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DIALOGUE BEYOND MARGINS : PATRONAGE OF CHIEF EUNUCHS IN THE LATE 16th CENTURY OTTOMAN COURT
SINIRLAR ÖTESİ BİR DİYALOG: 16. YÜZYIL OSMANLI HADIM AĞALARINDAN HABEŞİ MEHMED AĞA VE GAZANFER AĞA'NIN HAMİLİK FAALİYETLERİ

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Özet

Bu makale on altıncı yüzyılın son çeyreğinde sarayın idari hiyerarşisinde ön plana çıkan hadım ağalardan Habeşi Mehmed Ağa ve Gazanfer Ağa'nın yaptırmış olduğu eserler üzerinden hamilik faaliyetleri ve kimlikleri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Bahsi geçen dönemde padişah ve aile fertlerinin himayesindeki hayır işleri yerlerini vezirler ve devletin ileri gelen askeri erkanının vakfettiği çalışmalara bırakmıştır. Hadım ağalar da tıpkı vezirler gibi, kendi statülerini meşru kılma ve geliştirme amacı ile sanat ve mimariyi desteklemekteydi. Hadım ağaların sanat ve mimariye olan bu çok yönlü ilgileri, politik yükselişlerini sağlamlaştırmak ve sosyal ağlarını genişletmenin yanı sıra onları daha insani kılan yönlerini ön plana çıkartma amacını da taşımaktadır. Bu dönem için bir mimari yenilik sayılabilecek çeşme ve sebilleri vakfetmeleri ve böylece suyun herkese ulaşmasını sağ-lamaları sayesinde de ilahî bir imaj çizerek, aslında ellerinde olmayan tek beceri olan 'hayat vermeyi' başarmışlardır.

The end of the sixteenth century was a politically and socially transitional period in the Ottoman domain. After the conclusion of the reigns of

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Süleyman I and his successor Selim II, there was a gradual modification of power within the political equilibrium of the imperial palace. The twentieth-century popular historian Ahmet Refik[1] coined this period as the so-called "sultanate of women" (*kadınlar saltanatı*), implying that in the absence of powerful sovereigns, the rise of the sultan's mother (*valide sultan*) and consort (*haseki*) to political command in the era following the death of Süleyman instigated the beginning of a rather long decline.

Contemporaneous observers, such as the historian Mustafa Âli, criticized this period of transformation by glorifying and reminiscing about the good order of the old world and suggested that the only remedy to the problem could be to restore veneration for standards embodied in Ottoman dynastic law, *kanun*. Âli's criticism regarding the abuses of the system should rather be understood as a perception of decline, in which he held responsible the palace officials in terms of their outward social expansion facilitated by their accepting bribes, and building a second world to themselves outside the confines of the imperial household.[2]

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[1] Ahmet Refik Altınay, **Kadınlar Saltanatı (1058-1094)**, (İstanbul: Kitaphane-yi Hilmi, 1923). In her unprecedented study of the Imperial Harem, Leslie Peirce has argued that women related to the sultan acquired certain powers that were not seen before or after the period in between the enthronement of Süleyman in 1520 and the middle of seventeenth century. According to her view, and this is what made her argument so original, the theory of the "sultanate of women" was not an anomaly. For further information on palace women's source of power and status in this period see Leslie P. Peirce, **The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[2] In 1599-1600 Mustafa Âli wrote, "This (reprehensible commingling of palace personnel and persons outside the palace) did not exist under Ottoman sultans until the end of the reign of Selim, son of Süleyman. As a rule the young men in royal service did not associate even with the haughtier people outside the palace. They were forbidden to converse as much as one word with them. Constant hobnobbing was considered inappropriate… Most important to note, in those days bribery transgressions were quite hidden behind the curtain. Neither did bribery exist nor anyone seek to reveal that hidden commodity… An improper state of affairs among them is that the harem aghas of their own accord buy houses outside the palace walls. They develop networks and social connections, expand their wardrobe" in Douglas S. Brookes, annot. trans., **The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī's Mevāʾidüʾn-Nefāʾis fī Kavāʿidiʾl-Mecālis** [Tables of Delicacies Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings], Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin, eds., *The Journal of Turkish Studies,* (Harvard University: The Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 2003), pp. 20-21. For the treatment of Ottoman intellectuals' perceptions of decline and self-criticism related to decline consciousness

The period's significant break from the omnipotent image of the sultan as center of authority yielded the ascent of multiple power-holders, such as viziers and royal women, the *aghas* of the inner court, and other military officials, subsequently coalescing to form insurmountable alliances in their claim to rule. This article mainly focuses on the emergence of the chief eunuchs[3] as prevailing actors in the imperial household and as confidants of women of the imperial family, by exploring the manner in which they assumed imperial grandeur at the end of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. Like the viziers and other military milieu in the court, the chief eunuchs' patronage activity in arts and architecture was a conscious and strategically planned effort in legitimizing their status. The charitable architectural endowments of the chief eunuchs conveyed their ascent in the political ladder as they became increasingly visible as patrons in the late-sixteenth century.[4] This was also the period in which the chief

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in modern historiography, see Cemal Kafadar, "The Myth of the Golden Age: Ottoman Historical Consciousness in the Post-Süleymanic Era," **Süleyman the Second and His Time**, Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar, eds., (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), pp. 37-48; idem., "The Question of Ottoman Decline," **Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review** 4 (1997-98): 30-75; Donald Quataert, "Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes towards the Notion of 'Decline'," **History Compass** 1 (2003): 1-9; Dana Sajdi, "Decline, Its Discontents and Ottoman Cultural History: By Way of Introduction," **Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century**, Dana Sajdi, ed., (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 1-40.

[3] Turan wrote extensively on the careers of the chief eunuchs and their different functional categories in the imperial palace, drawing attention to their institutionalization. Of the three categories the first and lowest in status were the *Ağayân-ı Bîrûn*, who were eunuchs serving in the outer court of the palace; the second, the *Bâbüsaade Ağası*, also called *Kapu Ağası*, was the chief white eunuch who served in the *Enderûn-ı Hümâyûn*, the inner courtyard of the palace, supervising the *iç oğlan*; and finally the third, the *Dârüsaade Ağası*, also known as the *Kızlar Ağası*, who was the chief black eunuch responsible for the Harem. See Ahmet Nezihi Turan, "Mahremiyetin Muhafızları Darüssaade Ağaları," **The Journal of Ottoman Studies** 19, (1999), 123-148.

[4] I thank Prof. M. Baha Tanman who reminded me of the much earlier endowments of Kapu Ağası Hüseyin Agha. As one of the influential white eunuchs in Bayezid II's close circle during his training years as a prince, the Kapu Ağası Abdulmûinoğlu Hüseyin Agha had endowed the Kapıağası Madrasa, built in 1488 in Amasya. This, being an exception, was most likely the earliest architectural endowment by a chief eunuch until the late-sixteenth century. Hüseyin Agha also converted one of the most important structures in Istanbul, the Sergios Bakkhos church, into the Küçük Ayasofya mosque and zaviye. Although the agha was believed to be executed, his tomb is located near the convent he founded. The conversion of Byzantine churches into mosques by palace grandees

black eunuch's role became much more imperative as he now occupied the position of supervising the harem institution, a role previously entrusted to the chief white eunuch.

In order to better demonstrate the growing influence of the chief eunuchs of the inner palace, in particular, two of the most prominent chief eunuchs namely, the chief black eunuch (*dârüssaâde ağası*) Mehmed Agha (1574-91), and the chief white eunuch (*bâbüssaâde ağası*) Gazanfer Agha (d. 1603) of the late-sixteenth century, the present study examines their legitimation strategies as patrons of architectural monuments. The article specifically concentrates on the endowments of Mehmed Agha, the first black eunuch to acquire the title *dârüssaâde ağası,* and Gazanfer Agha, the most influential chief white eunuch of this era, taking into consideration as well the consequences of their their coinciding appointment delineated by a concealed rivalry. For instance, although their service periods overlapped, the fact that Gazanfer Agha's patronage activity materialized only after the death of Mehmed Agha indicates the nature of the hierarchical liaison between them. While there is a substantial list of chief eunuchs that could be subject to this study, focusing on the architectural and literary endeavors of Mehmed and Gazanfer Aghas enable the perception of a very specific change in the mentality regarding patronage and the way it was employed in the service of power. While observing this period as the first time that the eunuch aghas obtained such great political substance due to their close personal relationship with the rulers, I furthermore speculate whether the structures that they built expressed a unique architectural idiom that resonated with the identity of their patrons.

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had become a widespread practice during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II. For further information on the endowments of Hüseyin Agha see Semavi Eyice, "Kapu Ağası Hüseyin Agha'nın Vakıfları," **Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi**, IX (1978), pp. 170-185; idem., "Küçük Ayasofya Camii," **Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi** V, 1994, p. 146-149; and M. Baha Tanman, "Küçük Ayasofya Tekkesi," **Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi** V, pp. 149-150; for Hüseyin Agha's madrasa in Amasya see Albert Gabriel, **Monuments Turc d'Anatolie** t.2, (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1931-1934);. Another fine example of a mosque endowed by a eunuch during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II is that of Firuz Agha, the head-treasurer of the Sultan, built in 1491 near the Hippodrome. Hadîkatü'l-Cevâmi states that its patron's tomb is also located in the premises, Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayi, **Hadîkatü'l- Cevâmi'~ İstanbul Câmileri ve Diğer Dînî- Sivil Mi'mârî Yapılar**, (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2001), p. 213.

