The Yeni Valide Mosque complex in Eminönü, Istanbul, was a major imperial Ottoman architectural project whose construction spanned both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (fig. 1). Built by two powerful dynastic women, the mothers of Mehmed III and Mehmed IV, and designed by three or possibly four royal architects, the mosque complex was among the largest built in Istanbul in the post-classical era. Construction of the foundations began in 1597 under the auspices of Safiye Sultan (fig. 2), the mother of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603), but was abandoned shortly after the sultan’s death in 1603. The succession of Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) to the Ottoman sultanate marked the end of Safiye Sultan’s tenure as queen mother, or valide sultan; she was moved from the harem to the Old Palace to be replaced by a new valide, Kösem Sultan. When she died the Yeni Valide project was abandoned, and what had been built of the mosque’s foundations was left untouched for fifty-seven years. The building site, which had been expropriated at great cost from a largely non-Muslim community, was repopulated by minorities involved in the commercial
area adjacent to the customs depots of Eminönü. Shortly after a conflagration in 1660 devastated the section of the city from Unkapanı to Eminönü, the imperial family once more became interested in the Yeni Cami project. The Ottoman chronicler Silahdar informs us that at the suggestion of the head imperial architect, Mustafa Ağa, the mother of Mehmed IV, Valide Hatice Turhan (fig. 3), decided to reappropriate the property and resume construction. Under her patronage, the mosque was completed in 1663 and inaugurated in 1665 along with its dependencies: a royal pavilion (hünkâr kânı), a tomb (türbe) for herself, a building for water distribution (sulu kânı), a primary school (ölümスクthouse), and a market (carşı).

Recent research on patronage by women of the imperial family in the Ottoman Empire has shown that by the later years of Süleyman’s reign the court had become more sedentary as Ottoman princes and their mothers remained in the Topkapı Palace rather than move to the provincial territories of the empire as they had done in earlier times. Until the mid-sixteenth century, the major architectural endeavors of imperial women had been realized outside the capital as the mothers of potential heirs to the sultanate, serving as the protectors and advisers to their sons, held court with them in the provinces. In the royal household of the provinces it was the mother of the prince, as the eldest member of the court, who took over the role of patron of public construction. As the locus of princely residences shifted increasingly to the center of the empire, however, imperial women responded by building pious works in Istanbul rather than in the provinces.

Both valide patronesses of the Yeni Cami complex, by choosing to build a major public work in the capital of the empire, continued a pattern of patronage by imperial women that had been initiated in the sixteenth century by Süleyman’s wife, Haseki Hürrem. By locating her foundation in the political center of the empire and announcing her patronage in the foundation inscription of the Eminönü mosque, Hatice Turhan linked herself to earlier Ottoman women patrons who had sponsored pious monuments in the Ottoman capital and in a very concrete way took up the legacy left by her valide predecessor.
For imperial women of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then, building in the capital had high priority. Where in the city they built was also a concern as some sites, due to their elevation and/or proximity to the administrative center and ceremonial axes of the city, were more highly valued than others. Because the Yeni Valide Mosque is not located along the Divan Yolu, not adjacent to the Topkapı Palace, and does not command a hilltop site as the mosques of Fatih, Süleyman, and Sultan Ahmed do, its placement on the ‘low’ waterfront site of Eminönü has been cited as proof that imperial women patrons were denied choice properties in the capital for their architectural foundations (fig. 4). Implicit in this explanation for the site of the Eminönü complex is the assumption that the valide s were passive recipients of whatever property was allocated to them by someone more elevated in the Ottoman hierarchy as, given any choice in the matter, they would never have selected a site like Eminönü which lacked the visibility of its hilltop neighbors.

