

QUESTIONING AN “ICON OF CHANGE”: THE NURUOSMANIYE COMPLEX AND THE WRITING OF OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY (1)

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2. Hamadeh notes that what happened in the eighteenth century was in fact a changing disposition toward tradition and innovation. This aesthetic and cultural opening was mirrored in the receptiveness to foreign ideas and material culture that was characterized in architecture as well. On the other hand, the climate of change was not restricted to an inclination towards the west only; there were also adoptions from eastern elements and early classical Ottoman features. See Hamadeh (2004). For an overview of the architectural developments of this period, also see Artan (2006).

INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century began with the return of the court to İstanbul after the Edirne incident (1703) and some profound changes that took place in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. In the meantime, the Ottoman capital set the stage for an intensive architectural campaign; there was an upsurge in renovation, restoration, and building activities mainly for the purpose of reaffirming state presence and authority in İstanbul. These urban and architectural developments concomitant with the ongoing social transformations changed the built environment of the city, new building types emerged and there was an infiltration of foreign elements from outside cultures that was made visible in the gradual penetration of western neoclassical, baroque, and rococo forms. Hence a totally new architectural idiom started to appear in İstanbul, marked by the hybridity and co-existence of different styles that were incorporated into the traditional Ottoman canon.

Cerasi (2001 b) emphasizes that the new architecture of the eighteenth century introduced variations and adaptations of old components, Ottoman and Byzantine, in combination with derived elements. It is important to note that “Western influence was not antithetic to tradition and to other influences”. According to Cerasi (1999) all this was more than mere change in style and ornament; it was indeed an evolution of urban design and artistic mentality in eighteenth century Ottoman culture. Hamadeh, pointing to the changing landscape of İstanbul in this period underlines social transformations, expansion in patronage patterns, and appearance of new building forms noting that the architectural campaign to beautify the city after long periods of neglect might also be attributed to an effort to reconstruct the image of İstanbul as the capital city of the former “glorious days” of the empire (2).

The Nuruosmaniye Complex is the apogee of the stylistic transformations that began with the fountain of Ahmed III (1728) at the *Bâb-ı Hûmâyûn*.

Started during the reign of Mahmud I (1748) and completed shortly after his death (1755), the Nuruosmaniye in Ottoman architectural history is considered to be the first royal religious complex displaying baroque and neo-classical elements such as shells, scrolls, molded cornices, and cartouches in its flamboyant surface decoration. Since it is the first sultanic complex built after the Yeni Valide mosque (completed in 1663), the Nuruosmaniye can also be considered as the visible expression of the dynasty's efforts to reaffirm its power and potency in a period of political and economic hardship through the use of an innovative architectural vocabulary.



Figure 1. View from the interior, the Nuruosmaniye Mosque.



Figure 2. The Nuruosmaniye Complex.

3. It is agreed by general scholarship that Simeon Kalfa was the first prominent non-Muslim architect responsible for an imperial project. Artan (2006) notes that he had participated in the Laleli project as well. There is not much information available about Simeon, nor any other building attributed to him, with the exception of a house mentioned in a letter quoted by Pamukciyan (1981). In this letter written by an Armenian priest in 1759, there is the account of an excursion of Mustafa III along the Bosphorus when he saw a "dark red house in Kandilli, built by 'Red' Simon Kalfa who was the architect of the new mosque of Sultan Mahmud". Pamukciyan also comments on a number of sources to corroborate that Simeon Kalfa was of Greek origin. On the other hand, Kuban (2007, 528) states that the hearsay about Simeon's coming from the Balyan family cannot be evidenced.

4. This was not an uncommon practice, as written sources frequently mentioned plans and models used by Ottoman architects during the 15th and 16th centuries. This is demonstrated by Necipoğlu in her study on the plans and models from the Ottoman architectural practice. She states that since the Ottoman architect was not trained in perspective drawing, architectural models were the only means to visualize a three-dimensional perception. These models, she adds, were displayed in public festivities, and also used as souvenirs or mementoes of an actual building. Necipoğlu (1986).

5. "...bak benim bu esnâda câmi'i şerif binâsı hizmetinden ehem ve mültezim nazar-ı Humâyunumda bir iş yoktur." Ahmed Efendi (1918).

6. There is also the story of a blessed old man who greeted Mahmud I at the corner of the street and started to cry and pray for his health, thanking him for having chosen this site for the erection of a lofty honorable mosque and for making the people there very happy; the sultan hence decided to have a royal mosque built there. See, Ahmed Efendi (1918).



Figure 3. The Nuruosmaniye Complex.

The building has almost transparent façades with generous fenestration and elliptical windows (Figure 1); there are fluted capitals, round arches, placing of the *mihrab* inside a half-domed apsidal recess, an imposing imperial ramp, and a horse-shoe shaped polygonal courtyard which is unique in Ottoman mosque architecture (Figure 2, 3). We do not know the patron's motives behind the unusual innovative character of the mosque, but he was known to have launched certain reformist attempts in the empire and invited European experts for that purpose. It is important to note here that the architect who was responsible for the building was Simeon Kalfa, a non-Muslim Greek (3).

This study is devised to question whether the Nuruosmaniye, the prominent, imposing monument with all its unusual stylistic features, was perceived as a novelty by contemporaneous observers through a survey of local and foreign accounts as well as twentieth-century perceptions and art historical narratives with the aim of addressing the image and status of the Nuruosmaniye as it was established in modern historical writing.

THE NURUOSMANIYE COMPLEX IN OTTOMAN SOURCES

The most important primary source available on the complex is the *Târih-i Câmi'-i Şerif-i Nûr-i 'Osmânî* (History of the Honorable Mosque of Nuruosmaniye), which is the *Bina Defteri* or *Risâle* written by *Bina Kâtibi* Ahmed Efendi who was the secretary of the mosque's construction comptroller. This is a rare document on the specifics of the building and gives a detailed account of the organization of construction and step by step information on the building process. It is also a first-hand narrative about eighteenth century building techniques and site organization.

The Nuruosmaniye openly manifests the courageous attempt of a bold and daring sultan experimenting with innovative techniques and styles in his quest for a new architectural identity. There are narratives stating that Mahmud I brought the plans of famous European churches and wanted to adopt one of these for his new mosque but he was strongly opposed by the *ulema* (Toderini, 1798, Vol.2, 20-2; Dallaway, 1795, 103). It should be noted however; that these allusions to a European model are restricted to foreign perceptions only and not mentioned in Ottoman chronicles (Hamadeh, 2004; 2008). Ahmed Efendi's version in the *Târih-i Câmi'-i Şerif-i Nûr-i 'Osmânî* states that Mahmud had requested a drawing of the mosque (4); a rather simple sketch of a building with four walls was drawn and presented to him, but the Sultan was not content with it and ordered a (three dimensional) model (Ahmed Efendi, 1918). The sultan considered the construction of the mosque very significant for he said that there was nothing more important for him at that time (5). The Nuruosmaniye Complex was built next to the *Bedesten*, in a commercially active and very busy area and consists of a mosque, an *imaret*, *medrese*, *kütüphane*, *türbe*, *çeşme*, *sebil*, and *arasta* (Figure 4, 5) that spread out on both sides of a very crowded street and stands like an annex to the commercially active area. Ahmed Efendi notes that the sultan ordered a lofty mosque (grand sultanic mosque) to be built in this location because it was an honorable esteemed site close to the tradesmen, merchants, and artisans, and that it would be convenient for the Muslim community to come for prayers (6).

