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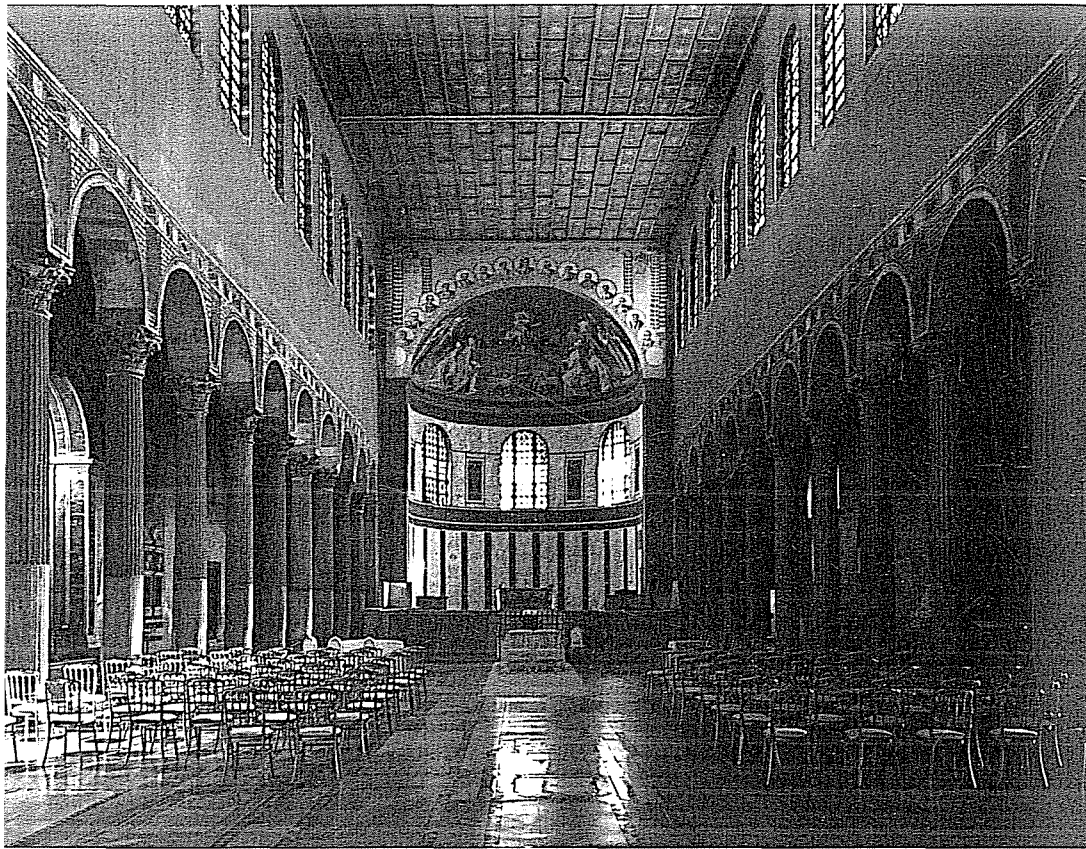
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Ottoman Elements in Latin and Non-Muslim Architecture

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Places of worship used by the communities of the three monotheistic religions are usually considered as radically different ritual and architectural spaces. However, several scholars - including Oleg Grabar, Robert Hillenbrandt, Spiro Kostof and Gülru Necipoğlu - have also emphasized analogies in the DNA and the historical/typological development of Christian and Islamic sanctuaries, with extensions to the underrepresented (by global standards) Jewish context. The contrast between an early-Christian church like Santa Sabina and the mosque of Cordoba is striking, but the analogy between the same church and another early landmark of Islamic architecture, the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, is also undeniable (figs. 1-2). The Umayyad mosque may be seen also as an early-Christian basilica with a prayer hall expanded in length, and with its axis rotated 90 degrees. The arcades dividing the main prayer halls of these sanctuaries into naves were also employed in synagogues of the distant and recent past, as in the 19th-century example of Eliahu Hannavi in Alexandria, where the colonnades even display a pulvinar of Byzantine origin, similar to those employed at Damascus.



