterforts to the drum of the dome and counterweights to the piers of the baldachin. Therefore, they are associable to flying buttresses and pinnacles at the same time. Similarly to the Valide-i Cedid and sharing the widespread desire of height of the eighteenth-century Ottoman mosques, the proportions of the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa are resolutely vertical. Thus, to avoid structural problems, the architect seems to have looked, once again, to Sinan's oeuvre, whose engineering features have always been praised from his own age.

The Laleli Mosque, which was possibly meant to be called with the patron's name (Mustafa III) instead of the current one deriving from a popular colloquial version, was built between 1759 and 1763, following the sultan's explicit requests on planimetric and volumetric arrangement [Fig. 6][16]. Despite the striking novelty of the result, the mosque combines multilayered references to Sinan and his age, like in the case of the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa. A protruding rectangular mihrab niche flaking a square prayer hall covered with a single dome surrounded by four semidomes rotating around it was already already used by Sinan in the Molla Çelebi Mosque in Fındıklı (1570-1584), in the wake of the experimentations on hexagonal baldachins (see above). His apprentice Davud Ağa combined this scheme with the octagonal baldachin, extensively used by the master, as we have seen, in many possible ways. The latter overcame the problem of the excessive prominence of the iron tie-rods of the former, thanks to the geometry of the baldachin, and visually freed the space. In both cases only two piers in correspondence with the entrance are freestanding, while the remaining vertical supports of the baldachin are partially incorporated

[16] The most exhaustive study on the Laleli is Neftçi (2002). See also Kuban (2007), Rüstem (2019) and Metin (2022b).

within the wall as pilaster and/or semicolumns. In this way, the prayer hall was released from massive freestanding supports impeding the unity of the centralized space, which being entirely crowned by a single dome gains even more ascending character independently from its actual height. Sinan used polygonal piers at the entrance, their half on the lateral perimeters and corner pilasters at the mihrab niche. Davud Ağa increased the support types introducing semicolumns to the lateral perimeters, while at the entrance we find a complex combination of polygonal piers incorporated at their lower half in a continuous wall.



6. Interior of the Laleli Mosque in Istanbul (1759-1763) (author).

The design of the Laleli skillfully merged the two solutions while also introducing an entrance bay which antecedes the square-planned baldachin, turning the prayer hall into a deepening rectangle. The central part of this bay mirrors the semidome of the mihrab niche, while at the corners are placed minor domes. Like in both references, only two supports are freestanding, but in this case all of them became colossal columns sharing the same plan and dimensions. This attitude reminds once again the Selimiye for the support and the Cerrah Mehmed Paşa for the introduction of an uninterrupted tripartite entrance

bay. The combination of those had already appeared in the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa; however, many nuanced solutions of the Laleli leave no doubt about how its architect(s) are profoundly familiar also with the sixteenth-century references. The lateral porticoes are still reminiscent of the Şehzade, but the new, 'Baroque' taste rendered them extraordinarily complex in its articulation and resolutely contrasting with the volume of the prayer hall externally.

