Art, Trade and Culture in the Islamic World and Beyond

From the Fatimids to the Mughals

Studies Presented to Doris Behrens-Abouseif

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Figure 1.
The Nusretiye Mosque and its complex viewed facing north, from the parade ground towards the mosque’s right side and rear (qibla) wall. Projecting from the southwest of the prayer hall are the sultan’s pavilion and prayer loge; extending to the northwest are the right-hand gate and wall of the original forecourt. To the southeast of the mosque are the clock tower, the pier leading from the Bosphorus (right foreground), and a small section of the barracks (right middle ground).
Albumen print by Francis Bedford, dated 21 May 1862. Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016, RCIN 2700994.
Built by the reformist Ottoman sultan Mahmud II and completed in 1826, the Nusretiye Mosque has long been associated with Mahmud’s modernisation of the army, and its name, meaning ‘Victorious’, is widely thought to refer to his destruction of the janissary corps. This conventional wisdom is challenged, however, by the fact that the janissaries were not disbanded until two months after the mosque’s inauguration. Using new documentary evidence, this article revisits the question of the Nusretiye’s symbolism, arguing that the mosque, though predating the fulfilment of Mahmud’s military reforms, was designed and named as a monument to their anticipated success.

Among the numerous imperial monuments added to the Ottoman capital of Istanbul during the nineteenth century, the Nusretiye Mosque holds several distinctions that have spared it from the generally dim view taken of these buildings. It is, for a start, a structure of considerable visual appeal: erected on the shore of the Bosphorus between 1823 and 1826, the Nusretiye is the first major extant work of the famous Balian dynasty of architects, and its majestic design —at once original and grounded in earlier models— has garnered a level of praise denied to the family’s later, more audaciously newfangled creations. The mosque is noteworthy also for being the principal architectural legacy of a well-regarded patron, Sultan Mahmud II (r.1808–1839), whose fame as an ambitious political and military reformer has become intimately connected with the building’s own reputation. Indeed, this link has given rise to a compelling story surrounding the Nusretiye’s name, which translates as ‘Victorious’: scholars and tourist guides alike tell us that this unusual appellation was chosen by Mahmud to commemorate his quashing of the janissaries —the Ottoman army’s ancient and unruly elite corps— and their replacement by a modern army in the year that the building was completed. This persuasive account has combined with the monument’s respectable patronage, impressive appearance, and conspicuous waterside setting to render it one of the best-known and most-appreciated of post-classical Ottoman mosques.

Simple facts, however, instantly call into question the conventional wisdom concerning the Nusretiye. It cannot have been named in commemoration of the so-called ‘Auspicious Incident’ —Mahmud’s grisly though celebrated massacre of the janissaries— since its opening occurred some two months before this event. Members of the corps had even participated in the inauguration ceremony, and by this time, too, the mosque had already been dubbed Nusret, ‘Victory’, of which the current name, Nusretiye, is a variant. But while the traditional explanation for the building’s name is easily enough debunked, the long-assumed association with Mahmud’s military reforms —and specifically his disbanding of the janissaries— is far from specious. That the monument was intended from the outset as a visual expression of Mahmud’s military overhaul is evident from its political timing, its location in the vicinity of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, and its design, which referred to an earlier project by Mahmud’s modernising cousin and predecessor Selim III (r.1789–1807, d.1808). And though the mosque was called Nusret from the time of its opening, hitherto overlooked documents indicate that the name was initially a matter of some debate, with two alternative designations apparently being used alongside, and perhaps in preference to, the official name during the first few months of the building’s life. These experimental appellations were tied to and meant to memorialise rapid developments in Mahmud’s reform programme, bearing testament to the mosque’s anticipated function as an emblem of Ottoman military and political renewal.