In these examples, the commonalities between Islamic, Christian and Jewish spaces may be traced to their Mediterranean roots: Hellenistic, Roman, late antique, with developments that stretch as far as Charlemagne's Palatine chapel at Aachen. Imperial or royal patrons of the Middle Ages in the Euro-Mediterranean region have, sometimes, consciously underlined and juxtaposed cultural differences "as such" into the same space, in an effort of legitimizing and promoting themselves as rulers of diverse communities. Roger II created in Palermo a multi-dimensional space where the languages (displayed in the epigraphic program) and the styles of three cultural contexts are displayed side by side, and co-exist without really overlapping. The prayer hall with its fresco cycles has a rather Italian character, and inscriptions in Latin; the chancery, decorated with

1. The early-Christian church of Santa Sabina, Rome.
Photo: P. Girardelli.

mosaics, follows Byzantine architectural and decorative schemes, and has Greek inscriptions; the wooden *muqarnas* on the ceiling are comparable to coeval examples from the Fatimid context, and display



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Arabic writings. Three architectural styles, three languages, three cultural contexts, and three communities of subjects - with the interesting omission of the Jewish dimension.

In Ottoman art and architectural history, the most obvious examples of kinship across religious divides belong to the so-called Classical (16th c.) and Baroque (18th c.) phases. Much has been written on the relation between the Süleymaniye mosque and the Hagia Sophia. Beyond nationalist or orientalist matters of primacy and originality, I believe that considering the former as a copy of the latter is as absurd as considering Roman art and architecture as a pure and simple imitation of Greek models (or American art as entirely derivative from European art). In turn, denying the relation or the similarity, would also be as absurd as denying any relation between Roman and classical Greek or Hellenistic art. In the Ottoman classical and baroque regimes of reference and intertextuality, the echoes of a

2. The Umayyad mosque in Damascus before the fire of 1893 (courtesy of Fondation Max van Berchem, Geneva).

broader cultural geography were grounded in a conscious process of selective appropriation and adaptation, emphasizing a cosmopolitan or imperial vision of the sacred space.¹

But rather than focusing on such expressions of dominant powers, in this paper I am reflecting on cross-cultural borrowings that were enacted by subaltern, non-Muslim groups who either paid homage and displayed loyalty to the Islamic ruling power – as in the spectacular, and probably unparalleled instance of the Armenian churches of New Julfa at Isfahan – or, conversely, attempted to represent their own cultural difference and belonging, when the geo-political context allowed for this kind of expression. Protection of a foreign power, relative segregation from the urban context, or the liberalization of imperial religious policies, were usually the reasons behind this latter choice; while the former – the option of integration and appropriation – may have been the result of a shared material culture, of the presence and agency of cultural intermediaries among the users of the sacred space, or, as we will see, of the representation of loyalty to the dominant power.

Pera or Beyoğlu in the 18th century

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and the ensuing loss of several Latin places of worship the Catholic communities of Galata had to redefine their limited space in relation to the new power balances. What could be retained from the late Byzantine period was preserved without substantial alterations in the basic elements of ritual and style – notwithstanding destructions and reconstructions following major fires.² Apostolic visitors of the 16th and 17th century describe the churches of Galata, with the large complex of San Francesco in the prominent place, as responding to the Italian standards of taste, ritual and decorum. The only remarkable difference, often commented upon, is the separation of women on the upper level with *ad hoc* galleries, a local custom shared with mosques, Orthodox churches and synagogues. This is expressly described as a local habit, sometimes praised by Catholic observers as it prevented reproachable contacts across the sexes. Another exceptionally “local” element, noted with pride by the Jesuit father Tarillon in the 1730s, belongs to the church of Saint Benoit, of late-Byzantine origin, entrusted to the Jesuits by Paul V in the late

1 Necipoğlu, 2012. For the “baroque” phase, the most comprehensive critical study is Rüstem, 2019.

2 Belin 1894. For a concise overview of the Latin landscape of Pera after the Ottoman conquest, see Girardelli, 2016.

16th century, and later (after the abolition of the order in 1773) to the Lazarists. Tarillon considers the dome of Saint-Benoit, preserved for centuries after the Ottoman conquest, as a sign of distinction in the understated profile of the Christian sanctuaries. However small, a dome covered with lead is, in his words, a privilege reserved only to imperial mosques (Belin 1894, 264).