Not in all cases emulating Sinan brought to outputs whose references are immediately recognizable. In some examples what was learnt from Sinan's age got metabolized till a point that only a well-trained eye could decipher. Such is the case with the emblematic mosque of the Nuruosmaniye Complex (1748-1755), where this situation cannot be but strongly intentional. The patron Mahmud I desired to 'refashion' the imperial capital after his victorious military campaigns, opening the road to the so-called Ottoman Baroque (Rüstem 2019, pp. 111-134 and Metin 2022b, pp. 87-134). As underscored by Rüstem, this was nothing less than a decisive act of self-affirmation (and in some instances, self-celebration) of the sultan, shared with the ruling elites from its emergence, and progressively spread to the rest of the society. Also the Laleli Mosque was less readable in its multiple sources compared to the Valide-i Cedid or the Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa; however, the limitedness of the direct citations and the level of 'disguise' of the references of the Nuruosmaniye were never matched. An attentive analysis explores how the lateral volumes on two levels reveal once again a deep acquaintanceship of Sinan's work. We have seen that in the Selimiye the lower level hosted an external portico whereas the upper one was enclosed by walls. These upper galleries open towards the central space not as balconies, which was the most conventional solution, but almost as the loggias of an opera house.[17] In the Mesih Mehmed Paşa the same solution was applied with stronger impact given the proportions of the building and the fact that in this case the upper galleries immediately overlook the space delimited by the baldachin with no filter spaces in plan nor further articulations in section. In the Nuruosmaniye, these lessons merged into a unique result. The use of the vertical supports articulating and partially screening the upper galleries derived from the Selimiye, while the solution of the section development is much closer to that of the Mesih Mehmed Paşa. Moreover, with the insertion of three volumes protruding towards the space and a boldly projecting cornice surrounding the whole internal perimeter of the mosque, the sense of movement and the chiaroscuro attained in the Nuruosmaniye

[17] Kuban used this expression to refer to the Nuruosmaniye (2007, p. 532), which seems even more appropriate.

notably elevated the building to an apex of plasticity seldom witnessed in other Ottoman structures. One could not decipher all these aspects if not by a far-reaching retrospective look at the local heritage, exactly like that of Simeon Kalfa and the other architects of the mosque. In Nuruosmaniye, the Sinan experience appears first quite veiled, but still very concrete if we start touching it more closely.

Purposely Sinan

If in earlier eighteenth-century mosques the legacy of Sinan was progressively melted in a pot alongside later developments and the influence of foreign aesthetics, two cases constitute isolated yet crucial exceptions. These buildings offer an extraordinary opportunity to understand the ideological and socio-cultural background of the Ottoman capital of the latter half of the century, a challenging time for the empire because of the increasingly aggravating military defeats and the natural disasters damaging the capital.

Both collapsed during the 1766 earthquake, the fifteenth-century mosques of the Fatih (Conqueror, the epithet of Mehmed II) [Fig. 7 and 8] and Eyüp Sultan (the Turkish rendition of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari) were reconstructed respectively between 1767-1771 and 1798-1800. The original structures were among the earliest mosques to be built in the new capital after the Ottoman takeover of the city in 1453. The plan of the former is quite well known: four piers divided the prayer hall into a main nave and two lateral aisles flanking it each with three individually domed bays. The central nave was roofed with a hemispherical dome followed by a semidome of the same diameter covering the area in front of the mihrab. If instead of two, the still extant Rum Mehmed Paşa Mosque in Üsküdar (1469-1471) had three domed lateral spaces, and those were connected with more openings to the main nave, the building would have displayed the same outline (on this building see Kuban 2007, pp. 192-193). On the original Eyüp Sultan Mosque more divergent restitutions have been proposed by the scholars; however, the most convincing is presumably the one which conjectures a similar arrangement, which apparently was perceived as a prestige symbol by the Ottomans of the fifteenth century. For different reasons, these structures were certainly the most distinguished mosques of the city to be built *ex novo* by the Ottomans, the former representing the conquest of the city and the sovereignty of the Sublime Porte over Rome (in fact it replaced the Church of the Holy Apostoles), and the latter being the most important Islamic pilgrimage place in all modern-day Turkey.