The eighteenth-century chronicler Süleyman İzzî also referred to the Muslim population in his account on the Nuruosmaniye:

7. Süleyman İzzî (1784, Vol.I, 189/b, 190/a).

A lofty, charitable mosque and noble sanctuary will be built anew with the orders of the sultan, near the old *Bezazistan*, at the honorable, delightful location inhabited by a large Muslim community, and all the people living in the vicinity will benefit from this charitable pious mosque and munificent *mihrab*" (7).

İzzî's emphasis on the location and the Muslim population in the area sheds some light on the underlying motive for the choice of site; it brings to mind that since the Nuruosmaniye was built next to a busy commercial zone it might have been intended to meet the requirements of the

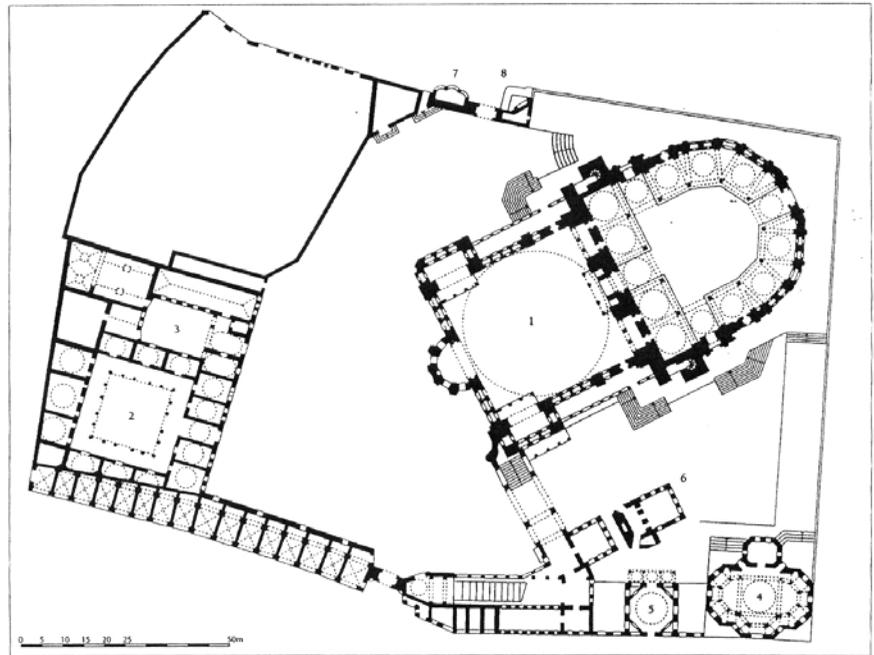


Figure 4. Site plan of the Nuruosmaniye Complex.

Nuruosmaniye Camisi, İstanbul. Yerleşim planı: 1. Cami, 2. Medrese, 3. İmaret, 4. Kitaplık, 5. Türbe, 6. Hünkar Kasrı, 7. Sebil, 8. Çeşme



Figure 5. The çeşme and sebil of the Nuruosmaniye.

8. "altı bin altıyüz altmış beş kuruş dahi Sarıkçılar kurbunda müceddeden İhyâsı irâde buyurulan câmi-i şerif masarifına mahsuben bina emini Ali Ağâ'ya eda ve teslim ve bâ-emr-i hümayûn ber-minval-i muharrer sarf olunmağla...." See, I. Mahmud Vakfiyesi.

9. Sultan III. Osman Vakfiyesi (2003).

10. "...câmi'-i şerif-i pür-nûrda..." See, Sultan III. Osman Vakfiyesi.

In vernacular language the complex is called *Nuruosmaniye*, which is derived from *Nûr-ı Osmâniyye*, meaning the 'heavenly light of Osman'.

merchants in the *Bazaar*, reconfirming Ahmed Efendi's observations on this matter.

Ahmed Efendi notes for the building as "the beautiful, honorable, holy mosque in the new style" (*câmi'-i şerif-i nev-tarz-ı lâtif*), referring to the Nuruosmaniye within the novelties of the architectural vocabulary of the eighteenth century. With reference to the size of the dome, he says that according to the observations and measurements of scientists, the greatest dome in İstanbul is that of Hagia Sophia, the second is the Süleymaniye, the third is the Fatih (*Ebu'l-Feth*) Mosque (the old), and the Nuruosmaniye rises with the fourth largest dome. According to Aras Neftçi (2007), the dome of the Nuruosmaniye measures 25.40 meters in diameter and is the third in İstanbul, after the Hagia Sophia and the Süleymaniye.

Ahmed Efendi (1918) notes the unequalled beauty and excellence of the building:

It is hereby written that this noble mosque full of divine light, this beautiful building erected with the graciousness of the sultan and munificence of God, represents wishes fulfilled; and the truth is that this charmingly ornate building, the exalted temple that gives a sense of relief, is constructed out of solid marble; and has no equal not only in İstanbul but probably throughout the world of Islam.

The author of the *Târih* talks very highly about the dependencies in the complex and his narrative is full of praise:

The stately *imâret* and the noble, majestic *medrese* (*imâret-i âmire ile medrese-i lâtif ve medrese-i müniife*).

There are an exalted *sebilhâne* and a lofty fountain outside the courtyard on the two sides of the Sarıkçılar Gate. There stands a magnificent, peerless library (**Figure 6**) of unequalled beauty at the corner overlooking the Çörekçi Gate of the Mahmud Paşa Mosque; inside the library there are marvelous books for the use of students of science and knowledge. In the gardens of the mosque there is a skillfully crafted fountain of unmatched finesse that has water spouts on four sides and on top. There is also a small fountain across the Cebeciler Kulluğu that provides water to the thirsty (**Figure 7**) ... the honorable mosque with a new style and the virtuous *medrese* and the *imâret*. The construction of this honorable mosque took eight years and [the news] spread through the horizons from the East to the West [around the world], and all those who will deserve [benefit] or not deserve, are obviously waiting [for its completion] with longing eyes" (Ahmed Efendi, 1918).

The *vakfiye* of Mahmud I makes several notes of the finances that were assigned to *Bina Emini Ali Ağâ* to be spent for the "honorable mosque to be built anew by imperial edict near the Sarıkçılar" (8). The construction of the Nuruosmaniye, which was started during the reign of Mahmud I, was completed seven years later when his brother Osman III came to power. It is therefore appropriate to look at the *vakfiye* of Osman III as well and trace observations on the Nuruosmaniye in this text:

"In the house of the empire, the great city of Kostantiniyye, at the poultry market an honorable mosque, a noble sanctuary, grand *medrese*, pleasant class-room, lofty library, an ornate room [office], a prosperous *imâret*, a finely crafted source of water [fountain] were built and erected with God's munificence and the will of the Prophet" (9).

There is reference to the light in the building (both physical and probably also spiritual) (10) and a detailed description of how water was brought to the fountains from Ferhad Paşa Çiftliği, outside the city walls in



Figure 6. The library, detail.



Figure 7. The fountain-sebil of the Nuruosmaniye.