Gülru Necipoğlu, in her seminal work on the organizational structure of the imperial harem in the second half of the sixteenth century, suggested that the period witnessed the beginning of a transformation in the time-honored social order, which permeated late sixteenth-century trends of architecture and patterns of patronage:

> Much to the resentment of those who wanted to preserve the old order, this was a period when royal women and black eunuchs joined forces and gained unprecedented power in politics, taking advantage of the increasing seclusion of the sultans, who had by then retired into the labyrinthine inner space of the harem.This abrupt emergence of women from obscurity to notoriety had its effects on the architecture of the harem in the Topkapı Palace, just as architectural transformations played a reciprocal role in bringing about such a change.[5]

The concept of patronage in the late sixteenth century should be perceived in terms of its identitary manifestations while comprehending the spectacle of the city as an elaboration of changing political domain. It was conceivably a symbolic network within which a constant negotiation of wealth and power was articulated. The sultan's image as the imperial patron was emulated by other members of the royal family, and grand viziers, as well as certain high-ranking dignitaries in the palace, such as the aghas of the imperial court. The social reputation of the patrons was defined through the body of monuments that they erected as pious endowments. The members of the ruling elite would regularly seek the services of the chief royal architect, who supervised the construction of such public foundations as mosques, masjids, madrasas, mausoleums (*türbe*), both in Istanbul and in various provinces of the empire.

Under Sinan's tenure as the chief royal architect (*sermimaran-ı hassa*) from 1539 to 1588, the post had become one of the most important institutions to establish and develop Ottoman artistic and imperial expression. During his fifty-year appointment, Sinan's exceptional skillfulness in the aesthetic realm contributed to the rapid urbanization and elegant ornamentation of the illustrious capital of the empire. His innovations in the structure of the sultanic (*selâtin*) mosque, use and interpretation of space, design of the dome, and codes of decorum transformed the overall scheme

[5] Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, **Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries**, (NY: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 159.

of Ottoman monumental architecture. Throughout his tenure, the capital of the empire turned into an urban hub where this sensibly formulated and buzzing building-activity developed the city, while simultaneously forming a solid society of patrons. Another important aspect of Sinan's novelty was that he regarded and ran his office as a workshop for his apprentices, where each could concentrate on and excel in a certain branch of the construction process.[6] Among the royal architects (*hassa mimaran*) who worked under Sinan's supervision, the water-channel superintendent (*suyolu nazırı)* Davud Agha was appointed as chief architect following Sinan's death in 1588.

The promotion of Davud Agha to the post of chief architect was not a decision made by Sinan. Four years prior to his death, when Sinan was leaving for pilgrimage, he had appointed Mehmed Subaşı to replace him. Considering that Davud Agha was not the first choice of Sinan as successor, Davud Agha's promotion is a testament to his close ties with the palace grandees, among who were the influential chief black eunuch Habeşi (Abyssinian)[7] Mehmed Agha and the grand vizier Siyavuş Pasha, that belonged to the same harem faction.[8] The ten-year long tenure of Davud Agha (1588-1598) is significant in terms of illustrating the politico-social changes that took place and their representation through the transformation of patronage patterns. This was a period when the concentration of building activity had gradu-

[6] Aptullah Kuran, **Sinan- The Grand old Master of Ottoman Architecture**, (Washington D.C. and Istanbul: Institute of Turkish Studies, 1987), p. 223; for a survey of architectural developments in this period in the capital see Doğan Kuban, **Osmanlı Mimarisi**, (İstanbul: Yem Yayın, 2007).

[7] "Abyssinians were highly prized in the trans-Saharan slave trade; higher prices were paid for Abyssinian eunuchs than for eunuchs of any other provenance, whether African or (literally) Caucasian, Abyssinian youths destined to become eunuchs were castrated in villages in Upper Egypt inhabited by Coptic Christians; the villages just south of Asyut were key centers. Because castration was against Islamic law, the operation usually took place at the peripheries of Ottoman territory and was typically performed by Christian physicians: near the Caucasus, Armenian physicians, near the Sudan, Coptic physicians. Even so, there are accounts of castrations performed within the Topkapı Palace itself," Jane Hathaway, **Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem**, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), pp. 17-18.

[8] Necipoğlu has pointed out that the signature of Davud Agha was not among the signatures of ten imperial architects who signed Sinan's waqfiyya (c. 1583-85) in Gülru Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire**, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 506-7; see also Muzaffer Erdoğan, "Mimar Davud Ağa'nın Hayatı ve Eserleri," **Türkiyat Mecmuası** XII, (1955), p. 184.

ally shifted from the grandeur of sultans' mosque complexes to a number of smaller madrasa-centered complexes built by the palace and military elite. Traditionally the Ottoman sultans endowed lavish Friday mosques with the booty collected from the conquests that they led.[9] Under these circumstances, due to the lack of funds in the sultans' treasury, between the Selimiye by Sinan (1569-75) and the Sultan Ahmed (1609-1617) by Sedefkâr Mehmed Agha, the construction of sultanic mosques had ceased, and grand viziers had become the commissioners of edifices built for sultans.[10]

Under Sinan's administration, Davud Agha repaired and drew a map of the Halkalı water-channel that supplied water to the Topkapı Palace.[11] During this project there emerged rumors that Davud Agha had pocketed some of the funds from the villages near Kağıthane and for a brief term he was taken from the post of the chief of the water-supply system, being replaced by Mimar Hasan Agha. In 1583 Davud Agha, upon Sinan's request, left for the Eastern campaign where he stayed for two years. On his return, he oversaw the construction of the Hünkâr Sofası, the domed Imperial Hall, or Hall of the Throne, and the adjacent new royal bath in the harem of the Topkapı Palace in 1585 **(Fig.1)**.[12] As a protégé of Sinan, Davud Agha

[9] The Selimiye Mosque (1568-74) in Edirne was an exception to this generally accepted rule. Necipoğlu explains, "Selim II's mosque complex in Edirne, was conceived as a victory monument proclaiming the triumph of Islam over Christianity at a time when peaceful relations prevailed with Safavid Iran. Its foundations, laid in 1569, just before the campaign of Cyprus (1570-71), embodied a vow that would be fulfilled in gratitude for divinely bestowed victory…Evliya recounts that the sultan ordered his general Lala Mustafa Pasha, who conquered Cyprus for him, to bring the booty of Famagusta for the construction of the mosque to Edirne, a frontier city celebrated as the 'rampart of Islam'. The fact that Selim II did not conquer Cyprus with his own sword seems to have been one of the reasons why the Selimiye was built in Edirne rather than in Istanbul. Under his son Murad III, no European territory whatsoever was conquered, therefore, as the French pilgrim Jean Palerne (1581-83) observed, this sultan did not build a mosque in the capital 'because their Mufti or Pope does not allow any other funds to be used for that purpose except for revenues gained from the Christians'." in Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, pp. 65-66.

[10] "During the 1590s, the adverse effects of inflation on various branches of the construction industry began to be vividly registered in imperial decrees issued on behalf of the chief architect, Davud. These documents show how far officially fixed prices lagged behind market forces, and how the state's authority in enforcing repeatedly issued orders had diminished," in Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, p. 510.

[11] Ahmet Refik Altınay, **Türk Mimarları**, (İstanbul: Sander Yayınları, 1977), p. 61.

[12] Necipoğlu-Kafadar, **Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power,** p. 172.

is believed to be involved in the construction of the Selimiye mosque in Edirne, Valide-i Atik mosque in Üsküdar, and Kara Ahmed Pasha mosque in Topkapı, as well as the Nişancı Mehmed Pasha mosque in Karagümrük, the plan of which was originally begun by Sinan.[13]

As the chief architect, Davud Agha supervised the building of various mosques, pavilions, and madrasa-mausoleum complexes until his death in 1598. His proximity to the palace was further augmented after his commissioning by the grand vizier Sinan Pasha to build two shore pavilions, the Pearl Kiosk (*incüli köşk* or *incüli ḳaṣr*) **(Fig.2-3)** and the Basketmakers' Pavillion (*Sepetçiler ḳaṣrı*), for Murad III in 1589.[14] As Necipoğlu suggests, the emphasis on such shore pavilions in the second half of the sixteenth century signified the evolution from the formational to the classic period of the empire. Hence the buildings that were erected in this era did not possess the grandeur of imperial growth, for it had come to an end. In order to better portray the modification in the status of the sultan in this period, Necipoğlu references historian Selaniki:

> The kiosk of the late Sultan Bayezid ——may God bless him—— which is comparable to this beautiful pavilion [Pearl Kiosk] had been restored from its foundations up by the late admiral Kılıç Ali Pasha. It was demolished, and the construction of a lofty kiosk superior to it was ordered in its place. A noble decree was issued to the greatest engineer of the age, the chief architect Davud Agha. He was ordered and reminded that, given its location on the seashore, he should devote extreme care to make it firm to the utmost degree, with strong foundations. It was begun at the end of Ṣa'ban in the year 999 [13-22 June 1591]; its provisions and expenses were likewise to be covered at the grand vizier's expense.[15]

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[13] Although certain scholars have attributed the Nişancı Mehmed Pasha and Mesih Mehmed Pasha mosque complexes to Davud Agha, the debate on his authorship still makes this point uncertain. For a different view on this issue see Kuran, **Sinan**, pp. 223-230, and Erdoğan, p. 184; and for a partial contestation of the ascription see Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, pp. 407 and 412.