7. Interior of the Fatih (Mehmed II) Mosque in Istanbul (1767-1771). Credits: Aras Neftçi, with permission.

8. Roof system of the Fatih (Mehmed II) Mosque in Istanbul (1767-1771) (author).

The reconstructions have completely altered the original design, even though in both cases the original dimensions of the plan of the prayer hall were largely preserved. The cubical and contrasting volumes were abandoned in favor of two well recognizable arrangements by Sinan, which apparently became the new prestige markers starting from the sixteenth century. The Fatih Mosque was reconstructed following the square-baldachin Şehzade model [Fig. 1] based on a central dome surrounded by semidomes in four directions, each of which is further flanked by additional minor semidomes. The remaining corner bays are covered with minor hemispherical domes completing the scheme with the well-known quincunx arrangement highlighting the central space. The result is an ascending pyramid both internally and externally, which starts from the domes of the porticated courtyard and reaches the monumental central dome with progressive levelling. This solution skillfully interconnects different scales coexisting within the building and proudly exhibits the early modern modular design principles of the Ottomans. After decades of experimentation on the prominence of the central dome, better articulation of the modular system, and lightful and airy interiors of the prayer hall, rebuilding the initial cubical volumes of these mosques would have apparently resulted as an excessively forced conservatism (a similar interpretation can be found in Rüstem 2019, pp. 213-214). It must be noted, as we have previously done, that this experimentation did not start nor finish with Sinan; however, he left this mark that strongly influenced the silhouette of the mosques built during his age replacing any other architectural and urban image of prestige in the mind of an Ottoman.

The Eyüp Sultan Mosque was reconstructed with the octagonal baldachin scheme, closely following the Sokollu Mehmed Paşa Mosque in Azapkapı (c. 1573-1577/78). Like in the previous example, hardly anything distinguishes the planimetric arrangement of the mosque from its reference. In this scheme, the main dome is surrounded by eight almost equal semidomes lacking the hierarchy of those in the square baldachin where major semidomes conducted to much smaller minor ones following the Hagia Sophia model. The square corner bays are once again covered with minor domes, insisting firmly on the quincunx arrangement. At this point a significant observation can be made: in a rather experimental example started a few years before the death of Sinan and possibly completed (if not entirely designed and built) by Davud Ağa shortly after, Nişancı Mehmed Paşa Mosque in Karagümrük (1584/85-1588/89), the upper ones of these corner bays close to the mihrab were cancelled, giving unprecedented dynamism

to the perimeters. The lower corner bays towards the entrance were also quite isolated from the main core of the space, in an effort to enhance the central plan of the prayer hall as seen from the interior. The authorship of this mosque remains an open debate, even though a certain Yani Kalfa was surely involved (See Rüstem 2019, pp. 217-219). This notwithstanding, or in other words, whether by Sinan or not, such an intricate arrangement could have never been adopted for the Eyüp Sultan Mosque even though from architectural point of view it represents a much more evolved and sophisticated version of the same baldachin system. The reason (or at least, the only reason) is certainly not only the desire to preserve the original perimeters of the building but must be considered also in the light of the notion introduced in the following paragraph.

These mosques were seemingly considered ancestral monuments of crucial importance for the collective memory, thereby rebuilt with immediately recognizable arrangements of the past evoking the grandiosity and power of earlier sultans. Notwithstanding, 'updates' to better consolidated aesthetic canons were not nonexistent, which in addition to the planimetric arrangement also included external developments. A few minor 'updates' were made exclusively on the external developments. In the case of the Fatih Mosque, three-stepped extrados with domed turrets [Fig. 8] of the New Mosque was introduced and the flying buttresses supporting the main dome of the Şehzade were replaced with other domed turrets to counterweight the baldachin and counterfort and the drum like we have seen in the Selimiye. The mosque being based on a square baldachin, these turrets were used in couples flanking the corners which correspond to the piers, giving remarkable movement and a new rhythm to the composition. The Eyüp Sultan Mosque also features the drum turrets, like its forerunner the Sokollu Mosque in Azapkapı, which this time correspond perfectly to the vertical supports of the octagonal baldachin underneath. However, unlike the previous example, the proportions in this case are more decidedly vertical, the main dome more evidently slender and the external development based remarkably based on plastic contrast between the parts. With these features, the Eyüp Sultan results more manifestly as an eighteenth-century mosque. In my opinion, the reason for this dual decision (which, to be clear, I am not presenting in dichotomy but rather as evolution and contextualization of the same urban idea) rests upon the topographical situation of each mosque. The Fatih Mosque was to be built on the most prominent of the alleged seven hills of Istanbul – a motif recurrently used to further associate the city to Rome despite its much more complex actual topography – thereby had to be seen