11. There was a total of 72 *du'âgûyâns* employed in the Nuruosmaniye. See, Yediyıldız (2003, 239).

12. Süleyman İzzî (1784, Vol. I, 189/b, 190/a).

13. There is an unexplained difference of 10 days between the dates given by İzzî and Ahmed Vâsîf.

14. Ahmed Vâsîf's interesting observation on the Nuruosmaniye as having a "symmetrical plan" (*gayr-i müşevveş*) is not repeated for any other building in his chronicle. See, Ahmed Vâsîf (1994, Vol. I, 72).

Edirnekapı. It is also noteworthy that the number of *du'âgûyâns* (those who recite the Koran and pray for the longevity of the state, victory of the Ottoman army, and the well-being of the Muslim community) appointed for the Nuruosmaniye was much higher than those of the earlier mosques (11).

The *Teşrifat Defteri* or the *Merasim Defteri* for the inauguration of the Nuruosmaniye was recently discovered as a supplement to those of the Laleli mosque. These documents include the names, ranks, and order of people who would participate in the inaugural ceremony, their sartorial codes, and where they were obliged to stand. It is specified that the procession would follow the *Divan Yolu* from the Palace to the Mosque, and there is a list of grandees who would receive gifts, fur coats, and clothes as well as detailed information about the types and costs of these gifts. It is interesting to note that in this document there is no reference to the architectural style or the novel features of the building (Neftçi, 2007).

The eighteenth-century chronicler Süleyman İzzî wrote about the location, the piety and charity of the sultan, ceremonial, and other important events that happened on the day the construction began. His narrative is told under the heading: "The Foundation of the Exalted, Lofty Mosque (*Vaz'-ı esâs-ı câmi'i mu'allâ*)." İzzî notes that on the same day [8 Safer 1162 or January 28, 1749] a galleon -*Nasîr Nümâ*- was put to sea and afterwards the sultan was accompanied by the grand-vizier and other high officials came to visit and inspect the site of foundation where sheep were sacrificed for the occasion and gifts were distributed with munificence and generosity (12).

Another contemporary historian, Ahmed Vâsîf (1994, Vol. I, 71), whose chronicles were in sequence with those of İzzî, noted that:

"...the construction for the new mosque had started on 28 Muharrem 1162 [January 18, 1749] (13) during the reign of the late sultan Mahmud Han, and while it was being built, made higher, and stronger, Osman Han, took over the throne and became the new sultan of the Ottoman land. The building was completed on the *Gurre Rebiülevvel 1169* [December 5, 1755] with the dependencies and was named *Nûr-ı 'Osmânî*. The interior of the mosque was furnished by colorful rugs and was full of priceless ornaments and embellishments appropriate for the sultan".

Ahmed Vâsîf depicted the visit of the sultan and his inspection, saying that he gave fur coats and other gifts (*ilbâs-ı hilât*) to the high officials during the inaugural ceremony. He referred to the Nuruosmaniye as the "second Kâbe (*beyt-i ma'mûr*)", praised its new style and layout, and how daylight streamed through generous fenestration on the façades. He went on to applaud the patron's munificence:

"..[the mosque is] indeed perfect and matchless with no equal; this bright, and prosperous building, the luminous temple that makes all other temples, old and new, envious; with an attractive layout and a symmetrical [well-defined] plan; it is the strongest, sturdiest and reinforced, it is obvious that the neat and orderly temple is delightful and pleasing, and is qualified as a sacred, honorable, lofty mosque.

There is no need to describe the sun with its light,

The work of art [monument] is visible [obvious] to the skilled eye.

In the courtyard of the mosque, there is a *medrese*, library, and *imâret* built where many people will be educated and benefit from, and they will pray for the patron's health and well being till eternity" (14).



Figure 8. The courtyard of the Nuruosmaniye (Photo by A. Neftçi).

Figure 9. The courtyard of the Nuruosmaniye.

Şem'dânî-zâde, the self-appointed chronicler of the second half of the eighteenth century, recounted the inaugural ceremony of the mosque in a more detailed passage describing the feast, fur coats, and coins distributed to those gathered for the occasion, mentioning that there was no applause inside the building since it was a mosque. He emphasized the "architectural temperament" (*tâb'-ı mi'mârisi*) of Sultan Mahmud and underlined the "charming plan and attractive layout" (*hoş resm ve lâtif tarh etmiştir*) of the mosque. Şem'dânî-zâde also gave the measurements of the height of the dome, the minarets and wrote about the "medrese with twelve cells, a lofty *imâret*, a library, fountain, *sebil*, and *şadırvan*." He concluded this section by praising the style, ornamentation, and decorative vocabulary: "The truth is, this is an appropriate pious deed, skillfully crafted, flamboyantly ornate and decorated, charming and delightful" (Şem'dânî-zâde, 1978).

İncicyan, the Armenian chronicler of the eighteenth century narrated with the composure and precision of a scientist praising the style of the Nuruosmaniye and said that it was built on a platform across the Old Bedesten and its dome and general architectural style are superior to those of all other mosques in İstanbul. "This building is adorned with marble columns; the gate, windows, and capitals are elegant and charming" (1976, 50-51). In the *Hadikatü'l-Cevâmi* which is an encyclopedic account of the mosques in Ottoman İstanbul, Hâfız Hüseyin Ayyânsarâyi (2000, 24-25) wrote very briefly about the Nuruosmaniye, mentioning its epigraphic program, and the imperial tribune (*hünkâr mahfili*) and the *müezzin's* tribune without addressing the style of the building.

In these contemporaneous Ottoman accounts about the Nuruosmaniye, there are no specific references to the innovative character of the building. Only Ahmed Efendi (1918) addressed "the new style" of the mosque (*câmi-i şerif-i nev tarz-ı lâtif*) and praised its dependencies; however, he did not even point out the unusual shape of the courtyard, except that, "since the corners are rounded, it measures less than a quadrangle with the same dimensions" (15). This is interesting because the horseshoe form is unique in Ottoman mosque architecture and one would expect Ahmed Efendi to underline this very salient feature with greater strength (Figure 8, 9).

15. "Ancak köşeleri müdeverer olmağla terbi'inden bir mîkdâr noksan olur." Ahmed Efendi (1918).

16. "On retrouve toujours le même dessein, si ce n'est peut-être dans les mosquées qu'on a construites sous la règne de Sultan Mahamout." Flachat (1766, v: I, 400-3).

17. Starting in the seventeenth century, as palace women became politically more powerful, the political role of the chief black eunuch also started to grow and reached its zenith in the first half of the eighteenth century. They were sometimes even more powerful than the grand viziers, "The Vizier exists but by the *Kızlar Ağası's* breath and does not take a step without him" said the British ambassador Sir James Porter. See, Itzkowitz (1977, 20-1).

The growing political role of the chief black eunuch was certainly reflected in architectural patronage as well. Hamadeh notes that nearly half of the thirty-two *meydan* fountains that were built between 1729 and 1746 were patronized by eunuchs. See, Hamadeh (2002, 123-48).

On the other hand, Flachat may be referring to *Hacı Beşir Ağa* here when he says 'Agi Bectache', for although he died in 1746, Beşir Ağa was the most prominent and powerful *Kızlar Ağası* in the first half of the eighteenth century. According to Itzkowitz (1977, 20) he is credited with having brought to power and caused the downfall of over a dozen grand viziers and with being very close to Mahmud I. However, there are no references to the chief black eunuch in the *Târih-i Câmî-i Şerîf-i Nûr-i 'Osmanî*.