While the Dominican church of San Paolo or San Domenico was converted into a mosque as early as 1475 (or shortly after), San Francesco resisted until 1697, when a fire - and the tensions created by Ottoman-European conflicts - led to its replacement by the Yeni Valide mosque (Matteucci, 1967; Özgüleş, 2017; de Obaldia, 2018).³ That loss marks the anti-climax in the decline of Latin presence in Istanbul, but was followed by a relative recovery in the 18th century, fueled especially by massive Armenian conversions to Catholicism. This development had a socio-topographical repercussion in the spatial history of the Catholics: while until then the Latin sanctuaries and parish churches had been concentrated within the old Genoese walls (existing since the 14th century and lasting until 1864), now the new settlement extra-muros of Pera was rapidly growing, with two of the three Catholic parish centers transferred to this rapidly developing region. It may be argued, in fact, that Pera as the expansion of Galata beyond the walls, away from the memories and peculiarities of the medieval Latin/Genoese heritage, developed largely during the “long” 18th century as an Ottoman/Catholic settlement and landscape. European diplomats, embassy buildings, Ottoman governmental interlocutors, Levantine elites, Catholic church/complexes, and the growing Armenian converts to Catholicism were the main actors in this novel production of space. The urban axis of the development was the watershed spine of the Grande Rue de Pera, with the two new Catholic parish churches - Saint Antoine under French protection, and Santa Maria Draperis protected by the Habsburgs⁴ - at brief distance from each other. In between, but on the opposite side of the street, the church of the Holy Trinity, established in 1722, was also protected by the house of Habsburg.

3 This Yeni Cami should not be confused with the far more monumental, homonymous structure in Eminönü, on the opposite side of the Golden Horn.

4 Saint Antoine, facing the Grande Rue but on the premises of the nearby French Embassy, was staffed by the same Franciscans who had lost San Francesco in 1697. The new dedication, officialized in 1724, was motivated by the growing popularity of the worship of St. Anthony in Istanbul in the early 18th century. Santa Maria Draperis, on the same side of the street but closer to Galata, was instead less prominent, and accessible through a steep, still existing downward stairway from the Grande Rue. It belonged to the Franciscan Observantines, who had lost a church with the same dedication in Mumhane (near present-day Cité Française), in 1660.

From an urban point of view, the Grande Rue was comparable to a High Street (or a Main Street) in a provincial European city; but the architectural structure and visual features of its houses remained largely Ottoman, at least until the 1831 fire of Pera and possibly later: timber structure, projecting volumes, ample fenestration, with interiors organized around a central hall or staircase. Maurice Cerasi has convincingly argued that, especially before the Tanzimat (1839-1876), it is impossible to connect the different house types diffused in the Ottoman cities to the ethno-religious groups inhabiting the empire (Cerasi 1998). In Pera as elsewhere, Greek, Armenian, Jewish and also Levantine or European subjects (including, for a long period, the ambassadors of the European powers) lived mostly in the same type of houses that were used by the Ottoman Muslims. Shifting from the domestic and residential space to the sanctuaries used by non-Muslim communities, it is also possible to find elements of design and decoration that were shared across confessional divides. In several former studies, I have demonstrated that the resurgence of Catholic presence during the 18th century also fostered the reconstruction of churches in more elaborate and substantial forms (Girardelli 2005 and 2010). This new investment and commitment may be explained only in part as the result of changing power balances, with Catholic nations fostering a kind of architectural resurgence. The most striking aspect of this development is its local and Ottoman dimension: new churches, built after the loss of old ones (to destruction in fires or conversion to mosques), were gradually acquiring status and visibility along the Grande Rue, and catered to the growing number of Ottoman Armenians who converted to Catholicism, definitely outnumbering the few hundred Levantine or European Latin worshippers.

In the course of the 18th century the new Armenian presence engendered a relative Ottomanization of the Latin sacred spaces, with the inclusion of some of the characteristic elements of the new "Ottoman Baroque" language in the design of churches and friaries. The same kind of mixtilinear arches, simplified Doric pilasters, and fluted capitals used in mosques and complexes ranging from Nuruosmaniye and Laleli to the earlier madrasa of Seyyid Hasan Paşa, appear also in a variety of Christian sanctuaries. While in the case of Greek Orthodox churches - Saint George in Büyükkada (1754) and the Panaghia in Beyoğlu/Pera (1804) are cases in point (fig. 3) - this shared language can be simply ascribed to the long-standing participation in a common material and architectural culture, the same forms in Latin Catholic sanctuaries imply a rather different set of meanings.