mostly in a diagonal perspective from below. On the contrary, the site of the Eyüp Sultan Mosque is completely flat and almost borders the coast of the Golden Horn, thus it is nearly on the sea level. This meant that the mosque could be seen only frontally; and for this reason, the architects must have had more interest in rendering the mosque's profile as slender and soaring as possible. These reconstructions fully reflect not only the aspirations of the decision-makers which determined the Sinan schemes to be adopted, but also the architectural, structural, and urban sensibilities of the period, which emerge from the details we have analyzed.

Forgetting Sinan (or almost)

After the examples we have analyzed, a new phase took over the architectural scene of the Ottoman capital with the progressive introduction of aesthetic norms deriving from the French Empire Style, and more importantly, a new test for Western revivalisms and eclectic combinations.[18] The whole nineteenth century was therefore characterized by new excitement for the Ottoman architects, which resulted in the complete abandonment of the interest for the local heritage, that of Sinan's age included.

The only examples in which still an ongoing research of re-elaboration of Sinan's contributions can be found is quite interestingly in provinces far from the capital. Among those the most significant one is certainly the mosque built in the Citadel of Cairo by Muhammad Ali Pasha (in Turkish *Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa*) (Behrens-Abouseif 1989, pp. 168-170), supposedly the governor of the Ottoman Egypt but *de facto* the sovereign ruler of the country in process of independence [Fig. 9]. This monumental mosque was built between 1830 and 1848 following the Şehzade model [Fig. 1], when its last re-elaboration in Istanbul appeared, as we have seen, more than half a century ago (for the reconstruction of the Fatih Mosque, see above). At first sight, this situation could look rather paradoxical, but if contextualized within the political aspirations of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the selection of an architecture with precise and immediately recognizable references to Istanbul starts making more sense. After the Napoleonic invasion (1798-1801), the ruling elites of Egypt increasingly claimed independence from the capital and a sort of rivalry started between Cairo and Istanbul. This certainly had immediate outcomes in the field of archi-

[18] For a panoramic view on the cultural and architectural climate of the time, see Metin (2021, pp. 175-178) and Kuban (2007, pp. 605-678). A more detailed study on the period is Ersoy (2015).

tecture, which goes far beyond the query of this study. Therefore, I am limiting my considerations to those above, even though there would undoubtedly be much more to say.

9. Muhammad Ali Pasha Mosque in Cairo (1830-1848).
Credits: Olaf Tausch, Wikicommons.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, new, proto-nationalistic ideas dominated the architecture of Istanbul, which lasted also during the first years of the republic. Commonly referred to as the First national architectural movement *(Birinci Ulusal Mimarlık Akımı),* it was nothing but a new taste of revivalism proposing the use of forms which were considered more 'local', deriving from early Ottoman or pre-Ottoman Islamic (such as Seljuk) heritage of Anatolia (Bozdoğan 2001, pp. 16-55). Like in every revivalist or eclectic architectural movement, the predominant spirit was that of the free selection from a (more or less) vast repertoire. Therefore, even though among these forms also appeared many references to the so-called Classical Ottoman architecture, we cannot claim these cases as experiments directly addressing Sinan's legacy. Even in examples with very consistent and coherent use of fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century forms, such as the Ethnography Museum in Ankara by Arif Hikmet Koyunoğlu (1925-1928), one cannot

claim any continuity with the endeavors of emulating and reproposing the architecture of Sinan. In these cases, the prevalent feeling of the architects and/or patrons must have been nostalgia, rather than a targeted perusal and study of the past in a continuity or innovation key. For these reasons, it would not be wrong to assert that between 1800 and 1945, he appears to be 'forgotten'. One might argue that this was in fact an intentional act of overcoming the past, which would seem an equally interesting argument, but that needs to be an inquiry for another study.