18. Cosimo Comidas de Carbo gnano was an Armenian, born and educated in Italy. He worked for the Spanish Embassy in İstanbul and was ennobled with *Chevalier* rank by Pope Pius VII. His most prominent work, originally written in Italian is a presentation of the historical topography of İstanbul and its monuments.



Figure 10. The Nuruosmaniye Mosque with minarets capped in lead (Photo by B. Kargopoulu, circa 1870-1875) (İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Fotoğraf Arşivi).

Other historians and chroniclers all regarded the building with admiration and agreed upon the excellence of the structure that they found charming, lofty, luminous, and peerless with a delightful design and layout. Şem'dân-zâde emphasized the flamboyant decoration and ornamentation, whereas only İncicyan found architectural features such as marble columns, windows, and capitals worth praising. Since he was raised in a Venetian monastery, İncicyan must have been well aware of European artistic styles and these features might not have appeared as "foreign" to him. A closer reading of these contemporary Ottoman accounts reveals that the Nuruosmaniye was planned, designed, and built as a very important project in eighteenth-century İstanbul. The importance given to ceremonial aspects in the *Târih* and the *Teşrifat Defteri* is commensurate with the size and significance of the Nuruosmaniye at that time, an indication that it was probably the most prominent and courageous attempt launched almost 150 years after the last royal complex, the Sultan Ahmed.

THE NURUOSMANİYE IN CONTEMPORANEOUS FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

The Nuruosmaniye Complex attracted the attention of many foreign travelers, chroniclers, and diplomats who visited İstanbul after the second half of the eighteenth century. The French manufacturer Jean Claude Flachat who resided in İstanbul between 1740 and 1755, recounts how they went from one mosque to another, which he says were the best things to see. However, he does not think that the interior decoration of the mosques deserve much attention and notes that it is usually sufficient to merely enter one mosque or look at it from a distance, for the decoration is the same in all of them. Nevertheless, Flachat emphasizes that the architectural style of the Nuruosmaniye stands out among the others: "One would always find the same design in the mosques, except probably in those constructed under the reign of Sultan Mahamout" (16). He is deeply impressed by the style of the Nuruosmaniye (the mosque built by Sultan Mahmud) to which he has devoted a lengthy paragraph:

"...without doubt, the most beautiful mosque that anyone can see in the Empire, when one has seen St. Sophie. There one can recognize the genius and the good taste of Agi Bectache, the famous Keslar Aga [*Kızlar Ağası*] or chief of the black eunuchs, that I shall talk about later: he has approved the plan (17). They have worked on it for five years. Whatever majestic height the building has achieved, there is as much construction underground as above ground level. Nevertheless I do not pretend that this is a masterpiece of art. It has a square plan topped with a dome without columns. The walls are made of large blocks of white marble that gives the thickness. They are linked to one another using the same marble [in the cracks] so that the mosque seems to be made out of a single block of white marble, sculpted on all sides with beautiful cornices that are supported by pilasters *en relief* that are placed around the building. A framed double cornice forms the windows that are embellished by English crystals. The courtyard is decorated by a number of large columns of granite from Egypt. They are exceptionally beautiful and the capitals are covered with gold [there is no other reference to this in any other source]; the main dome and the domes in the courtyard, and the minarets are capped in lead" (Figure 10) (Flachat 1766, Vol. I, 400-3).

Carbo gnano (18) focuses (1993, 63) on the architectural beauty and the decorative vocabulary of the Nuruosmaniye in his writings:

"The mosque named *Osmaniye* was erected near the Constantinus Column on the second hill and stands out with its architectural finesse and

distinction among the others. The construction started during the reign of Sultan Mahmut and was completed by Osman III who wanted to name the mosque *Osmaniye*. The most beautiful decorations of the building are the mouldings, portals, and windows; the marble galleries on the sides are magnificent, yet the most striking feature is the dome which is one of the most conspicuous in İstanbul".

Joseph Purgstall von Hammer was an Austrian diplomat who worked in İstanbul at the turn of the century and wrote incessantly for many years. His seminal work is the History of the Ottoman Empire in which he notes that the Nuruosmaniye consists of a square measuring seventy six *pas* on each side and it is accordingly covered by a single dome with the same diameter and does not have any lateral domes. He explains how the French architect M.Le Roi, visiting İstanbul in 1753, marveled at the technique of constructing the dome and gives a brief technical description on the building of domes. With reference to the architectural style, he says that there are no marble columns and galleries (*péristyle*) inside the Nuruosmaniye and this is what differentiates the building from the others. There is also an interesting allusion that von Hammer suggests on the name of the mosque: he says that it was named *Nouri Osmani (la lumière d'Osman)*, after the reigning sultan Osman III and notes that it also brings to mind the third Chalif Osman who put the verses of the Koran together in a single book and since he was married to the two daughters of the Prophet, he was nicknamed "possessor of two lights" making another reference to the "luminosity of the mosque" (1992-2000, Vol.15, 86-8, 151-3).

Giambattista Toderini was an Italian Jesuit who studied Ottoman civilization in İstanbul and he spoke very highly of the Nuruosmaniye saying that with its gilded galleries and elegant gold inscriptions, the mosque looks like a graceful and refined piece of jewelry. He was also the first author to refer to the plan of a church as a model for the Nuruosmaniye:

"The mosque was built by Sultan Mahmud who had an appreciation for arts, painting, and a refined taste in architecture. Mahmud brought drawings and models of the renowned buildings in Italy, England, and France and wanted to build a mosque inspired from these plans. However, the *ulema* made objections upon seeing this design by saying that the plan resembles that of a Christian temple rather than a mosque and advised the sultan to make modifications according to Muslim tradition in order to avoid discontent and upheaval among the public. Sultan Mahmud, feeling obliged to listen to the *ulema*, chose a plan that put both European and Turkish styles together. When the building was completed in 1755, Osman III (who was the reigning sultan) consulted the *müftü*, and obtained the fatwa; he was hence happy and content to name the mosque *Nûr-i 'Osmânîye*, giving his own name to the mosque and not that of his brother, Sultan Mahmud" (19).

The accounts of Jacques Dallaway, an English traveler who visited İstanbul in the second half of the eighteenth century, were curiously analogous to those of Toderini published six years earlier. Reverend Robert Walsh, another British traveler who came to İstanbul in the beginning of the nineteenth century, most probably based his writings on these accounts. Dallaway (1795, 103) and Walsh (1838, Vol. II, 12) both referred to the refined taste of Mahmud I, how he brought plans of Christian cathedrals as a model, and how he was made to renounce this choice by the men of law (*ulema*). Ottoman sources need to be checked on what the European travelers mean by "objections from the *ulema*", nevertheless Michael Levey (1976, 121) commenting on these accounts says that "if the story is true, the Sultan seems to have largely had his way, for the resulting complex is more



Figure 11. The courtyard of the Nuruosmaniye (Engraving by Thomas Allom).

Western than traditionally Ottoman” (20). In this argument Levey must be more concerned with the decorative elements, the *mihrab* niche, and the horseshoe-shaped courtyard of the Nuruosmaniye, for although these striking features cannot be undermined, the shape of the mosque is the traditional square covered by a single dome that once again confirms the compromise of Mahmud I between his innovative urges and the pressures from the *ulema* insisting on the classical codes of Ottoman architecture.