THE TIME AND PLACE FOR REFORM: THE NUSRETIYE’S LOCATION AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Nusretiye was built as a prominent landmark on one of the most significant sites of Istanbul, and it remains so today. A compact but imposing single-domed edifice, the mosque originally formed the main component of a much grander scheme that is largely lost to us because of mid-twentieth-century redevelopment. It is located in the district of Tophane, which takes its name from the Imperial Cannon Foundry (Tophane-i Amire) that still dominates the area from its position on a steep slope overlooking the Bosphorus. [Figures 2, 3] Established in the fifteenth century by Mehemd the
Barracks were constructed here in the fifteenth century and rebuilt in numerous forms thereafter, notably in 1792 by Selim III, who established three large rectangular blocks and an adjacent waterside parade ground for the corps of gun-carriage drivers (top ʿarabacılar). A small domed mosque with a single minaret stood in the open space between the two blocks nearest the water, but it was the barracks themselves that made the dominant visual impression: historical images show an assemblage of massive multi-storeyed structures of a type familiar from European military architecture though still unusual in the Ottoman context during the eighteenth century. Such eye-catching novelty spoke of Selim’s radical plans to reform his army, a topic to which I shall return. These barracks and their accompanying mosque survived well into the reign of Mahmud, when the entire complex was destroyed by a devastating fire in March 1823. Within days of the disaster, Mahmud seized upon the opportunity to begin reconstructing the newly vacated site in his own name, taking up Selim’s forward-looking scheme and aiming to surpass it.

The architect appointed to realise the project was Krikor Amira Balian (d.1831), founder of a prolific family of Ottoman–Armenian builders who dominated their profession in nineteenth-century Istanbul and secured the majority of imperial commissions at this time. Conforming to locational requirements, Krikor’s design —whose lost elements are well recorded in old images and maps— perpetuated the earlier arrangement of a mosque integrated into a military

Figure 2.
Tophane viewed from the Bosphorus circa 1810, showing (from left to right) the Tophane Fountain, the Imperial Cannon Foundry (Tophane-i Amire), and the parade ground and barracks of the corps of gun-carriage drivers; the dome and minaret of the barracks’ mosque are visible on the right. Coloured aquatint, from Hobhouse, J.C., First Baron Broughton, A Journey through Albania, and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the Years 1809 and 1810, London, 1813, 2nd edition, vol.1, plate between pp.830–31. Wellcome Library, London.
ensemble rather than the kind of pious foundation typical of more urban settings.\textsuperscript{10} [Figure 3] The configuration of parts, however, was now quite different. The long rectangular blocks constituting Selim III’s barracks had stood side-by-side parallel with the shoreline, the accompanying mosque being sandwiched between them and thus obscured from the water and road except for its dome and minaret. Other barracks of the period contained similarly screened-off mosques in their internal courtyards.\textsuperscript{11} Rejecting this model, Krikor extracted the mosque from its hitherto introverted setting, enlarged it, and gave it pride of place on a high basement overlooking the

\textit{Figure 3.}

Map of Tophane dated 1927, showing: 1) the Kılıç Ali Pasha Mosque Complex; 2) the Tophane Fountain; 3) the Imperial Cannon Foundry (Tophane-i Amire); 4) the Nusretiye Mosque and its courtyard, including the ablution fountain, \textit{sebîl} fountain, and timekeeper’s room; 5) the approximate sites of the gun-carriage drivers’ barracks as built in 1826; 6) the approximate site of the drinking fountain and timekeeper’s room before their relocation; 7) the clock tower; 8) the viewing pavilion; 9) the marshals’ offices; and 10) the approximate shoreline in 1826. Adapted from Pervititch, J., \textit{Plan cadastral d’assurances}, Istanbul, 1922–45, map 34 of Beyoğlu volume.
a lateral courtyard on the prayer hall’s northeast (that is, to its left when viewed frontally). Though the lateral courtyard remains, the forecourt was reduced to a small railed enclosure during the reign of Mahmud’s second son, Sultan Abdülaziz (r.1861–1876), who, after a fire in 1863, widened the road and erected a row of marshals’ offices diagonally across from the mosque. It was with this renovation that the lateral courtyard, which already featured an ablution fountain in its centre, acquired the two ornate kiosk-like buildings that now flank its entrance. These structures—one a public drinking fountain (sebil) and the other a timekeeper’s room (muvakikthane)—were completed a year after the mosque and had stood on the opposite side of the street before being moved to make way for Abdülaziz’s additions, which were in turn destroyed when the road was widened again in the 1950s.

The 1863 fire also brought changes to the barracks: those facing the mosque were rebuilt while those behind it were replaced with a munitions factory for which the shoreline was filled and extended, thus distancing the mosque from the water.