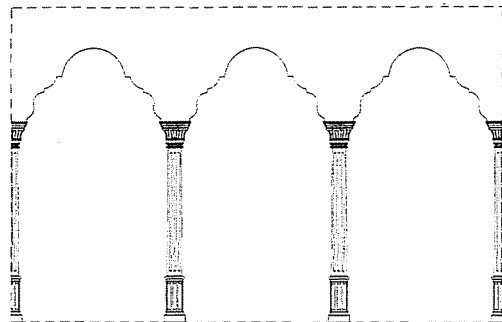
The "foreignness" of the Catholics to the so-called Ottoman *millet* system was being challenged, for the first time since the Ottoman conquest, by a large community with a double allegiance. Ottoman subjects who dressed like Gregorian Arme-



3

nians, respected the sumptuary regulations of the empire, but felt Catholic, did not recognize the authority of the official Armenian Patriarch, and worshipped side by side with the Europeans and the Levantines who held a foreign protection or citizenship. The Latin churches they used began to include relics of the Armenian saints, confession booths reserved to the sacrament of confession in Turkish (the language used by most Armenians in Istanbul), altars dedicated to

Saint Gregory the Illuminator - patron of the Armenian nation - and architectural elements "speaking" the language of the place (fig. 4). The Catholic allegiance of these Armenians could not be officially exposed in public: by Ottoman standards, a community whose religious leader was not acknowledged by the Sultan should have no place in the empire, unless its members were protected by a foreign ambassador, and benefited from a status of relative extra-territoriality. This happened only occasionally, to those Armenian Catholics who managed to obtain the protection of a Catholic ambassador: most of them remained legally Ottoman subjects, and could not profess publicly their Catholic faith. Hence the ambivalence of the visual environment they created at Pera.



4

3. An 18th-century chapel annexed to the church of St. George in Büyükkada (after Tuğlacı 1989).

4. Ottoman "baroque" arches in the church of Santa Maria Draperis, c. 1769 (after Girardelli 2005).

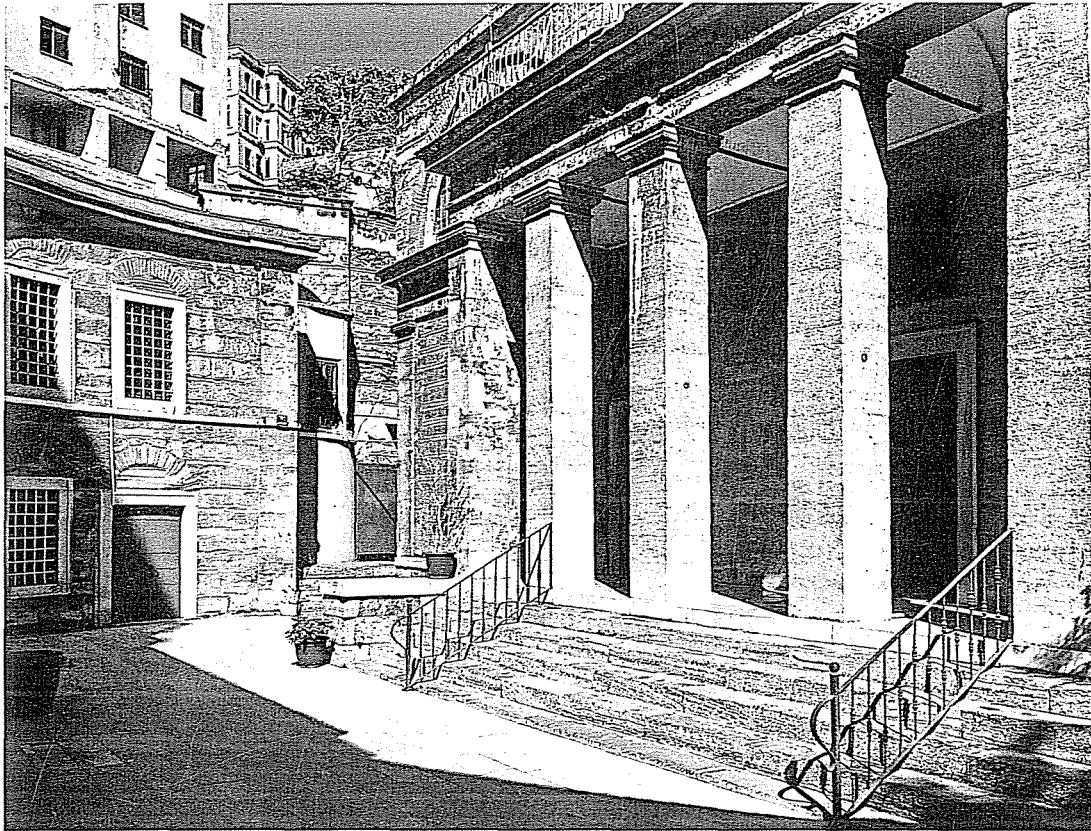
European classicism and Ottoman revivalism across confessional divides