Reminding Sinan

1945 is a milestone in the contemporary history of Turkey, and not only from an architectural point of view. Sinan was consistently claimed and praised both by late-Ottoman and early republican architects and ruling classes. However, between these two phases, he gained different, and absolutely new, meanings.[19] If previously the architecture of Sinan had no precisely Turkish nor Islamic connotations, throughout these decades he started being progressively presented as a national culture hero representing the 'Turkish genius' comparable to those of the 'West'. The building of his age started being analyzed in this new light and many authors even started retrospectively providing him with imaginary, nationalistic biographies. Sinan, who has always been recognized and praised for the architectural, urban, and engineering qualities of his work since his lifetime, started to be revered for his alleged cultural, artistic, and political message throughout the twentieth century. This process is still ongoing, and speaking about Sinan in Turkey becomes increasingly difficult and problematic.

The Republic of Turkey underwent a transition from its more authoritarian beginnings after its establishment in 1923, ultimately embracing a multi-party democratic system in 1945. This meant for the more conservative ideas to be heard more loudly, especially when concerning the Islamic background of the vast majority of the country and the Ottoman past. Precisely in this year was initiated the first ever mosque construction of the republican history. The Şişli Mosque by Ali Vasfi Egeli (1945-1949) reawakened the "Classical Ottoman" forms with clear references to Sinan, particularly to his Muradiye Mosque in Manisa (1583-1586) (on this building see Necipoğlu 2005, pp. 257-264). Sinan was now a revenant after a long absence. In the

[19] On this complex issue, see Necipoğlu (2007) and Tanyeli (2020, pp. 395-508).

following decades, more monumental and immediately recognizable examples started appearing, such as the Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara (1967-1987) [Fig. 10][20] and the Sabancı Central Mosque in Adana (1988-1998). Ali Vasfi Egeli's choice was rather unusual within the history of Sinan referencing, whereas these latter cases brought back to the scene better-known models. The former is a re-elaboration of the Şehzade Mosque, with the addition of two more minarets (endowing the mosque with four in total, like the Selimiye or the Süleymaniye). The latter indisputably reproposes the Selimiye model, while the use of six minarets recall the Blue Mosque. From this point on, a process which we might call a massive production has started, building in every big and small city and settlement of Turkey more or less elaborate 'Sinanizing' mosques (Batuman 2018, pp. 36-60).

10. Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara (1967-1987).
Credits: Ekrem Osmanoğlu, Wikicommons.

[20] The history of this mosque is rather complicated and helps understanding the dynamics of the period better than any other building. The construction started with the project of Vedat Dalokay which featured no historicist approach. It was abandoned shortly after, for linguistic choices, and the project for the current mosque was adopted instead. Dalokay's project became, a few years later, the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad (completed in 1986). See Batuman (2018, pp. 20-24).

Reawakening Sinan in 1945 was, more than remembering, an act of reminding. Because its departure point was not (only) the own references (and remembrances) of the architects and/or patrons, but an extrovert desire of approval in a new sociopolitical climate. If we used the title "purposely Sinan" for the late eighteenth-century reconstruction of the Fatih and Eyüp Sultan mosques, in these cases we need to speak rather about repurposing Sinan, as these buildings are completely *ex novo*. It is evident that replicating (more or less faithfully) the forms codified during the sixteenth century generated, at least till the 1800s and from 1945 on, a sort of aesthetic consensus. However, the nationalistic content ascribed to them has a relatively brief history.

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Much more could be added to each part of this study, I have omitted many aspects consciously. And more complicated than ever seems today the architectural and sociocultural panorama in Turkey, therefore the last part of the essay is intentionally far from giving conclusive remarks. One thing firmly remains certain: we will continue to think, in each period, on Sinan's legacy, independently from the persistence of its tangible outcomes, as it constitutes a crucial part of the material and immaterial culture of Turkey.

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