Robert Walsh who has underlined Mahmud I’s attempt to model the Nuruosmaniye after a European church and his being opposed by the *ulema*, made an unusual remark on the architectural style of the building; while there are observations that focus on the European or western inspirations and elements, Walsh (1838, Vol.II, 12-3) adopts a rather Orientalist attitude:

“Notwithstanding the intentions of its first architect (21) the design of the mosque of Osman is purely Oriental; yet it has an elegant appearance. The approach is by an arcade, supported by a colonnade of light and lofty pillars, enclosing the court. The whole of the interior is covered by an expansive dome, without any visible support of columns. The illustration [he is referring to the engraving of the courtyard by Thomas Allom (Figure 11)] represents the court with the congregation gathering for prayers and some of them engaged in the usual preparations. Nothing can be more grave and solemn than these. The people seem to be impressed with their pious purpose before they enter the house of prayer”.

20. See, Hamadeh (2008, 224-5). Such discords and disagreements between the ruler and the *ulema* were not new, Bates notes that in the fifteenth century Mehmed II seemed to have displeased his fellow Muslims and especially the *ulema* took offense in the interest of the sultan in “Western” arts and sciences. See, Bates (1979, 167-81).

21. What he means by “first architect” is not known, he might have meant Mahmud I, the first patron.

Nineteenth-century narratives appear to be commensurate with the Orientalist discourse that started to become prevalent in that period, as suggested by the accounts of Philipp Anton Dethier (1993, 51) who wrote a short paragraph on the Nuruosmaniye, emphasizing that “the only thing that is beautiful about this mosque is that it is totally made of marble.” Dethier recognized the European stylistic elements in the architecture of the building and made an interesting remark: “The mosque has a rectangular plan and is a spectacular example of foreign pride that seems to impose on Turkey those features that are not suitable for it.”

22. Hamadeh (2008, 226). See Toderini (1789, Vol. II, 20-22), Dallaway (1795, 103), and Walsh (1838, Vol. II, 12).

23. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Mimarisi (Usûl-i Mi'mârî-i' Osmâni)* (1998, 16, 56). See, Ersoy (2000, 256-60).

The analysis of these accounts mirrors an interesting divergence between Ottoman and European chronicles on the style of the Nuruosmaniye. While Ottoman sources point to the elegant beauty and grandeur of the lofty mosque, underlining its conspicuous decoration, ornaments, embellishments, brightness, and prosperity, none of them seems to be impressed by the stylistic changes in architecture introduced by this building. Foreign writers on the other hand, made implications to western references, such as cathedral plans brought from Europe and the possibility of an inspiration from Christian temples (22).

EARLIER TWENTIETH CENTURY WRITINGS AND THE NURUOSMANIYE

“This small monument (*Nour-i-Osmânié*) displays some stylistic characteristics of Turkish monuments on one hand, with certain elements borrowed from the eighteenth-century European architecture on the other, and marks the beginning of this rapid *décadence* in Ottoman art which, I must admit, was intensified by the mediocrity and ignorance of the European artists that the sultans and grandees chose to work with. This infatuation for European styles would perhaps be less harmful for art if more talented artists would have been invited to Constantinople, but this was not the case. Furthermore, starting in the middle of the eighteenth century, the *décadence* was diffused and intensified in an unacceptable manner”.

These are the words of Henri Jules Saladin (1907, 537) on the Nuruosmaniye, a Parisian architect of the late nineteenth century. After a description of the dome and the *mihrab*, Saladin comments on the courtyard: “In front of the mosque there is a large semi-circular courtyard edged by a portico, the silhouette of the building is quite elegant and stands beautifully in all its simplicity.” Cornelius Gurlitt who was a German architect and an architectural historian for the baroque style, came to İstanbul several times at the turn of the century. In his brief entry on the Nuruosmaniye, he says that the system of this structure is the same as that of Selimiye, with a huge domed square and a *mihrab* that consists of the five sides of a dodecagon. About the courtyard, he merely states that it is semi-circular and developed from a polygon (Gurlitt, 1999, 88).

The *Usûl-i Mi'mârî-i 'Osmânî* was commissioned by the Ottoman Empire to be displayed at the Ottoman exhibition in the Vienna International Exposition in 1863, in which eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture has been assessed in two distinct periods; the early years are depicted as a final glow and flourishment or “as a swan song” preceding the inevitable “decline” caused by the infiltration of western ornamental elements (Ersoy, 2000). It is noted that in the later decades, with the introduction of some decorative features by the architects and engineers brought from France, the unique beauty of the classical Ottoman architectural style was spoiled, and the peerless characteristics of Sinan’s architecture gradually degenerated. The only way to regain an ascent in the arts is to go back to the grandeur that the Ottomans had once enjoyed with their own original genius. The later years are criticized for being contaminated with “denatured” and “frappante” architectural models like the Nuruosmaniye (23).

Concomitant with these tendencies Celal Esad (Arseven) who was one of the first Turkish art historians, expounded on the patronage of Mahmud I:

“The French engineers invited to Turkey by Mahmoud I for the construction of water works, brought sculptors, decorators, and designers with them

who introduced the Louis XV style and the baroque that prepared the degeneration of the Ottoman style. The Ottoman artists started to get acquainted with different types of European ornamentation which rapidly became the vogue and was commonly called “à la franka” in vernacular. It was too soon and quick for them to forget the principles of Ottoman art.

Ignoring the basic concepts of this art [Ottoman], the builders started to mix all styles so that they produced ugly and displeasing works. One of these monuments is the *Nouri Osmanié*, started by Mahmoud I and completed by Osman; such as the Mosque of Laleli, and both of them belong to that period of *décadence*. The former (*Nouri Osmanié*) has a heavy and disgraceful aspect and is said to be built after a plan made by Sultan Mahmoud I himself” (Celal Esad, 1909, 179-80).

Saladin and Celal Esad have both termed the style of Nuruosmaniye as epitomizing the “*décadence* of Ottoman architecture”, attributing this degeneration to the mediocre talent and quality of the European artists practicing in İstanbul at that time. In his later work *Türk Sanatı*, Celal Esad (1928, 93) continues to praise the art of the classical Ottoman period, saying that art and architecture had reached an apogee at that time. It was pure and simple he says, was rid of the pomp and extravagance, and the Ottomans had found the most aesthetic solutions with simplicity and pure logic. He further notes that until the reign of Ahmet III, the Turks had been inspired from the East and it was only after this sultan’s accession that they started to turn to Europe. Curved details, scrolls, and shells of the baroque style started to appear on buildings and objects, while plain and simple forms of the classical period were gradually abandoned for the sake of these new ornamental features. Nevertheless, Celal Esad emphasizes that this style was not totally modeled after the European baroque; noting the creativity of the Turkish artists he says that in their search for a new idiom, they combined new forms and decorative elements with the characteristic features of their own taste and created a “Turkish Baroque” style. It is interesting that Celal Esad does not call this style “Ottoman Baroque” but prefers to use the term “Turkish” (Celal Esad, 1928, 170-1) (24).

During his stay in İstanbul the Hungarian architect Károly Kós (1995, 98-99) drew attention to the European inspirations within the building program of Mahmud I, saying that he was one of the most interesting advocates of change and renovation.