[14] "Sinan Pasha, the conqueror of Yemen, had accumulated immense treasures in various military campaigns before he was appointed to the post of grand vizier; through the pavilions he paid for, he must have hoped to win the sultan's favor at a time when financial troubles led to the frequent downfall of grand viziers," Necipoğlu, **Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power**, p. 218.

[15] Ibid, p. 231.

The first major monument attributed to Davud Agha was the Habeşi Mehmed Agha complex in Çarşamba (formerly known as Begcügez) in the Fatih district **(Fig.4)**. Designed in 1582, only a few years after its patron's accession to the post of chief black eunuch (1574-1590/1), the complex consisted of a single-domed mosque with a single minaret, the patron's mausoleum, a madrasa formed of ten cells for the study of hadith (*darü'l-ḥadis*), a convent, a fountain and a double hammam **(Fig.5)**. The mosque and the mausoleum were registered in the *Tuhfetü'l-miʿmarîn*, and unlike the rest of the structures they survived. Even though this mosque was constructed during the lifetime of Sinan, the inscription by the court poet Âsârî attributed the complex to Davud Agha.[16] In his analysis of the complex, Aptullah Kuran compares its features to those of the contemporaneous viziers.[17] The Mehmed Agha mosque is a square-based structure with an eleven-meter wide dome, which is supported by arches resting on four pillars and four columns that are semi-buried in the walls. A small half-dome accentuates the *mihrab* niche **(Fig.6)**.[18] Kuran also indicates that the internal arrangement recalls the octagonal schemes in which the transition is carried by squinches.[19] The octagonal plan is expressed internally by the pilasters protruding from the walls, and externally by the eight towers that circumvent the dome.[20] This mosque is a variation on the octagonal theme and a new interpretation of it. The interior is thus a wide and undivided space to perform ablutions.

Although the addendum of a fifth half-dome as a cover for the apsidal niche recalls the use of the five half-dome theme in the Semiz Ali Pasha mosque in Babaeski **(Fig.7)** and Molla Çelebi mosque in Fındıklı **(Fig.8)**, the mosque of the chief black eunuch Mehmed Agha differs in its modest and simple stylistic mannerism from that of viziers and kaaskers. Kuran specifies that the use of the fifth half-dome as a cover of the mihrab niche was a means to centralize those mosques that were composed around either

[16] Tahsin Öz, **İstanbul Camileri**, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997): "*Oldu mimarı kâmil Davud/ Yaptı canile derc idüp san'at/ Didi asarı tarihin Hatif/ Beyti hadi ve Camii ümmet.*"
[17] Kuran, pp. 223-224.
[18] Ibid, p. 223.
[19] Godfrey Goodwin, **A History of Ottoman Architecture**, (NY: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 334.
[20] Kuran, p. 223.

hexagonal or octagonal baldachins by Sinan and his successors.[21] In comparison with certain vizier mosques such as the Kara Ahmed Pasha and Sinan Pasha, the Mehmed Agha mosque lacks a large courtyard, and double-domed side wings. In the construction of this mosque complex neither finely cut ashlar or distinct colored granite columns were used. Instead, stone and brick was utilized in the construction of the mosque. The most decorative aspects of the structure are the paned glass and tile work that adorned the interior. The elegance of the tile work and the lunettes was one of the masteries that distinguished Davud Agha. The tiles of the Mehmed Agha mosque were brought from kilns of İznik with the exception of the panel above the window on the right side of the entrance, which was most probably produced in the Tekfur Sarayı workshops in the eighteenth century **(Fig.9-11)**. These tiles are comparable in beauty to those of the Takkeci İbrahim Agha mosque in Topkapı.[22] Another atypical feature was that the mosque had fewer windows than any other Sinan mosque in this period. The Mehmed Agha complex's convent, which has not survived to date, functioned initially as Halvetî, and later on as a Bayramî lodge. The first sheikh of the convent, Yayabaşızade Sheikh Hızır Efendi[23] was the sheikh of the Üsküdar Şemsi Pasha convent before having transferred to the Mehmed Agha complex.[24] Neither the public fountain nor the madrasa remain, but the mausoleum of the patron, which is a large square-based building with a dome, takes its place on the southeast corner. Mehmed Agha was an important patron during his term of service as the chief black eunuch. In a period when mosque-centered complexes had mostly fallen out of fashion, his humble yet sumptuous complex stood as a statement depicting his power and status in the palace.[25]

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[21] Kuran, pp. 120-121.

[22] Erdoğan, p. 188.

[23] For a detailed discussion on the contents of Mehmed Agha's waqfiyya regarding the stipulations on the convent and the sheikhs see Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, p. 500. I am indebted to Prof. Necipoğlu for kindly sharing her notes on the waqfiyyas of both Mehmed Agha and Gazanfer Agha.

[24] Ayvansarayi, p. 262.

[25] Emine Fetvacı calls attention to Gülru Necipoğlu's insightful contention that Mehmed Agha's commissioning of such an epic domed mosque followed the example of vizierial mosques which differed from the domeless mosques commissioned by attendants of equal rank during the period of Sultan Süleyman I. Emine Fatma Fetvacı, ''Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage 1566-1617'', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2005). For further information regarding this issue and Mehmed Agha's waqfiyya see Gülru Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, pp.

In the eighteenth-century biographical compilation of chief black eunuchs, *Hamîletü'l-Küberâ* (The Most Elegant Ones of the Elite), Ahmet Resmi Efendi compares the harem to a private kingdom in which the chief black eunuch is likened to a prime minister who managed the administration of the state alongside the valide sultan.[26]This compilation identifies the rise of the chief black eunuch to an unprecedented power to the late sixteenth century, when sultan Murad III was spending most of his time in the harem quarters. The same source states that Mehmed Agha remained at his post for sixteen years, until his death from a stomach disease in H. 999/ 1590-1.[27] After the funerary prayer that took place in the mosque of Sultan Mehmed II, he was buried in the mausoleum built for him by Davud Agha in the courtyard of his own mosque in Çarşamba.

In his two waqfiyyas (dated 1582 and 1591 successively)[28], it is stated that apart from the mosque complex, Mehmed Agha also founded a public water dispenser (*sebil*) in Hace Rüstem quarter strategically located in the ceremonial avenue, Divanyolu (1579-80). The waqfiyya informs that the patron later on endowed an elementary school (*mektep*) to be built on the upper-level of the water dispenser in Hace Rüstem. This sebil-mektep that he commissioned could be considered a novel undertaking for the late sixteenth century, since the combination of water dispenser and school (*sebil-kuttab*), as pious foundations were quite popular much earlier in Mamluk Cairo, but not as widespread in Istanbul in the 1590s. Necipoğlu recalls Mehmed Agha's connection to the Holy Cities, and the permission he had obtained to restore the sebil-kuttab in Medina in 1578.[29] Given that in Mamluk Cairo sebils were generally founded in connection with Quranic schools (*kuttab/maktab al-sabil*) that were established on the upper-level[30], perhaps Mehmed Agha's exposition to Mamluk patronage patterns played a determining role in his choice of endowments. The chief black eunuch added a madrasa with ten-cells and a classroom, as

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[26] Ahmet Resmî Efendi, **Hamîletü'l-Küberâ,** Ahmet Nezihi Turan haz., (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2000), p. 26.

[27] Ibid.

[28] These waqfiyyas are preserved in the *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi (from hereon TSK)*, (İstanbul), E.H. 3001, dated 990, fol. 37v and E.H. 3028, dated 10R, 999.

[29] Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan**, p. 498.

[30] Saleh Lamei Mostafa "The Cairene Sabil: Form and Meaning," Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar, **Muqarnas** 6 (1989): 37.

well as a public fountain across from the Hace Rüstem sebil-mektep in 1582. *Hadîkatü'l- Cevâmi* attributes the construction of this madrasa and fountain in Divanyolu to Davud Agha, though the madrasa was included among Sinan's edifices in the *Tezkiretü'l-Ebniye*.[31] In the late sixteenth century, this sebil was used as the tombs for Anber and Abdullah Agha, who were important palace officials during this period.[32] The complex of Mehmed Agha in Çarşamba Pazarı quarter is one of the earliest models of sebil-madrasa combination.