Hatice Turhan’s waiferya, contemporary Ottoman and European chroniclers, and the epigraphic program of the mosque, however, show clearly that the accepted explanation that the siting of the Yeni Valide project in Eminönü was the result of discrimination against imperial women building in the capital is incorrect. First, in both phases of the Eminönü building campaign, the commercial advantage of the waterfront site was an important factor in the decision to locate the mosque in that quarter of the city. Particularly in the second phase of the campaign, the L-shaped market buildings are concrete evidence of an intended commercial enterprise (fig. 5). Second, as Eminönü was a largely non-Muslim section of the city, it was an attractive area in which to initiate a building campaign which could Islamicize this densely populated commercial district. The selection of Eminönü as a site for the architectural campaigns of the valide was intentional and a central factor in shaping the building agenda of both patrons.

EMINÖNÜ AS A COMMERCIAL CENTER

To point the way to a reassessment of the position of dynastic women regarding site selection in the capital, it is important to consider the commercial attraction of Eminönü as a major factor in the choice of location for imperial munificence. Long before the Ottomans conquered Istanbul, Eminönü was a busy commercial center and served as the location of several of the city’s customs houses. As early as the tenth century, on the site of the present Yeni Valide mosque, stood the Porta Hebraica, the Latin name for the city gate in this quarter which attests to the presence of a community of Jews there, most probably of the Karaite sect. After the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II, non-Muslims were moved into the city to repopulate it and rejuvenate its economic and social life. In the following years many non-Muslims moved, or were moved, to Istanbul and settled in the Eminönü quarter and other locations along the banks of the Golden Horn. Reports of Ottoman chroniclers and various poll-tax registers give us some indication of the changing demographics of non-Muslims residing in Galata and Istanbul, from the time of Mehmed II’s conquest of the city through the seventeenth century. Of particular interest is a register for the years 1595–97 which provides valuable information about the number, origins, and occupations of Jews in the Eminönü area prior to the construction of Safiye Sultan’s mosque. While it is difficult to calculate the exact figures for Jews who were relocated as a result of the first expropriation undertaken for the Yeni Valide project, it is clear that the area surrounding the present location of the Yeni Cami mosque and the Egyptian market was a particularly densely populated Jewish quarter, and that there were very few Muslim establishments in this area before 1598. Expropriations for Safiye Sultan’s project were on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

Eminönü was a major port on the Golden Horn, and it was the place where business was transacted between foreign and Ottoman merchants, Muslim and non-Muslim tax farmers. As early as the fifteenth century archival sources attest to a growing dissatisfaction among Muslim merchants over the increasingly influential role played by Jewish tax farmers in the Ottoman Empire. The powerful positions held by Jewish merchants and tax farmers in the capital were also targeted in the mid-sixteenth century by Venetian merchants who resented Jewish monopolies over certain markets such as textiles and the wheat trade. As Arbel has pointed out, ‘The official representatives of the Republic in the Turkish capital reiterated time and again during the 1550’s and 1560’s that Jewish merchants completely dominated the supply of wool, cloth, and camlets, and that the Venetian merchants in Istanbul were unable to acquire these products and export them unless they were willing to comply with
the conditions imposed on them by the Jewish businesspeople.⁴ The tension over the prominent role of Jewish merchants and tax farmers in the capital culminated in 1582 when a group of ship’s captains and merchants filed a petition with the central government complaining that the collectors of the customs taxes were all Jewish and the latter had not exercised acceptable behavior towards Muslims paying the tax. The Muslim merchants requested “that henceforth such servants of tax farmers should not be Jewish.”⁵ A document published by Refik informs us that this request was granted.⁶

The growing discontent voiced by Muslim and Venetian merchants over the Jewish tax farmers and merchants in the capital must have facilitated Safiye Sultan’s efforts to expropriate the valuable property from the Jews that was required for the first building campaign of the Yeni Camii.⁷ In the second phase of building undertaken by Hattice Turhan, the rhetoric surrounding the process of expropriation, as evidenced in the waqfiya and parts of the mosque’s epigraphic program, reveals that a well-orchestrated campaign was organized to affirm the authority of the sultan’s central role in the Ottoman state and to legitimize an architectural enterprise which completed the transformation of the Eminönü quarter from a largely non-Muslim merchant quarter to a site where the central focus became the Yeni Mosque and its dependencies.