If the late Ottoman baroque style could be appropriated, in the 18th century, by different non-Muslim communities for the reasons we have exposed, it should not be surprising to find similar overlaps in later developments. But the meanings and context of such interactions will be rather different. In the age of Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839), especially after the Greek revolution (begun in 1821), the elimination of the Janissaries (1826), and the creation of a new Greek state (1832), the Sultan seems to have been eager to regain legitimacy and support also as the ruler of non-Muslim communities. He often granted permission for the restoration, reconstruction or even construction *ex-novo* (a much harder achievement for the Christians) of Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Latin Catholic churches. Their generally neo-classical architectural language often echoes the new standards of taste displayed also in mosques and other public buildings⁵, including the new police stations disseminated in the expanding areas of the city. In 1830 Mahmud II also recognized officially, under French and Austrian pressure, the Armenian Catholic community as a new *millet* (Beydilli, 1995), ending thus a period of semi-clandestinity that lasted for roughly two centuries. An Armenian Catholic cathedral, Surp Hisus Pirgiç, was built in Karaköy in 1834 (Tcholakian, 1998, 80-89), with construction techniques and stylistic features (fig. 5) remindful of the Ottoman brick and stone structures of the period.

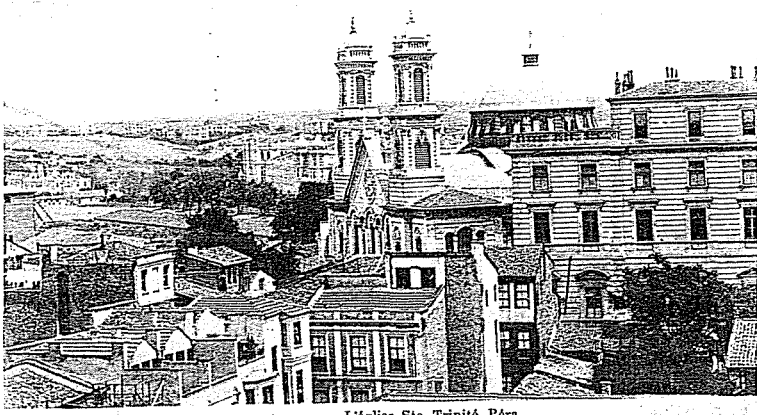
After the Tanzimat rescript (1839), initiating a relative liberalization in the religious sphere, the Catholic Cathedral of Saint Esprit was designed by Giuseppe Fossati, and built under the patronage of archbishop Hilléreau in the newly developing Christian suburb of Pancaldi (Girardelli, 2019). Its dimensions and monumentality were far above the 18th and early 19th century examples of Catholic architecture in the city. Following the Islahat fermanı (1856) - which explicitly mentioned the prospect of easier construction and repair of churches and synagogues - the visibility and monumentality of non-Muslim sanctuaries would rise as high as the Orthodox Hagia Triada in Taksim (fig. 6), or the Catholic new Saint Antoine, completed in 1913, and replacing a much more modest structure (though not on the same site). The former sanctuary, a work of architect Vassiladis Bey Ioannidis dated 1880 (Colonas, 2005, 25 and 32-33), displays an interesting blend of Ottoman, Gothicizing and Byzantine elements. Before this date, no other Christian or Jewish temple could have confidently exposed

5 Alyson Wharton (2015, 81-83) noted the similarity between the relief decoration of the intrados in the domes of the church of Surp Asdvadzazin/Holy Mother of God in Beşiktaş (1838) and of Mahmud II's mausoleum (1839).