According to Mehmed Agha's waqfiyya, he commissioned another sebil and a fountain at the intersection near Irgadpazarı, close to the marketplace. Mehmed Agha was given permission through imperial decrees to distribute water from the water channels outside the city walls to the sebils he had commissioned in Hace Rüstem and Irgadpazarı during the term of Davud Çavuş as the superintendent of water channels.[33] An important part of Mehmed Agha's pious endowments concerned the provision of water to the people. For this, he built numerous public fountains and sebils including the fountain and sebil near the Hagia Sophia mosque adjacent to the rooms endowed by Ca'fer Agha, the former chief white eunuch (d. 1557); a number of ablution fountains in the courtyard of the Mercan Agha mosque; a fountain in front of his own residence near the Old Palace; a sebil, fountain and prayer space (*musalla*) in Çukuramir, Terkoz near the Edirnekapı gate; and five public fountains in Üsküdar, three of which were located in Hace Abdul neighborhood.[34] He also endowed a masjid in Üsküdar.[35] The waqfiyya of Mehmed Agha accentuates the fact that the sultan granted him certain provinces on the banks of the Danube River in a pass called the İsmail Geçidi, which he built a castle to protect the towns from looting drifters. As the sole property he bestowed outside the capital, the chief black eunuch endowed a Friday mosque there, and repaired the surrounding towns, naming the area *Bağdad-ı*

[31] Zeynep Ahunbay, "Mehmed Ağa Medresesi," **Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi** V, (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), pp. 356-357.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid, p. 357. See the waqfiyya for detailed information on the organizational structure of these endowments.

[34] For identification of each of these fountains in Üsküdar, see İbrahim Hilmi Tanışık, **İstanbul Çeşmeleri: Beyoğlu ve Üsküdar Cihetleri,** Cilt II, (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1945), 211.

[35] *TSK*, (İstanbul), E.H. 3028, dated 10R, H. 999.

Mehmedabad, after himself.[36]

In the waqfiyya of Mehmed Agha it is mentioned that he had a formal residence near the Old Palace granted to him by Sultan Murad III. The fact that an agha of the imperial harem should acquire a private residence was a rare occurrence in this period. According to the description in the register the residence of the chief black eunuch was not a humble abode given its size and place. This palace-like edifice, which is no longer extant, was formed of two stories with six rooms on each floor. The residence also preserved a kitchen, a hammam inside its premises, and lavatories, and a garden at its courtyard. The three stables were located outside the courtyard with a garden. On the lower level of the residence there were fourteen rooms, a kitchen, a fountain, a grand salon, and lavatories. The ten shops and the public fountain for the provision of Muslims were also part of this grand residence. Of the two residences that were donated to Mehmed Agha, he chose to grant one to the disposal of the sheikh of his convent and the imam of his mosque.[37] The floor plan of his mosque in Çarşamba indicates the sheikh's residence as part of this complex.

During a period in which harem politics were at the center of the course of events, certain officials of the palace elite became more apparent due to their proximity to the sultan's mother. Through their status as confidants of the valide sultan, the aghas of the harem had established close-knit client networks, which enabled them to control whoever promoted to the senior-level ranks in the palace. By placing their men in the important positions, the aghas managed to secure the continuity of their status.[38] Consequently, in the late sixteenth century the authority of the agha of the harem rivaled that of the grand vizier. Although until the second half of the fifteenth century black eunuchs from sub-Saharan Africa were commonly used for service in the harem quarters, Murad III's reign was the first time that they were appointed as *dârüssaâde* agha, a title previously held by white eunuchs.[39]

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[36] Necipoğlu, **The Age of Sinan,** p. 499.

[37] *TSK*, E.H. 3028, dated 10R, 999.

[38] For further information on the operation of the institution of eunuchs in the harem see Turan, "Mahremiyetin Muhafızları," pp. 126-132; the famous chronicler Atā has also written extensively on the organization of the eunuchs in the imperial household, Tayyarzāde Ahmed Atā, **Tārīh-i Atā,** I, (Istanbul, 1293), pp. 257-269.

[39] Jane Hathaway, "The Role of the Kızlar Ağası in 17th-18th Century Ottoman Egypt," **Studia Islamica** 75, (1992): 141.

This was one of the most pivotal positions in the palace since the *dârüs-saâde* agha was the confidential messenger between the royal women and the sultan, as well as the grand vizier and the sultan.

In the reign of Murad III, the supervision of the waqfs of the royal family, and the management of the imperial endowments of Mecca and Medina were assigned exclusively to the post of the chief black eunuch. As a result, Mehmed Agha's sphere of influence was broadened significantly after this important assignment in 1586-87. This responsibility brought with it a lifelong affiliation with Cairo since the city was deemed the seat of these two waqfs, the *evḳaf al-haramayn*. These imperial waqfs were established in the reign of Sultan Süleyman in order to financially support the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The four endowments of the *evḳaf al-haramayn* were under the control of the chief black eunuch, and these were the *Dashishat al-Kubra*, established under the Mamluks; the *Mehmediye*, founded by Mehmed IV (1648-1687); the *Muradiye*, founded by Murad III (1574-1595); and the *Hassekiye*, established by Süleyman (1520-1566) for his wife, Hürrem Sultan.[40]

The chief black eunuch's power in the imperial palace was further augmented by his direct command of the halberdier corps and the entitlement to have numerous eunuchs and female slaves at his service. He could approach the sultan whenever he deemed it necessary. It is known that in 1587-8 on Wednesdays, Mehmed Agha held open councils in the harem regarding issues related to the maintenance of the *evḳaf al-haramayn.* The inscription dated 1587-8 on the gate of the domed vestibule in the harem, facing the second court of the imperial palace venerates Mehmed Agha, indicating that the "audience gate" was built at the suggestion of the chief black eunuch.[41] This inscription demonstrates the level of influence that the chief black eunuch had over Sultan Murad III. Hence, all of these components might explain Penzer's contention that the chief black eunuch became the most feared and bribed official in the palace in the late sixteenth century.[42] It is no surprise that such an unprecedented dominion by a black eunuch

[40] Ibid, pp. 141-142.
[41] Fetvacı, p. 210.
[42] Norman Mosley Penzer, **The Harem: An Account of the Institution as it Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans with a History of the Grand Seraglio from its Foundation to Modern Times,** (London: Spring Books, 1965), p. 129.

brought with it a certain amount of reproach. The historian Selaniki wrote that after Mehmed Agha's passing people denounced him immensely by saying, "Departed from this world, that black calamity!"[43]

Eunuch slaves had been a part of the sultan's court as early as the rule of Sultan Murad II (1421-51).[44] In the late sixteenth century, the status of the black eunuchs was elevated, which in turn eclipsed the former prestige of the chief white eunuch in the palace.[45] During the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595), the size of the imperial harem had increased consistently with the population of the palace at large; the number of eunuchs also came to its highpoint, roughly from 1000 to 1200.[46] The sudden ascendancy of the black eunuchs could be due to the resurfacing of the belief that black eunuchs were more durable to the operation of castration.[47] The black eu-

[43] Necipoğlu comments on Selaniki's statement of this well-known chronogram in *The Age of Sinan*, p. 498. See also Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, **Tarih-i Selānikī,** vol. I, Mehmed İpşirli, ed., (İstanbul, 1989), pp. 229-30.

[44] Hathaway explains that the Greek slaves have been verified in the court of the second Ottoman sultan, Orhan (1326-62), and that since his locale was the Byzantine Nicea in western Anatolia and Bursa, both captured from the Byzantines, it is possible that some of these slaves were eunuchs," in Jane Hathaway, **Beshir Agha,** p. 11; Cengiz Orhonlu, "Derviş Abdullah'ın Darüssaade Ağaları Hakkında Bir Eseri: Risale-i Teberdariye fî Ahvâl-ı Dâru's-saâde," **Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı'ya Armağan,** (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976), p. 225; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, **Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı,** (Ankara, 1988), pp. 172-183.

[45] Fetvacı has argued that the outpacing of the black eunuchs the white eunuchs in the imperial harem could also be detected in the illustrated manuscripts the production of which they supervised: "a visual representation of the power balances shifting in favor of the chief black eunuch can be seen among the pages of the first volume of the *Şehinşehnāme* (Book of the King of Kings), the two-volume account of the reign of Murad III written by the *şehnāmeci* Seyyid Lokman. Four illustrations feature the chief black eunuch as he investigates the assassination of grand-vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. Mehmed Agha is depicted on his way to see Sokollu on his deathbed; conversing with the dying grand vizier; giving the news of Sokollu's death to the sultan; and having the assassin captured…most importantly, however, it is the eunuchs' location on the page in relation to the other figures and the activities in which they engage that clearly identify who they are... Eunuchs are usually shown in subordinate positions and in passive poses, with their hands held together in front of their bodies… The images in the *Şehinşehnāme,* therefore, are particularly striking when compared with other depictions of eunuchs, including Mehmed Agha himself. In fig… he is the focus of the painting, the only one on horseback, and is surrounded by trainees of the palace," Emine Fatma Fetvacı, p. 206.

[46] Hathaway, **Beshir Agha,** p. 13.

[47] Çağatay Uluçay, **Harem II,** (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1985), p. 118;

nuch slaves brought from Africa were generally sold in Egypt, Istanbul, and other major ports in the Mediterranean. After going through a disciplined and well-rounded education in the palace school, they would be trained in the court of the princes alongside their mothers in the provinces, until they started attending the sultans. The highest rank that a black eunuch could acquire was the title of chief black eunuch. The chief black eunuch's main duty was to guard the gate of the harem, not letting anyone in who did not possess the right of access to the most secluded space of the palace.