In its original form, the Nusretiye’s ambitious scheme would have done much to enhance the visual and semantic impact of the now decontextualised mosque, which served as the fulcrum and public interface of the complex. Whereas the earlier mosque of Selim had been reserved for the barracks’ inhabitants, the Nusretiye was for civilian use also, bringing

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**Figure 4.**
The Nusretiye Mosque and its complex from the Bosphorus circa 1835, showing the mosque’s southeast (qibla) wall and, in the foreground, one of the barracks of the gun-carriage drivers. Lithograph by John Frederick Lewis after a drawing by Coke Smyth, from Lewis’s Illustrations of Constantinople: Made during a Residence in that City &c. in the Years 1835–6, London, 1837, pl.XIV. University of Houston Libraries, Special Collections.

**Figure 5.**
The Nusretiye Mosque and its complex from the west, overlooking the parade ground. Postcard dated 1911. Courtesy of Harvard University, Fine Arts Library, Special Collections.
ordinary people under the auspices of what remained a predominantly military site. The patently martial nature of the overall arrangement compels us to consider the mosque in the light of Mahmud’s military reforms, which were proceeding apace as the building was being erected.20 Convinced that such change was necessary for his empire’s survival, Mahmud had spent many years quietly planning to do away with the traditional Ottoman military system, long dominated by the janissaries. The once-formidable corps had proved a dangerous nuisance to various sultans since the seventeenth century, stirring up rebellion and posing a continual obstacle to reform. Earlier attempts at addressing the problem had ended in failure and even disaster, notably for the avowed moderniser Selim III, whose comprehensive reform programme—dubbed the Niẓām-ı Cedīd (New Order)—met with enough resentment among the janissaries to bring about his downfall.21 Selim’s boldest and most contentious initiative was the creation in 1794 of a small new army trained and equipped on the Western model, a move that ultimately precipitated a janissary-led uprising in 1807. Despite dissolving his new troops to satisfy the rebels’ demands, Selim was toppled in favour of his cousin Mustafa IV (r.1807–1808), prompting a counterrevolution by supporters of the former sultan. Mustafa responded by putting Selim to death in 1808 and also ordering the execution of his own younger brother, Mahmud, but the prince—the only remaining heir to the Ottoman throne—was kept safe and installed in place of Mustafa, who was himself executed.

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Figure 6.
The Nusretiye Mosque and its complex from the Bosphorus, showing the site after its extension into the water and the construction of the munitions factory, which replaced the barracks visible in Figure 4. Albumen print by Abdülah frères, 1880–1893, from the Abdülhamid II albums. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Prints and Photographs Division, LOT 9516, no.27.

Figure 7.
The Nusretiye Mosque and its original clock tower from the south. Engraving by Thomas Allom, from Allom, T. and Walsh, R., Constantinople, pl. opposite p.75. Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections Department.
the dismay of traditionalists, the young Mahmud II eagerly picked up Selim’s reformist mantle, though a brief abortive attempt to establish another new army at the beginning of his reign soon persuaded the sultan to learn from his cousin’s mistakes by taking a more patient and measured course.22

Mahmud thus bided his time until the 1820s, when international events allowed him to justify and gain support for his military overhaul. The Greek War of Independence, which began in 1821 and would continue until 1829, exposed the janissaries as ineffectual, a point underscored by the Ottoman army’s reliance on help from the recently modernised troops of Muhammad ‘Ali (r.1805–1848), the largely autonomous vassal ruler of Egypt.23 Emboldened by this turbulent context, Mahmud dismissed and banished those who would oppose him and appointed his allies to key positions of power, including within the ranks of the janissaries themselves. At the same time, he greatly increased the size of the artillery corps (topçuyān), which, though ostensibly tied to the janissaries, was the most loyal and modernised division of the Ottoman army, with a history of reform going back to the 1770s.24 It should be recalled in this regard that Selim III’s Tophane barracks and mosque —and hence the Nusretiye complex that succeeded them— served the gun-carriage drivers, who belonged to this esteemed artillery force. Accompanying these practical steps was a far-reaching ideological campaign that mobilised elite and popular sentiment. Like Selim before him, Mahmud courted the orthodox ulema and exploited their traditional disdain for the janissaries’ affiliation with the heterodox Bektashi order. The sultan’s show of religiosity also impressed the wider Muslim public, whose existing distrust of the janissaries was further fed by the corps’ inability to quell the Greek rebellion.25