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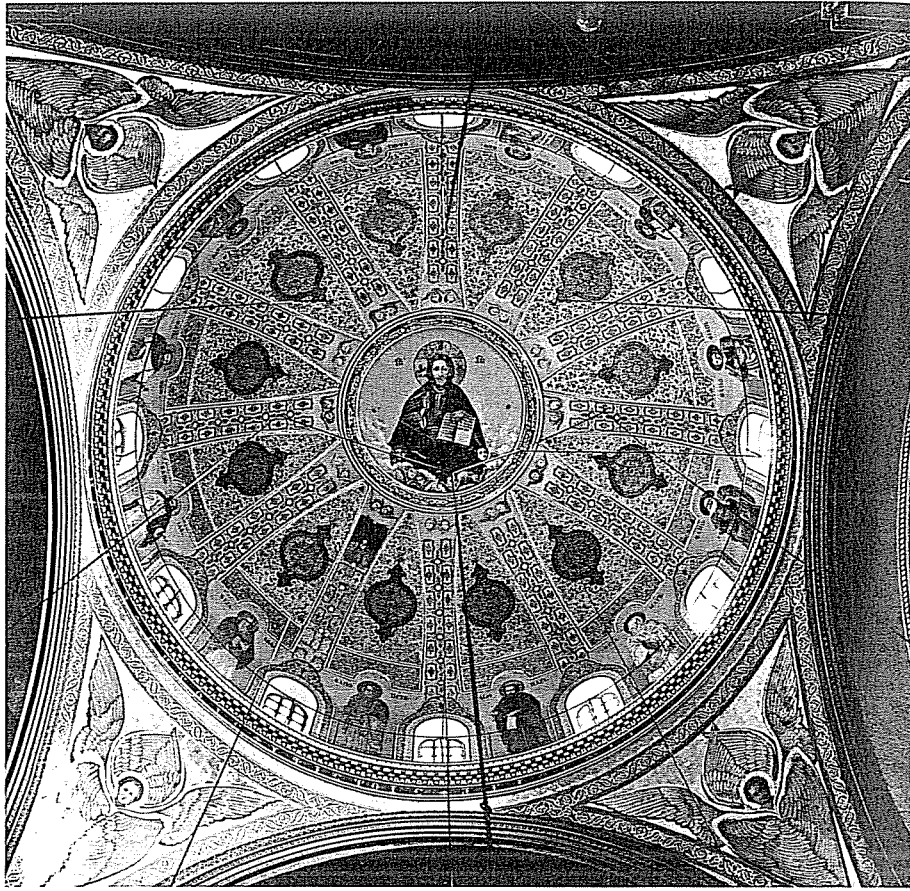


6



Constantinople.
 L'église Ste. Trinité, Péra.
 Bonne et heureuse année! J. Gauthier
 Editeur Max Fruchtermann, Constantinople. 1867. Photograph. Sébah & Joaillier.

5. The narthex of the first Armenian-Catholic sanctuary built in Istanbul, c. 1834. Photo: P. Girardelli.
 6. The Greek-Orthodox church of Hagia Triada, built c. 1880, in a postcard published by Max Fruchtermann (Sébah & Joaillier, courtesy of SALT research, İspiroğlu collection).

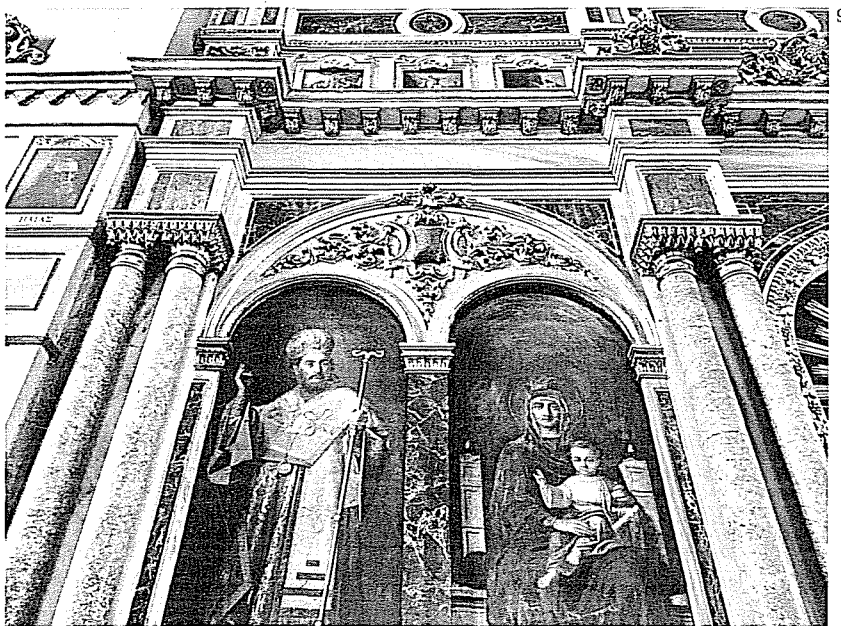
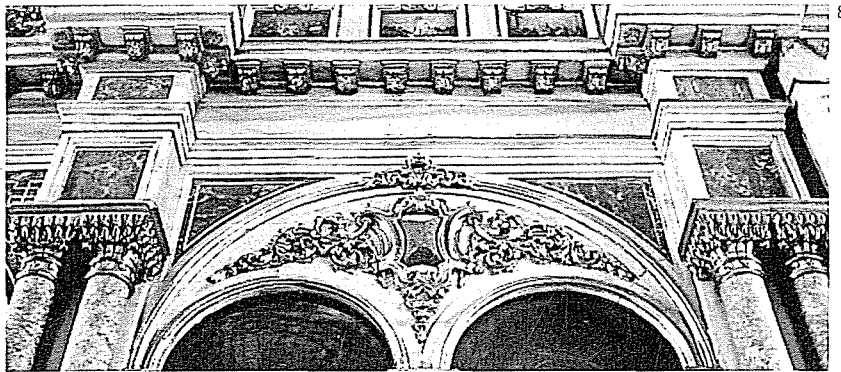