The very act of castration was perceived as eliminating the weaknesses of human nature by the subtraction of a bodily function of irreverence, which could threaten the unity and discipline of any entity. His mutilated body not only signified his loyalty to the sultan and his established institutions, the eunuch's acquired gender neutrality gave him the right of entry into the most protected space within the royal realm. His sexuality reduced to what

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Hathaway suggests another view that the more regular use of black eunuchs in the harem may be due to the unprecedented numbers of eunuchs entering the palace in the end of the sixteenth century. She further explains: "Growing numbers of young men from the same general region of eastern Africa no doubt fostered ethno-regional solidarity, as did the parallel phenomenon of growing numbers of young men from Hungary or, later, from Circassia and Georgia. With increasing numbers came gradual polarization of the two groups of eunuchs. Why the East Africans concentrated in the female harem while the Hungarians, and later Caucasians, concentrated in the male harem is less clear. The fact that the male harem, which predated the female harem, had from its inception been guarded by white eunuchs may argue for a continuation of the custom through sheer inertia. The female harem was introduced to Topkapı Palace shortly before the influx of Abyssinian eunuchs began; thus, it may have offered them a space that the male harem did not," Hathaway, *Beshir Agha*, pp. 14-15; In her recent publication on slavery, Madeline Zilfi identifies the demand for slaves from different racial backgrounds according to type of work and function that they were expected to perform: "Race, or more precisely, skin color, was an important predictor of work lives and social expectations. A preference for lighter-skinned slaves promoted racialized labor segmentation and stereotypes but did not dictate them. Sub-Saharan males and females usually sold for less than comparable Europeans and Caucasian peoples. Black eunuchs—who were always highly valued and in limited supply—and Ethiopian (Habeş) women were regular exceptions," in Madeline C. Zilfi, **Women and Slavery in Late Ottoman Empire,** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 136. See also Gabriel Baer, "Slavery and Its Abolition," **Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt,** (Chicago, 1969), 161-189; Mordechai Abir, "The Ethiopian Slave Trade and Its Relation to the Islamic World," **Slaves and Slavery,** Willis, ed., 2:123-136; Ehud R. Toledano, **If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East,** (New Haven: 2007); Toledano, "The Imperial Eunuchs of Istanbul: From Africa to the Heart of Islam," **MES** 20, no. 3 (1984): 379-390;

was considered to be non-threatening, the black eunuch possessed unlimited passage to the grounds that were separated by a clear gender distinction. The symbolic representation of the exclusive role of the chief black eunuch was embodied in the boundaries of space between the outer palace and the harem. As Shaun Marmon argues, "eunuchs were consistently associated with vestibule-like spaces in a variety of architectural settings. Despite their frequent presentation as guardians of social and sexual order, they were paradoxically in their very persons the embodiment of social and sexual ambiguity."[48] With their increased power in the palace, the chief eunuchs were not only gatekeepers between two distinct worlds they were also intermediaries. Hence the chief eunuchs were at a more advantageous position than any other palace official, being in the immediate intimate circle of both the male and the female members of the ruling family.

The chief black eunuch's patronage of these pious foundations augmented his grandeur. Necipoğlu has perceptively suggested that the symbolic gesture of becoming a patron accentuated the chief eunuch's status, creating the aura of "childless patron saint."[49] The fact that he would not have any first-degree heirs such as a spouse or offspring was essentially an assurance for the endowment funds' return to the state as revenue. After his demise, the effects of the chief eunuch's pious endowments would be at the disposal of the state's treasury. In the late sixteenth century the patronage of the chief eunuchs expanded beyond the conventional realm, as they systematically became engaged in literary quests. Hence, through a symbolic network of patronage of the arts, the eunuchs found a channel through which they could leave a legacy through the art of the letter. The benefaction of such secular urban monuments as fountains and sebils was paralleled by a deep interest in literary arts for this new group of patrons. Emine Fetvacı who studied the phenomenon of change in subject matter, appearance and language of illustrated manuscripts of the era under scrutiny has attributed this change to the shifting patterns in patronage and transformations in the network of patrons.[50]

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[48] Shaun Marmon, **Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society,** (NewYork; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 7.

[49] Necipoğlu emphasizes the aspect of the chief black eunuch not having children and hence creating a god-like self-image through his patron identity, **The Age of Sinan,** p. 501.

[50] Emine Fatma Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript

As a courtly persona, Mehmed Agha was an eager agent in manuscript production. His ownership of the primary manuscripts of his time demonstrated his ambitious nature, given that viziers instead of eunuchs more traditionally oversaw the commissioning of manuscripts.[51] Mehmed Agha's emulation of vizierial features in his patronage activity both in letters and architecture was indeed unprecedented. The sphere of patronage networks was further challenged by another prominent figure in the imperial palace, the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha, in the early seventeenth century. Fetvacı has pointed to the rise of Gazanfer Agha to power, stating that his patronage activity became more vigorous following the death of Mehmed Agha, even though he had long been the chief white eunuch during the reigns of Sultan Selim II (1566-74), Sultan Murad III (1574-95), and Sultan Mehmed III (r.1595-1603).[52]

Although some scholars have misperceived Gazanfer Agha to be of Hungarian descent, reliable sources suggest that he and his brother Ca'fer Agha were of Venetian origin. Maria Pia Pedani demonstrates that Gazanfer's mother, Franceschina Zorzi Michiel, was captured traveling with her children in 1559 in a Venetian town in Albania, where his father was the Venetian podesta. Their two sons were taken hostage by the Ottomans to be

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Patronage 1566-1617'', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2005); for the involvement of Mehmed Agha and Gazanfer Agha in manuscript production in the imperial court see also Zeren Tanındı, "Yeni Sarayın Ağaları ve Kitaplar," **Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi** 3/3 (2002): 41-56 and idem., "Transformation of Words to Images: Portraits of Ottoman Courtiers in the "Dîwâns" of Bâkî and Nâdirî," **Anthropology and Aesthetics** 43, Islamic Arts (Spring, 2003), pp. 131-145.

[51] For the treatment of the eunuch's involvement in the manuscript production, and supervision of the portrayal of the sultan's new image see Emine Fatma Fetvacı, p. 250. The eunuch's (in this case Mehmed Agha's) power in deciding on the elements that determine the sultan's depiction in illustrated manuscripts and chronicles shows the extent of influence and weight he acquired in court.

[52] "Though involved in the Nustretnāme project in the early 1580s, he becomes much more active as a patron after the death of Mehmed Agha, and after the construction of his madrasa, both events corresponding to 1590," Fetvacı, p. 295. See also Halil İnalcık, "Kapı Ağası," **Encyclopedia Islamica** IV, (Leiden, 1978): 571; Baki Tezcan, 103; The same point is emphasized in the article by Tommaso Stefini who wrote on the association between identity, regional factionalism, and patronage network of Gazanfer Agha: Tommasso Stefini, "16. Yüzyılda Bir Etnik-Bölgesel Dayanışma Örneği: İstanbul ve Venedik Arasında Gazanfer Ağa," **Toplumsal Tarih** 225 (Eylül 2012): 18.

brought to Şehzade Selim's court in Kütahya. After Selim became sultan in 1566, he suggested that Gazanfer and his brother Ca'fer join him in the inner court of the palace in Istanbul on the condition that they would become eunuchs.[53] Though whether Ca'fer survived the surgery has been a much debated aspect, Günhan Börekçi has shown that Gazanfer was initially the master of the turban (*dülbend gulâmı*) of Murad III in the privy chamber for three years, after which he took over his brother Ca'fer's post as head of the privy chamber (*has odabaşı*) in 1577. During Gazanfer's promotion to the post of head of the privy chamber, Ca'fer had become the chief white eunuch (*kapu ağası*). Two years after the retirement of Ca'fer Agha, when the chief black eunuch Mehmed Agha had deceased, Gazanfer Agha was promoted to the post of chief white eunuch.[54] Gazanfer Agha was permitted by Sultan Murad III to also maintain his position as head of the privy chamber, which gave him a prominence that was never before experienced by an official in either of the positions.

During his more than thirty-year long office, Gazanfer Agha was the chief of the white eunuchs of the imperial palace, and he governed the inner palace (*enderun*) where male slaves resided. He alone had the power to permit or reject anyone from entering the third courtyard from the second, as the keeper of the Gate of Felicity. Pedani states that during his lifetime, the chief white eunuch acquired great political power as a result of his close connection to Safiye Sultan.[55] In 1603 due to their extensive political involvement, Gazanfer Agha and his ally, the chief black eunuch Osman Agha, were killed by their enemies, "their heads rolling to the sultan's feet as a white coral and a black one."[56]

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[53] Günhan Börekçi stated that the historian and bureaucrat Mustafa Âli commented on his patron Gazanfer Agha referring to his castration "as an unfortunate event, but one that had a grand purpose fashioned by divine will." In his much-famed *Künh ül-ahbar*, Âli stated "it is understood that God's intention was to grant the Ottoman state the honor of being served by this man, and His intention in depriving Gazanfer Agha of the ability to reproduce was to give him hundreds of young boys as adopted sons," in ''Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) and His Immediate Predecessors'', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (Ohio: The Ohio State University, 2010), pp. 260-61.

[54] Börekçi, pp. 49-50.