Mahmud’s multipronged approach to selling his reformist vision was fittingly echoed by the formation of the Nusretiye, where the military, religious, and civil came together in a manner designed to speak to multiple audiences. Even before construction of the complex began, the sultan had shown considerable interest in its eventual site, which, as we have seen, already carried strong reformist overtones: a document of 1820 records plans to remodel the access points of the parade ground adjacent to Selim’s barracks, with particular attention given to the staging of sultanic visits to the neighbouring mosque.26 When the barracks and their ancillaries burned down in March 1823, Mahmud may even have been grateful for the pretext to appropriate the site in its entirety. The timing was curiously apposite —the fire came less than a month after he had appointed his ally Rusçuklu Hüseyin Agha (d.1849) as commander of the janissaries27— and it was inevitable that such a building project would become pegged to contemporaneous political developments.

The extent and consciousness of this relationship are strikingly revealed by a previously unnotated dispatch from The Times that was brought to my attention by Edhem Eldem. In its entry for the date 9 March 1826—a month before the Nusretiye’s inauguration—the dispatch states:

The public report is, that His Sublimity waits only for the completion of the mosque which is building at Topkapi by his orders, and the arrival of the Pachas assembled at the Adrianople, to proclaim the new military system
Figure 10. (above)
The Nusretiye Mosque from the northeast, showing the mosque’s left side and its lateral courtyard and ablution fountain, with the sebil fountain and part of the timekeeper’s room visible on the right. Author’s photograph.

Figure 11. (below)
The Nusretiye Mosque from the north, showing the entrance portico and royal pavilion. Photograph courtesy of Alyson Wharton-Durgaryan.
This new system would entail training a select number of janissaries and forming them into a modern corps, the Eşkinciyān. As we shall see, events did not play out quite as the report foretells, but what is important is that Mahmud’s mosque was so thoroughly associated with his reforms that its opening was apparently considered a prerequisite for their enactment. Given that the proposed overhaul was advanced enough in its planning to be the topic of open discussion, the idea that it would be thus postponed not only demonstrates how carefully the whole affair was being managed, but also proves that the Nusretiye was recognised as a sign of military renewal even before it had been finished and publicly named.

**A WINNING DESIGN: THE NUSRETIYE’S TRIUMPHAL ARCHITECTURE**

While much of the Nusretiye’s meaning derived from its physical and chronological context, the architecture itself was no less significant. The key change brought about by Mahmud’s redevelopment of the site was the augmented role assigned to the mosque, whose new prominence necessarily coloured the complex as a whole. [Figure 5] Intended both to dominate and complement the adjacent barracks and parade ground, the mosque stamped Mahmud’s military policy with the character of a righteous cause in the public interest. This symbolic function relied for its success on the monument’s carefully crafted design, which evoked a venerable tradition of imperial religious architecture while at the same time asserting its own modernity.

The bulk of the mosque consists of a sizeable prayer hall that is square in plan and crowned by a high dome that rests on four grand round arches with copiously fenestrated tympana. Though internally unencumbered, the prayer hall has cloister-vaulted galleries along the outside of its lateral walls. [Figures 1, 10] An apsidal projection on the water-facing qibla wall hosts the mihrab, while the entrance on the opposite side is fronted by a domed and arcaded three-bay portico that is itself preceded by paired staircases. [Figure 11] Flanking the portico, and connected by a gallery that runs behind it, are two block-like wings carried on arches and covered by low hipped roofs. Each

![Image of the Nuruosmaniye Mosque](image_url)
with its own entrance and staircase, the wings together form a sort of semiautonomous frontage that is lower but wider than the prayer hall behind. This structure is the so-called ḍünkār kāşan, or royal pavilion, a part of the mosque containing suites of rooms reserved for the sultan and his retinue. The wing to the right—which once overlooked the parade ground—has the larger doorway and gives access to the sultan’s private prayer loge, which occupies a two-bay extension that is stacked over the mosque’s southwest lateral gallery and communicates with the prayer-hall interior through a grilled window. [Figure 1] Two lofty pencil-like minarets—each with two galleries—rise from the front corners of the royal pavilion, bringing it into closer dialogue with the sacred prayer hall and instantly marking the whole edifice as an imperial mosque.