an extradados dome of this size clad in lead, very similar to the domes of coeval or earlier Ottoman mosques.

In the decoration of its façade, Hagia Triada displays neo-Gothic elements with Islamic inflections, in keeping with the decorative language of the Pertevniyal Valide and Hamidiye mosques (Ersoy, 2013). Inside, the majestic dome rests on pendentives with images of the Seraphims, evoking Hagia Sophia; but its intrados is decorated with painted decoration (*kalem işi*) medallions, in a Rûmi/Ottoman decorative mood (fig. 7). What may strike the observer un-

7. The intrados of the dome of Hagia Triada, with kalem işi decoration and images of seraphims in the pendentives. Photo: P. Girardelli.

accustomed to stylistic borrowings across religions even more, is the presence of a quintessentially “Islamic” element in the most sacred part of the ritual apparatus of an orthodox church: the iconostasis. At the Hagia Triada, this devotional screen is partitioned with Ottoman columns bearing *muqarnas* capitals (fig. 8-9).



This type of capital had almost disappeared after the “stylistic revolution” of the 1740s discussed by Ünver Rüstem in his work on the Ottoman Baroque (Rüstem 2019, 60-69). It was gradually revived, and adopted again in the design of mosques and sultanic palaces during the age of Abdülaziz, who promoted officially an Ottoman “architectural renaissance” (Ersoy, 2015).⁶ This ambivalent, revivalist approach would also be pursued sporadically, in a more eclectic language and context, in the reign of

8-9. Iconostasis with muqarnas capitals in the church of Hagia Triada. Photo: P. Girardelli.

⁶ An earlier example of this revivalist capital, dating from the final years of Abülmecid’s reign, is to be found in Gaspare Fossati’s türbe of Reşid Paşa (1859).



Abdülhamit II. It will finally be systematized in an academic framework, gaining the status of a “national style”, only after the Young Turks’ constitutional revolution of 1908. Seeing evident traces of this Ottoman revivalist language in the church of Hagia Triada may have reminded the Greek-Orthodox worshippers that they were still subjects of the Ottoman sultan, notwithstanding the existence of a new Hellenic state since 1832, and the ambivalent positioning of many Greek Ottoman citizens in its regard. A similar stylistic/political characterization also occurred in synagogues, remarkably in the interior of the Ashkenazi temple at Yüksek Kaldırım (Özkan Altınöz, 2017). However, the presence of Islamic and Orientalist motives in Jewish sacred spaces is a global, constant aspect of synagogue design during the 19th century, while it would be hard to find similar elements in a Greek Orthodox church outside Istanbul, or the main Ottoman cities.

It may be interesting to verify if such Ottoman-Islamic elements could reach also the space of Latin Catholic worship of the empire. The mixtilinear arcades in-

10. Columns with muqarnas capitals in the summer residence of the Apostolic Nunciature in Turkey. Photo: P. Girardelli.

introduced in the Catholic complex of Santa Maria Draperis in the 18th century were clearly Ottoman, but did not necessarily evoke an Islamic character, as the *muqarnas* probably did in the late 19th century. To my knowledge, the Catholic churches built in Beyoğlu did not include any



clear element of this revivalist idiom.⁷ However, I would like to conclude this cursory overview with a hint in this sense. Not the official Catholic places of worship, but visual expressions connected to Catholicism did refer to this neo-Islamic idiom. The present summer residence of the Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul in Büyükkada is a neo-classical villa (fig. 10), built in the 1890s for Greek Ottoman patrons, later acquired by the Giustiniani family, and donated in 1905 to this institution by a Greek Catholic member of the same family, Antonietta Matilde Dracopoli, widow of Bartolomeo Isidoro Giustiniani.⁸ The main hall of this building displays two columns with *muqarnas* capitals, in line with the revivalist turn that had begun during the Abdülaziz era (r. 1861-1876) (fig. 11).