[55] Maria Pia Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," **Turcica** 32 (2000): 14.

[56] The tragic incident is described in the histories of major Ottoman chroniclers, see for example **Tarih-i Peçevi** I, (İstanbul, 1281), p. 255 and **Tarih-i Naima** I, (İstanbul, 1281),

If one were to compare the patronage activity of Gazanfer Agha to that of Mehmed Agha in both arts and architecture, one would quickly notice that Gazanfer Agha's deeds were not solely motivated by political aspirations. He was indeed an intellectual of his time, supporting poets and scholars with vigorous curiosity. Under the supervision of Gazanfer Agha three illustrated manuscripts were translated from Arabic and Persian.[57] Gazanfer Agha also sponsored the renovation of the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad, and this generous act was illustrated and annotated in one of the manuscripts of *Feza'il-i Mekke ve Medine* (Virtues of Mecca and Medina).[58] Among the many significant pious deeds of Gazanfer Agha, the most important one is the madrasa-centered complex he commissioned in Kırkçeşme located in the Fatih district, by the aqueduct of Valens (Bozdoğan). The chief white eunuch was personally involved in choosing the schoolmaster of the madrasa (*müderris*). It is reported that Gazanfer Agha referred to Nişancı (Tevki'i) Muhyi Pasha, someone who he deemed the wisest of all that were around him, and he in turn recommended his son-in-law Seyfi-zâde, who then assumed responsibility of this admirable post.[59] Hence Gazanfer Agha had cultivated his public image, focusing more on building institutions of education, and supporting intellectual oeuvres as a patron.

In his waqfiyya, it is mentioned that Gazanfer Agha also built sixteen fountains both in Anatolia and Istanbul, and a mosque complex in Gediz. Davud Agha built the Gazanfer Agha complex in 1599 **(Fig.12)**. An unusual aspect of this complex was that it was a precursor to the trend of commissioning madrasa-centered complexes. The madrasa of Gazanfer Agha was granted an imperial college status, which denoted the first time that such a prestigious rank was offered to a madrasa established by a donor that was not a member of the royal family.[60] The complex of Gazanfer Agha comprises of a mausoleum, a madrasa, and a sebil. Kuran explains the emergence of

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pp. 307-308.

[57] These works were both translated into Ottoman, and changed from verse form to prose. They were the *Miftah-ı Cifru'l-Cami* (Key to Esoteric Knowledge), the *Story of Ferruh and Huma*, and the *Baharistan* (Abode of Spring), Fetvacı, p. 266.

[58] Fetvacı, p. 286.

[59] Meserret Diriöz, "Gazanfer Ağa Medresesi'nin Açılışına Dâir Bir Mesnevi," **Birinci Milli Türkoloji Kongresi,** *İstanbul, 6-9 Şubat 1978 Tebliğler*, (1978), 407.

[60] Börekçi, p. 51; see also Baki Tezcan, **The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World,** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 104.

madrasa/mausoleum type complexes in this period as a reaction to the abundance of mosques that were built in the previous decades. If a complex was in the proximity of a mosque, then it was deemed unnecessary for it to also include another prayer space. The Sokollu complex in Eyüp, the Koca Sinan Pasha complex in Çarşıkapı, and the Kuyucu Murad Pasha in Vezneciler also demonstrate the popularity of madrasa/mausoleum complexes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.[61] The noticeable resemblance of the complex to the Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha's mausoleum and sebil in Divanyolu, which was built by Davud Agha as well, attests to the political and social ambitions of its patron.

The entrance to the building is through a gate that has five windows on the right and three on the left side **(Fig.13)**. The small graveyard between the walls of the courtyard and the tomb of Gazanfer Agha, not originally planned by the architect, is a later addition. In the courtyard, the eldest gravestone dated 1616, is claimed to belong to Mehmed Emin Efendi, one of the assigned *mütevelli* (trustees) of the Gazanfer Agha's waqf. The elaborate madrasa is formed of fourteen rooms with a small square-shaped courtyard. The large dome of the mausoleum is sustained by a twelve-point support system. Other than the tomb of Gazanfer Agha, there are two unidentified women's graves in the mausoleum, which might have been his relatives.

The sebil[62], located on the southwest corner of the courtyard is one of the most important features of this complex **(Fig.14)**. Shirine Hamadeh explains that a sebil was different from the classical wall fountain in the sense that, "with the exception of a few 'unattached' structures such as Sinan's hexagonal sebil nearby the Süleymaniye mosque (1587) or the wall-type sebil of Rüstem Pasha (1562), the 'classical' sebil projected out of the wall in a three-quarter circle or a polygon. Pierced by large, latticed, segmental, or pointed arches from which water was served to the public. They were

[61] Kuran, p. 123; see also Zeynep Nayır, **Osmanlı Mimarlığında Sultan Ahmet Külliyesi ve Sonrası, 1609-90,** (İstanbul: İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Baskı Atölyesi, 1975), pp. 170-178.

[62] Shirine Hamadeh, "The City's Pleasures: Architectural Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul", Ph.D. dissertation, (Cambridge: MIT, 1999), p. 101: "The sebil can be best described as a spoutless 'water tank' structure where water was distributed to the public free of charge, usually by an appointed person (sebilci). Sebils were most often built as corner structures which sometimes extended into a wall fitted çeşme."

surmounted by a dome or a flattened conical roof."[63] In this period, the sebil was not a commonly commissioned architectural monument.[64] However, it was the beginning of a new interpretation, a more temporal and intimate type of pious endowment. As an elegant extension of the complex, the Gazanfer Agha sebil is formed of an octagonal base plan and a double-domed structure. The marble columns, caged windows, and the interior decorations in the Malakâri style contribute to its distinct organization. The arches that enhance the exterior of the sebil are formed of marble striped masonry (*ablaq*), which is a curious detail. It is mentioned by many sources that there is a water preserve made out of marble, which obtains its water supply from the well constructed within the sebil.

For palace officials of lesser ranks the commissioning of sebils and fountains became a more common practice in the seventeenth century possibly due to the affordability of these structures in comparison to larger and more sophisticated ones such as madrasas and mosques. This was a period in which the mania over building such monumental religious endowments as mosques and masjids had come to a point of saturation, gradually relinquishing its place to newer trends of a rather more mundane and non-religious kind. The first known example of a water dispenser in Istanbul was the Efdalzâde sebil in 1496.[65] During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the changing tastes and wealth of the ruling elite also affected the focus of their architectural patronage.

Shirine Hamadeh identifies the eighteenth century as the defining moment in the construction of sebils and public fountains, suggesting that their proliferation is part of a remarkable building activity since the conquest of the city in the mid-fifteenth century.[66] Though this contention is true in

[63] Ibid, p. 103.

[64] According to Hamadeh, "scholars have tended to attribute this excessive profusion (patronage of the fountains), directly or indirectly, to the series of infrastructural improvements which occurred in the same period, with the building and repair of dams and reservoirs, and the extension of water lines to new neighborhoods. The two oldest fifteenth-century networks of Kırkçeşme and Halkalı witnessed significant repairs and enlargements by Mahmud I, Mustafa III, and Abdulhamid I, and the addition of a dam, *Büyük Bend* or *Bend-i Kebīr* (the Great Dam) by Ahmed III in 1722-23," Ibid, p. 94.

[65] İzzet Kumbaracılar, **İstanbul Sebilleri,** (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938).

[66] Shirine Hamadeh, "Splash and Spectacle: The Obsession with Fountains in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," **Muqarnas** 19 (2002), 123.

numbers, it should be noted that the emergence of sebil/fountain endowments occurred in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.[67] Hamadeh underlines that the restructuring of the city's water supply system corresponded to the trend of commissioning of public fountains.[68] Although the proliferation of public fountains in this period was partly correlated to the expansion of the water infrastructure, Hamadeh argues much reasonably that attributing the increase of fountains could not solely be explained by this improvement. Had this been the case, the expansion of the water supply lines also should have impacted the building of other water-related structures such as hammams. However, while the number of public fountains and water dispensers increased, the construction of public baths decreased considerably. Hence, Hamadeh's argument that the ultimate reason for the emergence of fountains was the considerable expansion in the network of building patrons is a feasible explanation.[69] The fact that sebils and fountains began to be a trend as early as the last quarter of the sixteenth century strengthens this contention.

One of the earliest examples of Ottoman sebil-fountains in complexes besides that of Habeşi Mehmed Agha and Gazanfer Agha, is the Piyale Pasha complex located in the Kaptan neighborhood in Kasımpaşa. Built by the grand admiral of Selim II (1566-74) Mehmet Piyale Pasha, the complex's construction was possibly concluded in 1573. Established on the location of a former dockyard, this complex was at the site of a planned canal project supported by its patron, though it never was actualized.[70] Of the many structures that formed the complex such as the mosque, madrasa, convent, mausoleum, enclosed cemetery, elementary school, laundry area, double

[67] Hamadeh reports that in the sixteenth century there were 75 recorded fountains, in the seventeenth 130, and in the eighteenth (1703-1809) there were more than 365 public fountains in Istanbul, in Hamadeh, **The City's Pleasures,** p. 103; see also Tanışık, 210, and Affan Egemen, **İstanbul'un Çeşme ve Sebilleri: Resimleri ve Kitabeleri ile 1165 Çeşme ve Sebil,** (İstanbul: Arıtan Yayınevleri, 1993); Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, **Su Güzeli: İstanbul Sebilleri,** (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, 1995).