In its overall arrangement as well as its individual parts, the Nusretiye’s architecture draws on and combines the choicest models of the preceding 75 years. Its single-domed, apsed prayer hall follows a type made canonical by the Nuruosmaniye Mosque, which was designed by the Ottoman–Greek architect Simeon Kalfa and erected by Mahmud I and Osman III (r.1754–1757) in the heart of Istanbul between 1748 and 1755. [Figure 12] Debuting a bold new cosmopolitan style that has been dubbed the Ottoman Baroque, the Nuruosmaniye revived in original terms the dormant practice of constructing sultans’ mosques in the Ottoman capital, and almost all subsequent mosques of this category—including the Nusretiye—are indebted to it.30 The Nuruosmaniye, however, maintains the tradition of an arcaded forecourt preceding the prayer hall, whereas the Nusretiye, as we have seen, lacks this element and is instead fronted by a wide royal pavilion. Such use of the pavilion to replace the arcaded courtyard as an indicator of sultanic status first began with the Beylerbeyi Mosque, built on Istanbul’s Asian shore between 1777 and 1778 by Mahmud II’s father, Abdülhamid I (r.1779–1789). This otherwise understated work took the well-established reference to his Üsküdar foundation served to strengthen Mahmud’s image as his political and cultural successor.

But such evocation of Selim’s legacy was as competitive as it was deferential. Despite its ambitious and imposing architecture, the Selimiye was tainted by a troubled history that Mahmud would have been anxious not to repeat. The mosque’s planned inauguration had to be abandoned when, to quote the official historian Cevdet Pasha (d.1895), ‘the janissaries—responding to rumours that the soldiers of the Niẓām-ı Cedid would replace them in lining up for the ceremonial salutation—all took up arms with the intention of renovation, which took place just two years before work began on the Nusretiye, would render the relationship between the two mosques even more apparent.

The Nusretiye’s closest prototype, however, is the Üsküdar Selimiye Mosque, built for Selim III between 1802 and 1805 by Foti Kalfa, another Ottoman–Greek architect.31 [Figure 13] Chronologically as well as aesthetically, the Selimiye is the immediate precursor to the Nusretiye, which essentially reproduces the plan and elevation of the older mosque. Among the more telling correspondences between the two monuments is the fully rounded profile of the arches supporting their domes, a contrast to earlier mosques that employ pointed arches in this capacity. There is a striking overlap also between their royal pavilions, with that of the Nusretiye faithfully emulating the Selimiye’s unusual placement of the sultanic loge outside the space of the prayer hall. It should not surprise us that Krikor Balian, probably at his patron’s urging, chose the Selimiye as his template. The mosque was a worthy exemplar that synthesised the key experiments of preceding years, infusing the novel layout of the Beylerbeyi with the magnificence and monumentality of the Nuruosmaniye. Its suitability as a model was enhanced by its ideological association with Selim III, who built the mosque as the centrepiece of a new urban development to showcase his modernising efforts. Located in the district of Üsküdar on Istanbul’s Asian shore, this uniquely comprehensive complex also included shops, factories, and a printing press, all on wide streets laid out in a grid system. Neighbouring the mosque, and erected in conjunction with it, were the Selimiye Barracks, a large quadrangular structure to accommodate the Niẓām-ı Cedid soldiers.32 The barracks and mosque together formed an impressive pairing easily seen from the Bosphorus and even the European shore. The analogous composition of the Nusretiye complex must, then, be viewed in light of the Üsküdar scheme, which prefigured both its arrangement and its combined military and socio-religious symbolism. Given how heavily Selim’s impact already bore on the Topkâne site, the decision to make additional—and unmistakable—reference to his Üsküdar foundation served to strengthen Mahmud’s image as his political and cultural successor.
destroying the dignitaries of the Sublime Porte and targeting the members of the Niẓām-ı Cedīl with their bullets. Only upon reassurances that they would retain their traditional duties did the janissaries desist and allow the mosque to be opened in a more muted ceremony several weeks later. Still less auspicious was the fate of the adjacent barracks, which the janissaries burned to the ground in 1808 after Mahmud’s failed early bid to revive the new army. The sultan would eventually rebuild the destroyed barracks, but only after the Nusretiye had itself been completed. Scarred by its past and its architectural disfigurement, the Selimiye complex thus stood as much as a warning as it did a model, and Mahmud’s bold citation of it at Tophane should be understood as a show of his confidence in being able to succeed where his predecessor had failed. Not only would the Nusretiye make good its prototype’s physical losses, but it would do so in a location that was busier, more central, and of far greater semiotic resonance than the comparatively peripheral setting of the original.