**ZULMIYE VS. ADILYE**

The decision to build in Eminönü posed a number of difficulties for both Safiye Sultan and the architects involved in the construction. The expropriation of land for the mosque was costly and handled improperly, earning the first Eminiye a poor reputation in the annals of Ottoman architectural history. While relatively few construction records for the two Yalıçami building campaigns have been discovered in the Ottoman archives, we are fortunate in having detailed accounts by contemporary Ottoman chroniclers of the Eminiye project.⁸ Of particular interest to these chroniclers were the controversies surrounding the expropriations that preceded both building campaigns. It is clear from the account by Selmani of the first campaign and by Silahdar of the second that the confiscation of property, even for an imperial architectural project, was a highly charged event, the execution of which had to be conducted in a just and legal way.

Selmani Mustafa Efendi, an Ottoman chronicler who wrote in the final years of the sixteenth century, provides a valuable contemporary account of the first expropriation and the problems with the foundation work during Saffye Sultan’s building campaign. The chronicler’s entries for 29 January 1598 and 8 March 1600 state that the mosque, soup kitchen (maqas), inn (hath), and other pious foundations which Saffye Sultan intended to build were located in the Jewish quarter of Eminie (Eminiye). The necessary number of stone (kâğıt, rectangular) buildings were confiscated and leveled to prepare for the laying of the mosque’s foundations and Kapco Kara Mehmed Âğa, the superintendent (ålbadda) to the chief black eunuch of the harem, was appointed as overseer. The grand vizier Hasan Pasha visited Eminiye to check on the progress of the project. Kara Mehmed Âğa was to pay a compensatory sum double the value of the confiscated property to the various landowners, but failed to do so.⁹

To date no waqfıya has been found for Safiye Sultan’s Eminönü foundation, so it is difficult to determine when, or even if, any of the subsidiary buildings of the complex were ever built. Of the mosque itself, only the foundations up to the base of the first window were completed.¹⁰ Again from Selmani’s records, we know that the foundation work had presented the architect Davud Âğa with a tremendous challenge. On the soft shores of the Golden Horn, the prodigious weight of the mosque’s foundations, estimated to be ten thousand tons, created a serious problem of water seepage; Selmani claims that Davud Âğa was much acclaimed for his innovative solution, which was to pump out excess water from the foundations so that he could complete the lower substructure of the walls of the mosque.¹¹

In addition to the technical problems with the early construction, Saffye Sultan’s project was also troubled by criticism in the palace over the great expense of the enterprise. Venetian sources report that members of the Janissaries and other court officials “attribute many disorders to her [Saffye Sultan], in particular the consumption of money for a superb mosque she is having built; but she has halted in its construction.”¹² Sanderson, however, informs us that work was suspended only briefly and writes a few months after the Sultan’s victory that “the Great Sultan’s church goeth up space, and she rayeth as before.”¹³

By the mid-seventeenth century Saffye Sultan’s mismanaged project was being described by Erdiya Celebi as an “act of oppression” (zulmiye), and the contrast between the impropriety of the first campaign and the justness of the second became a kind of leitmotif in the references by later Ottoman chroniclers to the Yeni Valide complex.¹⁴ From the intense efforts and huge funds expended upon clearing and preparing the foundations for the Yeni Valide project and the perseverance Saffye Sultan showed in continuing to build in the face of criticism from the palace over the expense of the foundation work, it is evident that the Islamization of the busy commercial district surrounding the customs houses (seen clearly in Geelho’s engraving of 1680; fig. 6) was a significant and intentional step in the sultan’s agenda. By Islamizing the non-Muslim quarter of Eminiye, Saffye Sultan hoped to seek legitimation for her project, and it appears that the initial expropriation was facilitated by capitalizing on the growing resentment over the prominent role of Jewish custom agents and tax farmers in the Eminiye quarter. At this point it is important to recognize how the Book of Council, written by Gelibolu Mustafa Ali, had shaped late-sixteenth-century opinion concerning royal foundations.¹⁵ Written for Saffye Sultan’s husband Murad III, Mustafa Ali had admonished imperial patrons against building charitable endowments using the resources of the treasury rather than booty seized in the campaigns of the faith. Mustafa Ali writes:

As long as the glorious sultans, the Alexander-like kings have not enriched themselves with the spoils of the Holy War and have not become the owners of lands through the gains of campaigns of the Faith, it is not appropriate that they undertake to build soup kitchens for the poor and hospitals or to repair the churches and higher medreses or, in general, to construct establishments of charity, and it is seriously not right to spend and waste the means of the public treasure on unnecessary projects.