Mrs. Giustiniani, who lived in Pera near the Zoğrafyon Greek High School and the properties of the Alléon, Olivo and Perpignani

11. The present summer residence of the Apostolic Nunciature in Turkey (formerly Giustiniani mansion), in the island of Büyükkada, c. 1890. Photo: P. Girardelli.

7 A vault decorated with *muqarnas*, in a mood that transcends specifically Ottoman models, was used in the niche sheltering a side altar of the Armenian Catholic Church of Diyarbakır (1895): Wharton 2015, 85-90.

8 This part of the paper was developed also as part of my research project "Talents in Transition. Italian-Ottoman networks, migration and mobility in the architecture and construction field" (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Bilimsel Araştırma Projeleri, 18302). I am grateful to the graduate students who contributed to the project: Mert Pekdoğdu, Ege Gutay and Erkin Pehlivan.

families, was a generous benefactor of Catholic institutions, both in Istanbul and in Rome. After donating this property to the Vatican in the early 20th century, she also bequeathed with a testament, notarized at the Italian Consulate General of Istanbul in 1926, substantial assets to two Catholic orphanages in Rome, and to the Institute she had founded in memory of her husband in Bomonti: the Salesian school Bartolomeo Giustiniani (today Evrim Lisesi). What appears interesting from the document, is that she also cared to leave a sum of 1500 Turkish liras to the imam of the mosque of Büyükada, Ali Efendi, who should keep half of the sum for himself and distribute the remaining half among those in need in his community. The same amount of 1500 liras was left to the Sisters of Ivrea, who managed an Italian orphanage in Istanbul, and to the charity Societa' Italiana di Beneficenza.⁹

This detail challenges the idea of an unbridgeable divide between local Muslims and Levantine/non-Muslim elites in the multi-cultural environments of the Eastern Mediterranean. A Greek lady with Italian citizenship, who professes the Catholic faith, speaks mostly French, and married into the old Levantine (Genoese/Chiote) family of the Giustiniani, donates to the Vatican a property in Büyükada decorated with *muqarnas*, and later leaves to the Muslims of the same island a substantial sum. Could this concern for a Muslim community be connected to the neo-Ottoman stylistic choice for the decoration of the Giustiniani hall? How conscious and intentional was the inclusion or the preservation of this detail? Was the lady's Greek-Ottoman background important in determining this aspect of taste? And how does this element fit into the new use and destiny of the building as the official seat of a Vatican representation? These questions may or may not be answered through further research. The underlying issue is, however, how the multi-cultural society of Pera (and the islands) would fit in the polysemic, dialogic landscape of late-Ottoman Istanbul, a landscape created largely by its own desires, contentions, representations.

9 Archives of the Consulate General of Istanbul, Atti notarili, 1925-1928. Remarkably absent from the will is the Società Operaia Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso, a philanthropic association linked to the ideals of the Risorgimento, rather secular (and with free-Masonic tendencies) than Catholic in spirit. Greek Orthodox institutions are also absent.

Özet

Latin ve Gayri-Müslim Mimaride Osmanlı Öğeleri

Beyoğlu'ndaki gayri-Müslim yapılarla ilgili literatürde, Osmanlı görsel kültürü ile bağlantılar, Osmanlı-İslam yapılarından alıntılar nadiren ele alınmıştır. Oysa, yapım sistemlerinden iç mekân düzenlemelerine, kemer ve sütun biçimlerinden duvar bezemelerine dek, Katolik, Rum-Ortodoks, Ermeni ve Musevi cemaatler Osmanlı siyasi sistemine bağlılıklarını da ifade eden yerel formlar ve öğeleri benimsemiş bulunuyorlardı. Makale, özellikle 18 ve 19. yüzyıllarda yapılmış Katolik ve Rum Ortodoks mimarlık anıtlarından bazı örnekler ışığında yapılarda gözlenen bu ortaklıklarını içinde buldukları çok kültürlü bağlam içinde değerlendirmektedir.

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