The Nusretiye’s claim to preeminence rested also on the skilful way it updated its inherited design. The mosque’s silhouette is noticeably more vertical than that of the Selimiye, and thus more graceful and commanding. The effect is achieved in part by raising the dome on a true drum, a departure from the squatter profile traditionally favoured for Ottoman mosque domes. Adding to the impression of height are the minarets, which are proportionally far taller than examples elsewhere. Their soaring stature is the result of a renovation begun only a month after the mosque was opened, for sources tell us that the original minarets were somewhat shorter and had to be partially destroyed and rebuilt when it was realised that festive lights (mAHyAş) hung between them could not be seen because of the dome. Fulfilling the mosque’s promise of loftiness, these extended minarets constitute the most striking formal difference between the Nusretiye and the Selimiye, whose single-galleried minarets appear almost modest by comparison.

Such theatricality is apparent also in the Nusretiye’s decorative and stylistic details. The mosque is heir to the modern, cosmopolitan manner that began with the Nuruosmaniye and whose defining characteristic is its idiosyncratic adaptation of Western European forms. At once locally grounded and internationally relevant, this eighteenth-century Ottoman Baroque style was part of a more general reassertion of the empire’s global significance in an era of intensified diplomatic and cultural contact with the West. The Nusretiye presents a distinctly nineteenth-century reworking of the same aesthetic principle, with the earlier Baroque mode now replaced by an exuberant Neoclassicism reminiscent of the French Empire Style. The cupolae’s vertical projections of the prayer-hall piers thus swell to form bulbous turrets, unlike their straight-sided counterparts at the Selimiye, while the roundness of the great arches supporting the dome is highlighted by an openwork frieze of circles. More dynamic still is the treatment of the dome itself, which, in a flourish peculiar to this mosque, is studded all around its base with gilt baluster-shaped finials that draw attention to its height. A similar liveliness is exhibited by the lavish carving of the white limestone and marble that make up the mosque’s walls and liturgical furnishings. Such dense plastic ornament continues a fashion set by the Nuruosmaniye and found also at the Selimiye, but the formerly Baroque–Rococo motifs have here given way to rosettes, acanthus scrolls, and swags in the Neoclassical mould. As much as it responds to past models, then, the Nusretiye Mosque is equally a product of its own day, and the same would have held true for the complex as a whole. Frequently remarked upon by nineteenth-century travellers, the Nusretiye’s stylistic modernity allowed Mahmud to put his own stamp on a long-established building type and, in so doing, create a monument capable of referring not only to the achievements of the past, but also to those yet to come. This architectural statement remained intelligible long after it was fashioned: in a description of Istanbul published in 1901, the German traveller Hermann Barth hails the Nusretiye as the city’s first modern building, exclaiming of it, ‘Reform everywhere: in art, too, a new spirit takes hold!’

**A MOSQUE BY ANY OTHER NAME …**

On Friday 9 April 1826 the Nusretiye Mosque was inaugurated with a splendid royal visit. The occasion was recorded by several historians of the period, including Mehmed Daniş Bey (d.1837), a state official who wrote a short eyewitness account of the events surrounding Mahmud’s military reforms of 1826. This account, a copy of which Mehmed Daniş presented to the sultan, begins with the Nusretiye’s opening, when Mahmud:

*in pomp and state set out from the Topkapı Shore Pavilion aboard the imperial boat and headed straight for the pier of the Tophane parade ground, and he [then] rode his light-footed steed on the brocades that had been spread from the pier to the door of the noble mosque’s imperial tribune; and before the Friday prayer, he gratified the staff of the noble mosque as well as those who had served in its construction with robes of honour and kingly gifts and presents, after which he returned [to his palace] happy and prosperous.*

Another account is offered by the court chronicler Mehmed Es’ad Efendi (d.1848), who tells us that the distribution of gifts took place after rather than before the prayer and who
Figure 13. The Selimiye Mosque, Üsküdar, from the southwest, showing the mosque’s right side and, projecting towards the foreground, the royal pavilion. Albumen print by Abdullah frères, 1880–1893, from the Abdülhamid II albums. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Prints and Photographs Division, LOT 9541, no.21.
mentions Krikor Balian at the end of the considerable list of individuals whom the sultan rewarded. Also honoured with gifts was the commander of the janissaries, a number of whom formed part of the sultan’s extensive retinue on the occasion. Whatever Mahmud may have had planned for the corps, its members were very much present at the ceremony.