For the Divine Laws do not permit the building of charitable establishments with the means of the public treasury, neither do they allow the foundation of mosques and medreses that are not needed unless a sultan, after conducting a victorious campaign, decides to spend the booty he has made on pious deeds rather than on his personal pleasures, and engages to prove this by the erection of (public) buildings.¹⁶

Mustafa Ali’s advice was intended for the reigning sultan, but his admonishments would have impressed the regent queen mothers as well, when they took up the reins of power from their sons or husbands. Saffye Sultan’s husband had won no major victories over the Christian armies, and thus he appears to have taken Mustafa Ali’s advice to heart and refrained from public building.¹⁷ Her son Mehmed III also showed little interest in leaving behind an architectural heritage from his sultanate. Faced with the prospect of her husband and now her son’s reign passing with no architectural commemoration, Saffye Sultan herself initiated a building enterprise in the center of the empire. While no recent Ottoman victories could justify this expensive undertaking along the lines suggested by Mustafa Ali, the expropriation of property in the capital could have been intended as an example of “proper patronage” because of its Islamizing purpose.¹⁸ Ultimately Saffye Sultan’s attempts to legitimize her campaign failed, but her persistence with the Eminiye project in the face of technological obstacles and so much criticism reveals that Eminiye was a valued location. It was only when her son died and she was removed to the Old Palace by Ahmed I that she abandoned all hope of completing her project in Eminiye.¹⁹

The memory of the improperly conducted expropriation at Eminiye reemerged in the rhetoric surrounding the construction of Sultan Ahmed’s mosque, the imperial project undertaken by Saffye Sultan’s grandson in the years between the first and second phases of the Eminiye building campaigns. In the Rüstem Efendi, an early-seventeenth-century architectural treatise written for Mehmed Âğa, the imperial architect of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, the author Câfer Efendi recounts in the thirteenth through the eighteenth couplets of the Ensiyye Koşusu (Founding Ode, 53b) the story of the expropriation of property in the Ayvamedan (Hippodrome) prior to the construction of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque. The allusions to the earlier waqfiye of Saffye Sultan, the ambiguities...
The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex at Eminönü

Fig. 6. Yeni Valide Mosque complex and custom houses of Eminönü in lower-eight corner. Engraving by G. J. Grelot, Relation nouvelle d’un voyage de Constantinople (1860). (Photo: courtesy Çelik Gulersey and the Istanbul Library)

The foundations of Sâfiye Sultan’s mosque would stand for over half a century before another valide sultan, the powerful Hatice Turhan, could carry the Eminönü project to completion. Mehmed IV’s mother’s involvement in the repossessing of the Eminönü site and the completion of her predecessor’s project once again calls into question the accepted view that the harbor site was a mediocri spot allocated to an imperial woman. It is apparent that Hatice Turhan, like Sâfiye Sultan before her, understood and wanted to exploit the commercial advantages of the Eminönü site. The prominent position of the Misr Carşı (Egyptian Bazaar) in the valide’s complex is striking, especially when one considers that the courtyard of the complex is dominated by two large khans, that is, commercial rather than religious structures (fig. 7). Silahdar reports that the imperial architect Mustafa Aga, who had been involved in the construction of the fortresses in Çanakkale for Hatice Turhan, suggested to the grand vizier Köprüli Mehmed Pasha that the valide-revive the Eminönü project rather than undertake repairs of the Cerrahpasha mosque near Akzaraz, which the vizier had earlier suggested to the valide. After the fire of 1660 Silahdar reports that Hatice Turhan followed the advice of Mustafa Aga, rather than Mehmed Köprüli, indicating that the valide herself had made a choice between proposed sites.