“New forms and elements were imported from France and Persia and were blended into admirable artistic creations. These buildings were not monumental works of art though, they were renovated structures with flamboyant decorations; there was nothing new in this Turkish Baroque idiom, it only involved renovation and embellishment of the past.

The Nuruosmaniye built between 1730-1754 was the first sultanic mosque after almost one hundred years of pause and the first baroque religious building in İstanbul. The Laleli (1773-89) was the last grand mosque built in İstanbul, but none of the two buildings represent characteristic features of the period nor display monumental grandeur and beauty, they did not transform the architectural landscape of the city”.

Although Kós does not interpret the style of the Nuruosmaniye as *décadence* in Ottoman architecture, he nevertheless employs a rather cautious overtone and notes that both the Nuruosmaniye and Laleli lacked “monumental beauty.” It is also interesting to note that he does not mention any European inspirations in the building but merely notes, “it was the first baroque mosque in İstanbul” (1995, 99-101).

24. This might be construed through the ideology of the Republic where national identity and “Turkishness” became the prevalent discourse within the new secular state. Bozdoğan writes about the “Turkification” of Ottoman forms and architecture during that period (2001, 34-55).

Charles Diehl was a Byzantinist, a scholar and a professor at the University of Paris. In *Constantinople*, an account of his visit to the city, Diehl writes about the prominent mosques in İstanbul and says that at the Yeni Valide Mosque “one can sense that *décadence* is coming closer” (*on sent que la décadence est proche*). Nevertheless, he states that the beauty of the sparkling stained glass windows and the richness of the mother-of-pearl and ivory inlay are to be admired.

“It is not necessary to study extensively the eighteenth-century mosques such as the *Nouri-Osmanié* and *Laleli-djami* and even less for the 19th, such as the mosque of Mahmoud (II). Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century western influences started to penetrate Ottoman architecture and European elements were introduced into the decorative program: this infatuation with Western arts brought a rapid *décadence*. Yet one should not judge Turkish art merely by observing these hybrid monuments. The great mosques of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the beauty of their proportions and splendid elegance in their decoration, rightly merit admiration and praise” (Diehl, 1924, 117-8).

An early twentieth century historian, George Young (1926, 142) wrote that although the Nuruosmaniye was a last effort to experiment in design, “the result is more eccentric than effective. All the conventional features of mosque-construction are there, but unpleasingly distended or distorted. In a similar vein, Albert Gabriel, a French architect who had a profound admiration for Sinan, asserted (1926, 326) that the Nuruosmaniye represented “bad taste” (*mauvais goût*).

Doğan Kuban is one of the most prominent architectural historians in Turkey and has studied and written extensively on the Turkish architectural history. In *Türk Barok Mimarisi Hakkında Bir Deneme*, Kuban (1954, 27-9) notes that in the Nuruosmaniye plasticity was achieved by architectural elements, and in spite of the many baroque forms, the building cannot be considered as an example of “European Baroque.” Although the domed-square unit is very traditional, he underlines that the decorative vocabulary displays novelty. Kuban, using the term frequently reiterated, says that “the Nuruosmaniye can be considered as the pioneer of an era that signals *décadence*”. What Kuban does not approve of is that the plain and simple structural character of the previous classical mosques is corrupted by foreign elements in this building. Otherwise, in terms of interior spatial conceptualization, façade articulation, and overall silhouette, it is not inferior to the older domed-square mosques and may even be considered as a final attempt of Ottoman architecture in the mid-eighteenth century.

These narratives of the early twentieth century architectural historians are mostly written around a discourse of *décadence*, emphasizing that the style of the Nuruosmaniye (and the Ottoman periods thereafter) is a disgraceful degeneration of the most-admired classical architectural tradition. Most of the authors blame the European artists and architects practicing in İstanbul for the hybrid vocabulary that they think is neither Ottoman nor completely western, but rather a combination of local elements with borrowed foreign forms introduced by non-Muslim architects. This argument is mirrored in the nationalist trends of the early years of the Republic and had deep Oriental overtones that addressed the Ottomans in line with the “Orientalist” discourse prevalent in the West. Early-republican historiography, largely undertaken by nationalist ideology, has a tendency to view the early and classical Ottoman idiom as inherently modern, *avant la lettre*; and as Tanyeli (1999, 43-9) argues, follows the

25. For the problematics of Turkish national historiography of the early Republican years, see Tanyeli (1999, 43-9).

widely-acclaimed “rise-and-decline” paradigm by exalting the sixteenth century and “othering” the so-called period of “stagnation and decline” hence degrading the architectural style of the eighteenth century for contaminating the beauty, simplicity, and purity of the classical tradition (25).

THE IMAGE AND THE STANDING OF THE NURUOSMANIYE IN MODERN HISTORICAL WRITING

The prominent Turkish architect, architectural historian, and erudite Aptullah Kuran (1977, 303-27) says that the winds of change at the turn of the century affected classical Ottoman architecture only slightly and the flamboyance of the so-called “Tulip Period” was mostly displayed in residential architecture and fountains. About the Nuruosmaniye, which he says was a distinctive mosque of that period; he notes:

“The novel external effects of the uniaxial approach and the irregularly designed and placed stairs are carried through in the building itself. The court, shaped like a horseshoe, is a noble experiment quite in keeping with the aspirations of the era. Despite structural difficulties resulting from the use of the traditional domed-square motif to effect a semi-elliptical form, the fountainless court of the Nuruosmaniye comes closer to the spirit of the European baroque than any other eighteenth-century mosque. This judgment however, does not extend to the main part of the mosque, because the prayer hall, in basic architectural terms, retains the classical formation of the sixteenth century”.

Kuran points to the conspicuous display of decorative features in the Nuruosmaniye, such as the column capitals, undulating cornices, and round arches, that he says “constitute a break with the past, far beyond the normal processes of architectural evolution.” He attributes the use of European forms to an outside influence and possibly to the foreign architect. Nevertheless, for the Nuruosmaniye, Kuran notes that “the building does not invoke the spirit of the baroque, for that which is baroque does not penetrate the skin but merely scratches the surface.”

Oktay Aslanapa in *Osmanlı Devri Mimarisi* (2004, 454-60) states that the baroque style is predominant in the Nuruosmaniye; its decorative vocabulary, undulating arches, shells, scrolls, acanthus leaves, and distinctive column capitals all announce the beginning of a “Turkish-Baroque style,” although conceptualized differently from the European baroque. With this statement he is echoing Celal Esad who had said that the new style created by Turkish artists in their pursuit of a new idiom, was “Turkish Baroque.” Aslanapa points out that with a dome of over 25 meters, a very innovative design, ornamental features, and its new vocabulary, the Nuruosmaniye still reflects the creative power of Ottoman architecture in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Not surprisingly, more recent Turkish art historical narratives of the twentieth century do not see the style of the Nuruosmaniye as an unconscious emulation of western architectural forms, a contamination and *décadence* of Ottoman traditions. Their discourse seems to be liberated from the national heritage ideology and modernist biases that dominated the writings of art historians of the early Republican years who were inclined to associate the “national style” with the “Turkish heritage” that drew its roots from the early and classical Ottoman and Seljuki references (Ersoy, 2000). In the second half of the century however, they started to look at the building as a creative assimilation of foreign styles into the Ottoman

vocabulary, pioneering a new and unique “Turkish-Baroque” style. Ayda Arel (1975, 59-62) expounding on transformations in the architectural landscape of İstanbul, notes that the Nuruosmaniye can be considered as an intermediary solution to the Europeanizing attempts in Ottoman architecture. The fact that the architect was a non-Muslim of Greek origin supports the argument that the Nuruosmaniye was a search for the adaptation of foreign architectural perceptions to the Ottoman idiom:

“A general evaluation of the Nuruosmaniye indicates that Ottoman building codes are rather ‘forced’ with forms gathered and borrowed from Baroque architecture. However, these imported forms are also foreign to the French architectural idiom that has been taken as a model, until the Nuruosmaniye. High relief details and exaggerated structural forms point to a rather degenerated Italian rococo style”.