[68] The water infrastructure was supplied with new dams, water reservoirs, and extended water lines to newly established neighborhoods in the eighteenth century. See Hamadeh, "Splash and Spectacle," p. 123.

[69] Ibid, p. 125.

[70] M. Baha Tanman, "Piyale Paşa Külliyesi'nin Yerleşim Düzeni ve Mimarisi," **Piyale Paşa Camii 2005-2007 Restorasyonu,** (İstanbul: Gürsoy Grup Kültür Yayınları, 2011), p. 101.

hammam, bread and pastry bakeries, bazaar, and sebil, little has survived to date **(Fig.15)**.[71] The Kılıç Ali Pasha complex located across the Ottoman canon foundry (Tophane) in Karaköy was another complex commissioned by a grand admiral in 1581. Among the last works of Sinan, the architect, this important complex included a sebil opening to the public street **(Fig.16)**. The Koca Sinan Pasha complex built by the five-time grand vizier Sinan Pasha between Çemberlitaş and Beyazıt squares in 1593 was among those earlier complexes that comprised a sebil **(Fig.17)**. The mosque commissioned in 1592 by a local dervish-caps (*takke*) maker, Takkeci İbrahim Agha, located outside the Byzantine city walls across the cemetery in Topkapı had two sebils for public water supply **(Fig.18)**. Consequently, an important question that should be reevaluated is the reason for the late arrival of the sebil/fountain structures to the Ottoman architectural repertoire.

As a water structure, the sebil was a popular element in the architectural inventory of the Mamluk-period Cairo. Perhaps its earlier emergence and proliferation in Cairo is attributable to the absence of a water source other than the Nile. With the assistance of wheels water was elevated from the Nile and effectively carried by way of aqueducts into large wells and then onto sebils in numerous districts of the city. Perhaps the difference between Shafi'i and Hanafi legal rites in terms of their interpretation of the purity of water and cleanliness could be one of the reasons for the late arrival of sebils and fountains to Ottoman architectural landscape. Since according to the Hanafi perception water could only be considered clean and pure if it was obtained in a flowing state, the use of water dispensers for public supply might have seemed repelling at first.[72]

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[71] The complex has undergone an extensive restoration in 2005-2007.

[72] M. Baha Tanman was the first to raise this important issue to my attention. Hamadeh has cited a few sources that have dealt with fountains as significant constructs in Islamic architecture in the Ottoman period, in "Splash and Spectacle," pp. 123-124: see Mahmud Hamid Husayni, **Al-Sabilah al-'Uthmaniyah bi-Madinat al-Qahira 1517-1798,** (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1985); Saleh Lamei Mostafa "The Cairene Sabil: Form and Meaning," Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar, **Muqarnas** 6 (1989): 33-42; Andre Raymond, "Les fontaines publiques (sabil) du Caire a l'époque ottomane: 1517-1798," *Annales islamogiques* 15 (1979): 235-291; Archie Walls, "Ottoman Restorations to the Sabil and to the Madrasa of Qaytbay in Jerusalem," **Muqarnas** 10 (1993): 85-97; Ülkü Bates, "Eighteenth-Century Fountains of Istanbul," in **9th International Congress of Turkish Art** (23-27 September 1991), 1: 294-295.

It has been suggested by Saleh Lamei Mostafa that the traditional characteristics of sebils in Mamluk Cairo were related to the Quran and the hadith.[73] Symbolically water brings life, carries with it the power of creation, blooming and flourishing from nature. According to Islamic doctrine, water was emphasized in Islam not just because of its significance in ritual cleansing of the body but also due to a number of allusions of it being the source of all creation.[74] Hence water is a symbolic reference to the invincibility of God. In Mostafa's point of view the sebil is not just a commemorative structure, it is in fact a representational feature of one's helplessness in the face of God's might. Mostafa suggests that, "water running over the *salsabil* symbolizes the rain which Allah sends down from the heavens (which in turn is a symbol for the descent of divine revelation) in a form that revives the dead land (which symbolizes the resurrection)."[75] The essence of the eunuch being a patron of a structure that gave life through water might in fact be an allusion to his godlike existence. Thus, symbolically, the fountain and the sebil become objects through which the eunuch was able to achieve procreation. Being built into the corners of buildings and complexes gave the sebil accessibility from the outside. This way, water was able to reach all the passersby, and the generous patron, in turn, could receive their grateful prayers. The eunuch's lastingness in the mundane world is depicted through his endowment of the sebil, which was neither an entirely religious nor secular structure. The fountain/sebil endowments atoned for the eunuch's ineffectuality in giving life.

The sebil became a significant element of public urban life, where the distinctly drawn gender boundaries could not be as segregated as indoors. Although they were more affordable endowments, their mere existence was a portrayal of imperial visibility through which the patron had a direct impact on the social and daily practices of the people. As Hamadeh makes a reference to an eighteenth-century verse by the poet Vāsıf, "*On your way to the fountain/ Don't get pregnant by that debauched Bekir Pasha*" it is possible to deduce that the emergence of the fountain/sebil structure as an

[73] Saleh Lamei Mostafa, p. 33.
[74] "The omnipotence of Allah is revealed in the creation of all creatures from water," Ibid, pp. 34-36.
[75] Ibid, p. 37; M. Baha Tanman, « Les *selsebils* dans l'architecture ottomane », **Actes des VI et VIIe Congrès sur le Corpus d'Archéologie Ottomane sur. Selsebils, Minarets, Mausolées et Souks a l'Époque Ottomane,** (Tunis, 2005), pp. 169-194.

architectural trend among the palace grandees affected the permeation of strict gender boundaries.[76]

The sixteenth-century court intellectual and historian Mustafa Âli devoted a section of the *Essence* to his major benefactor, Gazanfer Agha:

> By the date of this writing, the year 1596-97, I, who truthfully praise Gazanfer Agha, had composed thirty collections of writing, more than twenty treatises, and four eloquent divans in Persian and Turkish. All people of quality know that I have always gained endless opportunities and renewal of life through that most generous one's kindness, generosity, and boundless energy in seeking for me high appointments. He always gave full value to my learning and ability, and took pride in me as a product of his patronage. I received purse after purse from that noble person, and carried off to storage the cloaks and valuable gifts he bestowed on me.[77]

Patronage of the arts was a conscious effort by the chief eunuchs to enhance their reputation during a period in which their political involvement earned them vindictive criticism. Hence, these benefactions were not solely emblematic acts to obtain social recognition and prestige. Through their architectural and literary patronage, the two chief eunuchs consciously created an entourage that acted as a barrier between them and those who despised them. As major ruling figures in the harem, their mutilated status was a signification of their loyalty to the sultan. The eunuchs preserved within their existence the power of being the only ones that trespassed the definite gender boundaries between the world of man and woman. As sophisticated patrons, Mehmed Agha and Gazanfer Agha's numerous en-

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[76] Hamadeh explains, "this verse by the late eighteenth-century poet Vāsıf is an exasperated mother's plea to her mischievous daughter, conveying her concern over the wide-ranging implications of a trip to the fountain. This was part of the daily (or weekly) routine of most people. With the exception of some well-to-do households whose residences included a well or a fountain, most everyone relied on neighborhood fountains for their daily water supply. It was an inevitable activity which, as illustrations and vignettes of the same period illustrate, provided a context and a pretext for men and women to mix freely: an arena for unrestrained socialization, flirtation, and in this mother's mind, for the most unpredictable forms of encounter. The neighborhood fountain was an unguarded and ungendered outdoor social space which lay beyond the reach of social and behavioral regulations like, for example, those prohibiting the mixing of genders in public places," Hamadeh, **The City's Pleasures,** p. 148.

[77] Cornell H. Fleischer, **Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600),** (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 170.

dowments, especially of public fountains and sebils in various quarters of Istanbul indicated the extension of their authority and wealth. Their preferences as benefactors heralded the emergence of a new cultural network of patrons in a budding urban setting. As eunuchs, patronage of these specific edifices communicated a much deeper yearning, one that was instigated by the absence of that which rendered them everlasting. Through dispensing water, the eunuchs created the illusion of giving life, which in principle, stemmed from the desire to outlast death. The structures that Mehmed Agha and Gazanfer Agha endowed communicated a unique architectural expression that resounded with the distinctiveness of their patrons. Perhaps through the appropriation of water, the chief eunuchs conducted a dialogue beyond margins.