The name of the newly completed mosque must have been decided by the time of the opening, which is probably when it was made public. Indeed, a couplet from the lengthy poetic inscription that is carved in marble above the mosque’s main entrance proves that a version of the present name was already set in stone before construction had ended:

Let this exalted temple be named the Mosque of Victory [Câmi-i Nusret], May the Lord of the Worlds render its builder victorious.

The composer of this inscription was the poet and cadi Keçecizade İzzet Molla (d.1829), whose text, in keeping with tradition, was selected from a number of competing entries. He was also, it seems, the inventor of the name itself, as we learn from a memorandum he wrote after he had submitted his entry but before the mosque’s appellation had been finalised. Addressing an official he refers to as ‘brother’, İzzet writes that he has been asked by royal order to suggest some alternative names to that of Câmi-i Nusret, which was presumably the frontrunner. He duly provides a range of options, including Ḥayriyye (Beneficent), Şevket-ābād (Abode of Majesty), Câmiʿü'l-Fütūḥ (Mosque of Conquests), Cihādiyye (Pertaining to Holy War), and Zafarīyye (Victorious), but he also specifies their shortcomings. Many of them, he notes, are quite un-mosque-like and ‘would cause doubt as to whether they are the names of royal palaces or imperial ships’, while more explicitly religious designations such as Câmiʿü'l-Feyż (Mosque of Divine Grace) are deemed ‘far from fitting’, probably because they would convey nothing specific about the mosque. Having questioned the suitability of his own alternative
suggestions, İzzet reaffirms the merits of what he had already proposed in his poem, stating: ‘Indeed, because [the mosque] is in Tophane and reached completion at a time of triumph and victory, I believe that naming it “Mosque of Victory” as a good and propitious omen will please [the sultan].’

Several key points emerge from this fascinating document. For one, the question of what to call the building had taken on remarkable importance: where most imperial mosques were unimaginatively called after their founders, nothing less than a semantically charged original title would do for Mahmud’s mosque. The unorthodox nature of this naming process explains the level of discussion it engendered, though the gist of İzzet’s offerings suggests a tacit agreement among those involved that a name of martial flavour would best reflect the building’s site and timing. But what exactly are the ‘triumph and victory’ to which İzzet refers? In terms of actual events, the most notable Ottoman success at this time was at the battle of Missolonghi, which was on the verge of falling to the empire after being repeatedly besieged during the Greek War of Independence. This came at a time when the Greek cause seemed more generally to be losing steam, and the idea of a relationship between this juncture and the mosque seems especially tempting in light of the fact that the siege was concluded only two weeks after the Nusretiye opened, as if to bear out İzzet’s remark on the propitiousness of the appellation.

Such a context for the name is unlikely, however, to be the whole story. While the fall of Missolonghi inflicted a temporary blow to the Greeks, it was not altogether a resounding triumph for Mahmud’s own army, which, after having lost its way, had turned to the sultan himself. That Mahmud’s own army, nothing less than a semantically charged original title would do for Mahmud’s mosque. The unorthodox nature of this naming process explains the level of discussion it engendered, though the gist of İzzet’s offerings suggests a tacit agreement among those involved that a name of martial flavour would best reflect the building’s site and timing. But what exactly are the ‘triumph and victory’ to which İzzet refers? In terms of actual warfare, the most notable Ottoman success at this time was at the battle of Missolonghi, which was on the verge of falling to the empire after being repeatedly besieged during the Greek War of Independence. This came at a time when the Greek cause seemed more generally to be losing steam, and the idea of a relationship between this juncture and the mosque seems especially tempting in light of the fact that the siege was concluded only two weeks after the Nusretiye opened, as if to bear out İzzet’s remark on the propitiousness of the appellation.