Describing the architectural features and the new grammar of the Nuruosmaniye in detail Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu (1983, 153-78), emphasizes the European forms displayed in the building. She notes that architectural elements and façade articulation within a traditional structure indicate that a new style has been introduced to Ottoman architecture.

“The essential point is that the Ottoman architect did not imitate the European style unconsciously, but instead made a choice of the forms and plans that he could easily use within a traditional structure. So he has in a way adapted the new style to preceding forms of architectural elements.”

For Maurice Cerasi, an Italian architectural historian born in İstanbul:

“Simyon Kalfa’s Nur-u-Osmaniye mosque is equally puzzling (with the Selimiye), but for quite different reasons. Where does the mastery of the European Rococo-Baroque lexicon stem from? It is no rough quotation or mere imitation of foreign styles, but a clever transposition of a foreign vocabulary into a perfectly dominated indigenous poesis. This too implies more than mere artistic intuition, perhaps a historicistic approach of which we have no precise knowledge. Both cases (Selimiye and the Nuruosmaniye) strike us as possessing a conceptual clarity of design (as opposed to mere clarity of construction or simplicity of composition) exceptional in Ottoman culture and never to be repeated again” (1988, 87-102).

Cerasi also underlines (2001a, 143-53; 2001b, 1-23) that the Nuruosmaniye is a very prominent complex, a synthesis reached in the eighteenth century, of previous experimental attempts, incorporating contributions from the traditional idiom and foreign inspirations. Ottoman architects, with a peculiar vocabulary, have tried to incorporate “heterogeneously derived elements” and introduced spectacular variations that are characteristic of the late Ottoman creative processes.

Yenişehirlioğlu and Cerasi agree that in spite of foreign elements in the Nuruosmaniye, the building is not an unconscious emulation but a creative interpretation of the imported forms within the Ottoman architectural language.

In his recent book *Osmanlı Mimarisi*, Doğan Kuban’s (2007) stance towards the Nuruosmaniye is rather different from his earlier assessments; he prefers to attribute the upsurge of European Rococo details in ornamentations to the preferences of patrons. He says that sculptors abandoned elegant floral decorations of the “Tulip Period” after the 1740s and began to adopt Rococo forms concomitant with the desires of both royal and lesser patrons. Penetration of ‘S’ and ‘C’ curves, shells, and acanthus leaves created a new vocabulary with unique characteristics in the hands of Ottoman builders. The development of this “Turkish-Baroque”

style, says Kuban was enhanced by the erection of the Nuruosmaniye with its very unusual design and unaccustomed details, emphasizing that the Nuruosmaniye is “the most prominent monumental creation after the Selimiye in Edirne” with its spatial conceptualization within the urban fabric and its flamboyant baroque decorative vocabulary. Referring to earlier interpretations on the style of the building, Kuban (2007, 526) notes that although it had been considered as *décadence* in the past, it is in fact an original Baroque expression of Ottoman culture that demonstrates the creative potential of the eighteenth-century to assimilate and incorporate novelties. The Nuruosmaniye, he says, is the evidence that the ideas of the so-called “Tulip Period” continued to be shared by the following generations and corroborates the existence of a reformist spirit in the Ottoman Empire. It is hence the assimilation and an original interpretation of European culture in many aspects. According to Kuban (2007, 532), the Nuruosmaniye is more consciously integrated with the surrounding commercial area than the previous classical complexes, while the unusual semi-elliptical courtyard is the most salient feature that brings to mind a conceptual relationship with the European Baroque. “However, although the form of the three-dimensional details reject the traditional idiom and display a real baroque interpretation, they do not make reference to any preceding Western model. Even the imposing polygonal *mihrab* niche with its diameter of almost 10 meters, was not built with a reference to the European Baroque style.” Kuban (2007, 509-36) also brings an explanation to the non-Muslim architect and suggests that the sultan probably appointed Simeon Kalfa in order to be able to realize a non-classical building with a new idiom that was different from earlier mosque types; however, he adds, there are no documents to corroborate this argument.

Shirine Hamadeh (2004, 2008) brings an interesting perspective to the stylistic characteristics of the Nuruosmaniye and makes a comparison of the observations of contemporary Ottoman and European authors on the building. She points out that while Ottoman chroniclers seem to be reluctant to mention features of western origin, there are hints by European observers about western models, such as in the accounts of Dallaway and Walsh. Although most contemporaneous Ottoman sources praise the building generously, acclaiming its monumentality, its ornamentation, and abundant fenestration, they seem to overlook westernizing aspirations in the building’s architectural idiom.

I would like to extend Hamadeh’s frame of reference to the present day and would like to comment on the interpretations of the Nuruosmaniye in modern historiography, in twentieth century art historical narratives. It is interesting to note another discrepancy between the observations of the early and later authors. Although both Turkish and European commentators of the early twentieth century see the Nuruosmaniye as an “Icon of Change”, the dominant argument is that the building represents “a *décadence* and degeneration in Ottoman architecture.” The authors point to the hybrid eclectic style of the building and the European forms displayed, comparing these features with earlier works of the admired classical period. The plain and simple styles of the monumental structures of the past are highlighted, while the hybridity of the Nuruosmaniye comes under frequent criticism. Charles Diehl (1924, 117-8) probably made the most merciless comment by calling the Nuruosmaniye and the Laleli “*les œuvres bâtardes* of the eighteenth century.”

26. Ahmed Efendi in *Târih-i Câmi'-i Şerif-i Nûr-i 'Osmâni*, points to "the lofty mosque in the new style" (*câmi'-i şerif-i neo-tarz*).

Later twentieth-century observations on the other hand, underline the features that display novelty; they view the eclectic flamboyant decorative repertoire of the building as an artistic creation, as opposed to their earlier counterparts who mostly regarded the style as an unconscious emulation of western models in a period when signs of self-doubt started to prevail all over the empire. With the decline of modernism and the assimilation of new post-modernist trends in cultural and academic spheres, perceptions in art and architecture are transformed so that hybridity and eclectica gain prominence. As cross-cultural dialogues are intensified, and artistic and cultural appropriations become significant, the style of the Nuruosmaniye is now regarded as a "creative appropriation and assimilation" rather than "degeneration."