Had Hatice Turhan been aware of the contents of Cafer Efendi’s Risâle and Mustafa Ali’s Cevâret, using the abandoned foundations of Sâfiye Sultan’s mosque in Eminönü would have had some appeal. By resurrecting Sâfiye Sultan’s project Hatice Turhan saved extensive foundation work and began the reclaimation of the Eminönü district. While there again had been no major Ottoman conquests to justify such a large and costly project, Hatice Turhan would succeed where Sâfiye Sultan had failed. She was able to legitimize the second expropriation required by her campaign and the expense of her project by manipulating recent events in the capital and tying her act of patronage to an earlier Ottoman and Islamic past.

Hatice Turhan benefited from the bad press that had surrounded the first expropriation in Eminönü. The expropriation of the mosque’s foundations and the surrounding area in 1660 was perceived this time as a noble, pious act; it would drive out the Jews of the district, who, once the construction of Sâfiye Sultan’s project was halted, had again inhabited the quarter. Silahdar writes of Hatice Turhan’s noble efforts to save the district from the Jews. He notes that “the place where Sâfiye Sultan’s partially completed mosque lay had been neglected, chattered from debris, and overrun by Jewish-owned houses. The abominable condition of the area was an affront to religion [Islam] and the state; the completion of the mosque would guarantee prayers for the valide until the time of the Resurrection.”

As with the first expropriation, there was again resistance in Eminönü from Jewish property owners. Silahdar reports that after the decree to vacate was announced, the Jews in the district offered the grand vizier one thousand kes or (purses) of ixtam (from the community treasury to retain their property. The offer was rejected and the ultimatum given: either sell your homes or face execution (Kabûl etmen-i cünusun...
in Arabic, and the subsequent confiscation of this tribe’s land by the Muslims.

It was he who drove the unbelievers among the People of the Book out of their dwellings into the first exile. You did not think that they would go and then for their parts fancied that their stronghold would protect them from God. But God’s scourge fell upon them whence they did not expect it, casting such terror into their hearts that their dwellings were destroyed by their own hands as well as by the faithful. Learn from your example you that have eyes.

A later passage from the same sura mentions how the unbelievers had been punished by fire: “But in the world to come the fire shall be their scourge because they set themselves against God and His apostle.”

While continuing through the recitation of the Hijra sura, the reader would have conjured up the memory of the recent fire of 1660 which had destroyed many of the Jewish houses in the Eminönü area and greatly facilitated the construction of the mosque. Finally, Safiye Sultan’s earlier expropriation in the Eminönü area may also have been recalled while reciting the final part of the Exile sura which reads, “Like those who were but recently punished before them, they tasted the fire of their own deeds: a woful scourge awaits them.”

The selection and display of verses from the Exile Surah in Hatice Turhan’s book could have had the underlying purpose of legitimizing the expropriation of property from the Jews and other non-Muslims in the Eminönü area by linking contemporary events with the events of the past. That is, if the reader could see the connection between the historical events that led to the destruction of the Jewish community, he would be more likely to accept the legitimacy of the actions of Hatice Turhan.

Further evidence that Eminönü was selected to Islamize this lucrative quarter of the city exists in sections of the epigraphic program chosen for the mosque. Of particular interest are the Quranic verses from the Exile sura (59:23), which refer to an early Islamic instance of confiscation of property from non-Muslims. The verse is located on the gallery level near the hünkâr mahfîl (royal prayer loge) (fig. 8). It reads: “He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Giver of Peace, the Keeper of the Faith; the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-Powerful, the Most High! Exalted be God above their Idols.”

The verse makes no specific reference to the Yeni Valide project, but those believers who knew how the passage proceeded would understand that it recounts the prophet Muhammad’s expedition against the Banu al-Nadir, a Jewish tribe who converted to Judaism under the leadership of Rabbi Valide and who were later expropriated by the Muslims.

In the section of the project involving the demolition of the foundations of the old mosques in Eminönü, Hatice Turhan had the choice of using either the foundations of the old mosques or the foundations of the new mosques. She chose to use the foundations of the old mosques, thereby giving the impression that she was paying homage to the past.