Fig. 1 Detail from inside the Imperial Hall or Hall of the Throne (Hünkâr Sofası), the Harem at the Topkapı Palace, (courtesy of *ArchNet*)

Fig. 2 The vaulted base of what remains of the Pearl Kiosk (İncili Köşk) located to the east of the outer walls of the Topkapı Palace, (courtesy of Walter B. Denny, *ArchNet*)

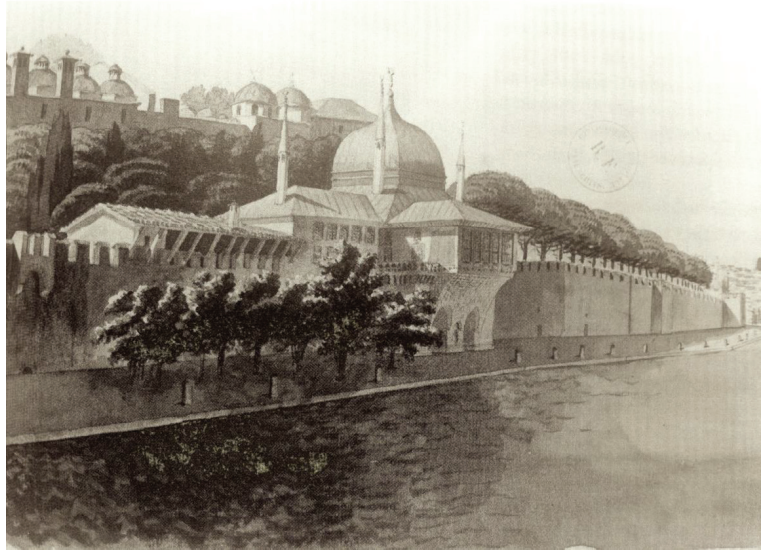

Fig. 3 Watercolor illustration of the Pearl Kiosk with the kitchens and Treasury-Bath complex in the background. From J.N. Huyot, *Croquis de voyages*, 1817-29, MS. Paris, Bibliothèque National, Fr. Nouv. Acq. 5080, pl. 7 (courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power, Fig. 131, p. 227)*

Fig. 4 Habeşi (Abyssinian) Mehmed Agha complex in Çarşamba neighborhood, in Fatih district (Photographed by Reha Günay, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005, Fig. 524 and 525, p. 499)

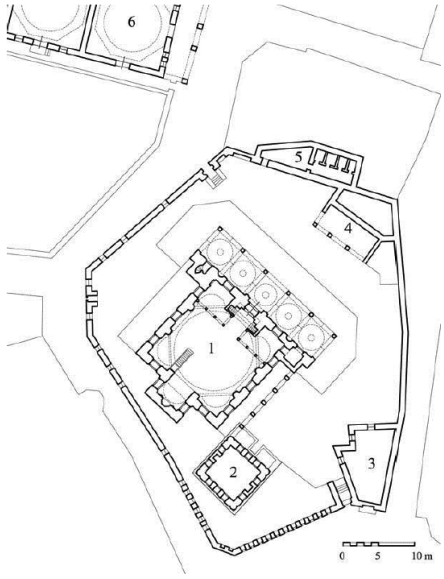

Fig. 5 Floor plan of the Mehmed Agha complex showing 1) mosque, 2) mausoleum, 3) site of the convent sheikh's residence with public fountain, 4) ablution fountains, 5) latrines, 6) double bath (Drawn by Arben N. Arapi, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan, Fig. 521, p. 497*)

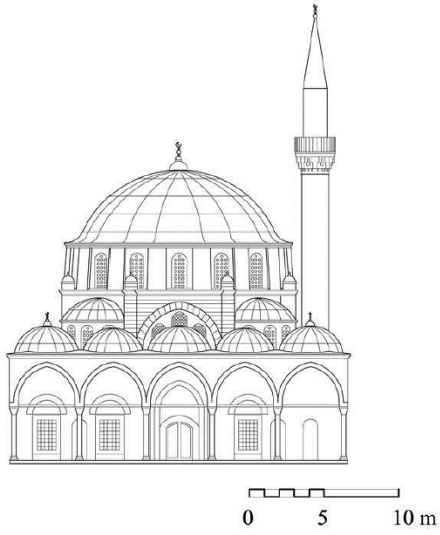

Fig. 6 Mehmed Agha complex elevation drawing (Drawn by Arben N. Arapi, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan, Fig. 522, p. 497*)

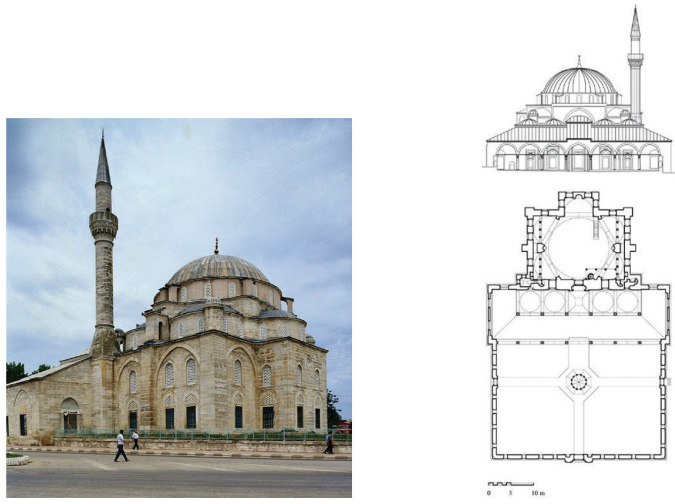

Fig. 7 Semiz Ali Pasha Mosque at Babaeski photographed by Reha Günay; Floor plan and elevation (Drawn by Arben N. Arapi, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, Fig. 382, p. 388 and Fig. 381, p. 386)

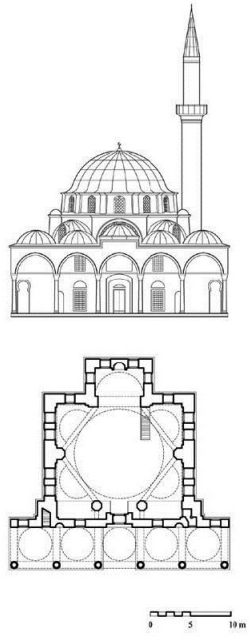

Fig. 8 Molla Çelebi Mosque at Fındıklı floor plan and elevation (Drawn by Arben N. Arapi, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, Fig. 501, p. 480)

Fig. 9 Mihrab of Mehmed Agha Mosque (Photographed by S. Doğan)

Fig. 10 Tile work and calligraphy detail from Mehmed Agha Mosque interior (Photographed by the author)

Fig. 11 Detail of the tile work and calligraphy from Mehmed Agha Mosque interior

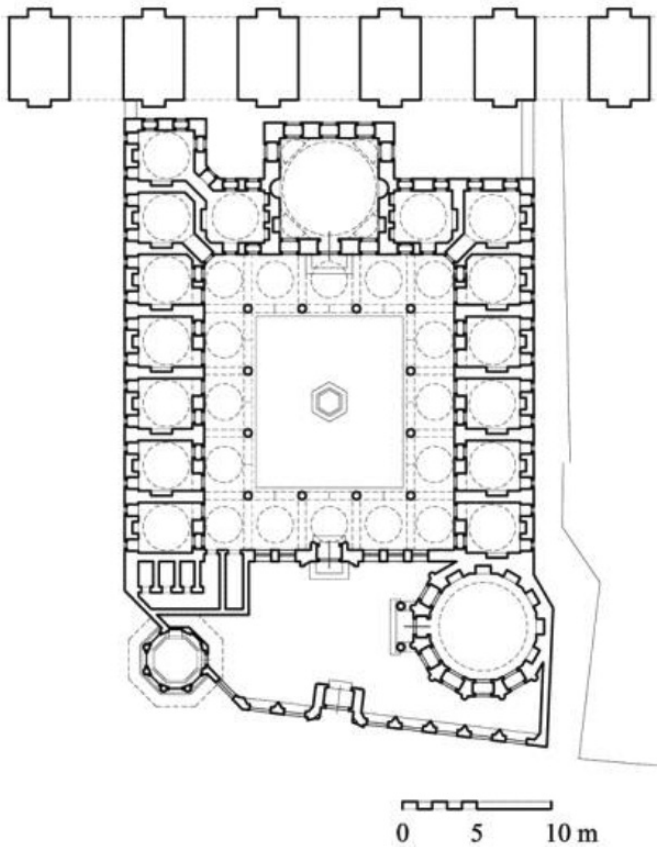

Fig. 12 Floor plan of the Gazanfer Agha complex (Drawn by Arben N. Arapi, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, Fig. 536, p. 510)

Fig. 13 View of the Gazanfer Agha Complex. The mausoleum is on the right, the sebil on the left, and the madrasa under the Valens Aqueduct behind (Photographed by Cemal Emden)

Fig. 14 View of the sebil of the Gazanfer Agha Complex (Photographed by Cemal Emden)

Fig. 15 The Piyale Pasha Complex, view of the exterior prior to the recent restoration (Photographed by Reha Günay, courtesy of Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005, Fig. 427, p. 427))

Fig.16 View of the sebil from the northeastern of the Kılıç Ali Pasha Complex (Photographed by Özgür Başak Alkan, courtesy Aga Khan Visual Archive, MIT)

Fig. 17 View from Yeniçeriler Street, looking east towards sabil and tomb Koca Sinan Pasha Complex (Photographed by Walter B. Denny, courtesy Aga Khan Visual Archive, MIT)

Fig 18 Takkeci İbrahim Agha Mosque view of the rectangular sabil across the street from the mosque precinct; the tombs of the founder and his son are seen to its left (Photographed by Özgür Başak Alkan, courtesy Aga Khan Visual Archive, MIT)