CONCLUSION

The conspicuous appearance of the Nuruosmaniye lies in its unusual decorative features where western baroque forms like shells and scrolls; 'S' and 'C' curves are displayed within a traditional Ottoman mosque design (Figure 12-14). Although completed during the reign of Osman III who gave his name to the complex, the Nuruosmaniye was initially the project of his brother Mahmud I who had approved of its design and plan. Hence, contemporary accounts indicate that it was Mahmud I who deserved and merited this building more than his brother who was merely the inheritor. The style of the Nuruosmaniye seems to be more appropriate to the reformist character and the architectural patronage of Mahmud I who had a "good taste in architecture" (Dallaway, 1795, 103). This was also commensurate with the new tendencies in the residential palaces, waterside mansions, and the fountains that he patronized in İstanbul. Kuban (2007, 523) notes that the revivalist role of Mahmud I becomes evident in the cultural environment that was shaped during his reign and in the artistic climate that produced a building like the Nuruosmaniye.

An analysis of contemporary Ottoman sources demonstrates that these authors are aware of the building's new features and architectural style (26); however, although the charming design of the Nuruosmaniye is highlighted, its formal and decorative features, innovative excellence, and beauty praised, these observers make no reference to a western source of inspiration. On the other hand, quite interestingly, there are allusions to European models in foreign accounts of the eighteenth century. Later sources adopt a rather different overtone, early twentieth-

Figure 12. View from the interior, the Nuruosmaniye Mosque.

Figure 13. Decorations on the portal, the Nuruosmaniye Mosque.

Figure 14. Ornamental detail, the Nuruosmaniye Mosque.



27. Although it was still the dominant architectural style when Ankara was declared as the new capital, Ottoman Revivalism or the First National Architectural Movement was deemed anachronistic in the 1930s and was abandoned in favor of a new “modernist” architectural movement in line with the ideology of the early Republic. For the National Architectural Movements and Modern Turkish Architecture, see Batur (1984), Tekeli (1984), and Bozdoğan (2001).

century art historian Celal Esad (1928, 169-70) notes in *Türk Sanatı* that the penetration of European forms contaminated the Turkish style and that the Nuruosmaniye symbolizes *décadence* with its “disgraceful appearance,” while classical Ottoman architecture is praised for its “purity” and “simplicity” in line with the assessments of a number of other early twentieth-century narratives that have been analyzed in this study.

This is commensurate with the advent of Ottoman Revivalism, or the First National Architectural Movement that appeared at the turn of the century as a synthesis of classical Ottoman, Seljuki, and local styles with Islamic references. These architects rejected the imported eclecticism and architectural pluralism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; hence, stylistic transformations and the influx of a hybrid decorative repertory were regarded as corrupt and degenerate. Concomitantly, a search for national identity and authenticity became the prevalent discourse and the style of the Nuruosmaniye was identified with contamination of the traditional architectural style (27).

However, recent narratives in the later years of the twentieth century approach hybridity differently. With the waning of nationalist trends that highlighted the early Republican years, there is a gradual change in the stance of the scholars towards the hybrid architectural style of the Nuruosmaniye; their assessments, in line with the post-modern perceptions in cultural studies, convey a “cluttered, but colorful and creative” image and make allusions to a “turning point” in Ottoman architectural history. Although regarded as “corrupt and degenerate” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Nuruosmaniye, built in a period when sultanic complexes were no longer as prevalent and frequent, is considered to be an “innovative and creative” attempt to assimilate foreign styles into the Ottoman vocabulary.

This is also mirrored in the transformation in Doğan Kuban’s approach towards the Nuruosmaniye; while in 1954 he regarded its style as *décadence*, in his recent seminal work *Osmanlı Mimarisi* he asserts that the Nuruosmaniye is the most important monumental creation after the Selimiye. Kuban (2007, 506, 680) says:

“we are now far ahead of the scholarly tradition (which was the mainstream in the early years of the republic) that viewed the era of Sinan as the ‘ideal national style’; we no longer denigrate the artistic cross-cultural creativity and innovative originality of the post-classical years that produced prominent architectural monuments through the assimilation of foreign elements into local traditions and the physical environment.”

He underlines that the Nuruosmaniye is the “turning point” of this assimilation process and symbolizes an extraordinary attempt for renewal and revivalism, in spite of the traditional spatial configuration that the building displays underneath its innovative “dressing.”

The unusual architectural features and ornamental profusion of the Nuruosmaniye symbolize a flourishing in eighteenth-century Ottoman building repertory. The innovative stylistic vocabulary of the building might also be considered as a prominent architectural representation of the social transformations of the period. The importance of the Nuruosmaniye lies in the fact that it is the first sultanic complex built after a long period of time (one hundred and fifty years after the Sultan Ahmed and eighty years after the Yeni Valide Camii), that nevertheless pioneers other mosques like the Laleli and the Ayazma. With its dome second to the Süleymaniye, it is

an imposing act of royal patronage in a period of economic and political hardships, an expression of the efforts to reconfirm state power, authority, and dynastic sovereignty.

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NURUOSMANIYE KÜLLİYESİNİN OSMANLI MİMARLIK TARİHİ YAZILIMINDA BİR 'DEĞİŞİM SİMGESİ' OLARAK İRDELENMESİ

Onsekizinci yüzyılda İstanbul, önemli politik, sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel değişikliklere sahne olmuş, halkın değişen zevkleri ve hayat tarzları ile devletin gücünü ve otoritesini yeniden kurma çabaları geniş ve yoğun bir mimari yapılaşmayı da beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu değişiklikler kentin genel görünümüne de yansımış, ithal edilen yabancı formlar ve yeniliklerin geleneksel Osmanlı unsurları ile birlikte kullanılması sonucu yeni ve karışık bir mimari dil ortaya çıkmaya başlamıştır.

Bu çalışmanın konusu olan Nuruosmaniye Camisi ve külliyesi, Osmanlı mimarlık tarihinde ilk kez barok ve neo-klasik elemanların uygulandığı dini bir yapı olması ve bir daha tekrar edilmeyen at nalı şeklindeki avlusu ile büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu yapının yenilikçi özelliklerinin, onsekizinci yüzyıl dinamikleri ışığında dönemin yerli ve yabancı yazarları tarafından nasıl algılandığının irdelenmesi amaçlanmakta, aynı zamanda ikincil kaynaklar ve sanat tarihi alanındaki çalışmalar araştırılarak modern tarih yazımında Nuruosmaniye'nin nasıl ele alındığı sorgulanırken Osmanlı mimarlık tarihinde bir "Değişim Simgesi" olarak algılanışı da incelenmektedir.

Onsekizinci yüzyıl Osmanlı yazarları binanın mermer sütunları, aydınlık görünümü ve süslemelerinden övgü ile söz ederken, Batı etkisine işaret etmemektedirler. Buna karşılık dönemin yabancı yazarları yapının mimari unsurlarında Batı'ya gönderme yapmakta ve Nuruosmaniye'nin gerçek banisi olan I. Mahmud'un Avrupa'dan örnek kilise planları getirme çabalarını anlatmaktadırlar. Yirminci yüzyıl tarih ve sanat tarihi yazımlarında ise ilginç bir özellik göze çarpmaktadır. Yüzyılın ilk yarısındaki anlatımlar binanın Batı'dan esinlenen karışık uslubunu eleştirerek klasik Osmanlı mimarisini adeta "kirlettiğinden" söz etmekte, ikinci yarının modern yazarları ise Nuruosmaniye'yi cesur bir yaratıcılık örneği olarak görmektedirler.

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