Hatice Turhan’s decision to use the foundations of the old mosques was a strategic one. By using the foundations of the old mosques, she was able to create a sense of continuity with the past and to establish a connection between the old and the new.

In conclusion, Hatice Turhan’s decision to use the foundations of the old mosques in Eminönü was a masterful move that allowed her to create a sense of continuity with the past and to establish a connection between the old and the new. It was a decision that was not only practical but also symbolic, as it allowed her to create a link between the past and the present.

NOTES


4. For records of the foundation inscriptions of imperial women who built in the capital before Hatice Turhan, see my “The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex in Eminönü, Istanbul (1597-1660),” Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994, pp. 56-62. In the main portal inscription of the Yeni Valide mosque, the valide sultan takes full credit for founding the mosque. The line in the lower panel of the inscription to the immediate right of the central portal inscription proclaims that she ordered the mosque to be built (einsa salehine anâfedde).


6. For the problem of who in the Ottoman hierarchy had the authority to select or allocate a building site, see my “The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex,” p. 57, n. 51, and Ervin Schick’s review article, “Construcum and Power: The Sultanate of Women’s Reconceived?” in Perspectives on Turkey, Spring 1995, p. 12. Summarizing Ayamanyar’s Hakkında el Gönül, Ulku Basak reports that 7 percent of the mosques in Istanbul, or 65 out of 955, were built “by or for women” (Women as Patrons,” p. 240). I suggest that mosques built for women and mosques built by them should not be lumped together in the same group merely because women were somehow involved in the project. Another foundation inscription, contemporary chronicle(s) reports, and the foundation charters can be very helpful in determining the chain of authority in architectural projects, but this research must be done on a case-by-case basis. For example, it is evident from the foundation inscription of Hatice Turhan’s mosque and Stilhabar’s account of the project that...
she was recognized as the legitimate patron of this pine work. Further, in the valide’s official foundations charter, her political authority in the empire is confirmed by his title, valide-i deliller (“the female” owner of the Ottoman state).

There is clear evidence in the second phase of the Yemeni Valide project that ultimately it was the valide who was exercising legitimate and official authority, hence there is no doubt that the Emine Sultan project was built by her and not for her (“The Yemeni Valide Mosque Complex,” p. 226; Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library no. 159, fol. 6d).

7. Letters between the grand vizier and Hatice Turhan further attest to the valide’s interest in and concern with commercial matters. In a letter written to the grand vizier about the loss of revenue from Egypt, the valide inquires of the state, “What is the reason why the (annual) revenue from Egypt has fallen to 800 pounds when it used to be 1200 pounds?” During the reigns of my lord Sultan Ibrahim, may God have mercy on him, and during the reign of Sultan Murad, how many times, year after year, did we see the Egyptian revenues arrive? What can they be thinking of that they send such a shortfall?” and quoted from Lezlie Peete in *The Imperial House: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1995), p. 226, from the Topkapi Palace Museum Archives (TSMA) 7601/32. The income that Hatice Turhan had endowed for the Yemeni Cami was to provide, as the sifahle (Suleymaniye Library no. 150, fol. 25b-26a), derived from real estate and rural properties in Istanbul and in several villages in Rumelia. For a comprehensive list of all proprietors and expenses mentioned in the sifahle, see my *Yemeni Valide Mosque Complex*, pp. 228-30, Appendix 1.4.


9. All Uğur, *Fatih devleti İstanbula (Istanbul, 1999)*, p. 12. The origins and ideology of the Karatay sultanate of Jukasir are controversial and beyond the scope of this article. For additional evidence, see William Breen, *“Karatay” and the Christian-Orthodoxy—Christians of Islam*, *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 557-54.

For information about the project in Byzantine history, see Zeki Atiköz, *Kırsız İsmiyeti: The Formative Years, 975-1154 A.D.* (Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library no. 159, fol. 25b-26a).


12. Article by Leyla Yüceyilmaz, in *Yemeni Valide Mosque Complex* (Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library no. 159, fol. 6d).


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