True to the anticipatory choice of name, the mosque’s opening was followed by turbulent developments in the capital. According to Cevdet, the battle lines were already drawn at the inauguration. He recounts that Mahmud paraded ‘with the artillery soldiers on his right and the janissaries on his left’, and that ‘when he stopped for the exchange of salutations, the artillery soldiers saluted him, but it was noticed that he did not turn his gaze to the left.’ Histories authored nearer the period in question make no mention of this royal snub, and it may well be that Cevdet, writing decades after the event, is presenting a mythologised and teleological version of it. Nonetheless, the tale serves as a telling contrast to the failed inauguration of the Selimiye, and it also provides a fitting, if fanciful, introduction to the sequence of events that we know would follow. Although Mahmud’s reforms were not promulgated immediately after the mosque’s opening as predicted in The Times, they were announced at a grand assembly less than two months later on 28 May. The new Eykinci troops were to number 7,650 men drawn from Istanbul’s 51 janissary battalions, and they were to be regularly trained in modern warfare. Within a few days, 5,000 Eykinciyân had been created, and a small contingent performed the new drill before high officials on 12 June. The janissaries at large, however, were none too pleased with these changes, and on 14 June they assembled in the open area known as Et Meydanı to stage a rebellion. Modern opinion is divided as to whether Mahmud had been hoping for such a pretext in order to act as he subsequently did, but in any event the revolt did not catch him unawares. He immediately called on his loyal troops and subjects to quash the mutiny, and he had to be dissuaded from personally leading the attack. Spearheaded by mounted artillery troops, the sultan’s supporters trapped the janissaries in their Et Meydan barracks, which were bombarded and burned down on 15 June. Thousands of janissaries were killed in the violence, and their demise marked the end not only of the rebellion, but also of the corps’ very existence. Dubbed the ‘Auspicious Incident’ (Va’ḳa-ı Hayriyye), Mahmud’s eradication of the janissaries was formalised two days later with a public edict stressing the religious justification for the act and announcing the creation of a new army to be known as the ‘Aşıkî-i Maṣṣûrî-i Muḥammadıyye, the ‘Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad’.
On the previous day, a Friday, Mahmud had attended prayers with the customary public ceremonial, except that the janissaries were no longer to be seen among his guard, which was now made up of artillerymen and bombardiers. The mosque on this occasion was that of Zeyneb Sultan (built 1769), a small and rather muted venue that was chosen perhaps because of a lingering sense of cautiousness in the immediate aftermath of the revolt. But it was Mahmud’s own foundation at Tophane that was to emerge as the true architectural memorial to the ‘Auspicious Incident’, hardly surprising in view of the site’s existing reformist associations and particularly its ties to the artillery corps that had so loyally repaid the sultan’s favour. Sources from the period reveal the enhanced significance the mosque acquired in the wake of Mahmud’s feat. As noted above, Mehmed Daniş Bey begins his first-hand account of the janissaries’ downfall with the Nusretiye’s inauguration, thus underscoring the relatedness of the two events in the eyes of contemporary observers. Offering more vivid evidence of the mosque’s political topicality is another overlooked newspaper report generously shared with me by Edhem Eldem, this time a French dispatch from Istanbul written only eleven days after the ‘Auspicious Incident’ and published in the Journal des débats. The report starts with the news that:

[s]ince 15 June, Sultan Mahmud has constantly been dressed in the Egyptian mode, a type of military uniform as rich as it is elegant. His example is generally followed. The caouch [kawuk, turban] is no longer worn except by certain ministers and heads of administration.

The adoption of this new attire — ‘Egyptian’ because it resembled the modern uniform of Muhammad ‘Ali’s army — was only one element of a more sweeping shift, for the report continues: ‘There is talk of completely reforming and renewing the government. Everything must take a new face.’ This desire for change apparently extended to the Nusretiye, about which the dispatch states the following:

The new mosque of Top-Canna [Tophane], constructed after the fire of 1 March 1823 at the expense of [his, M[ajesty], and which had been named Adliie (the Just), has just been distinguished by the following appellation: (Fethī-sultan-Mahmoud, Sultan Mahmoud the Vanquisher.

Although I have found no other sources to corroborate these extraordinary details, they are too close to the occurrences in question and have too much the ring of truth to be disregarded. The first of the specified names, ‘Adliie, was derived from Mahmud’s epithet of ‘adî, ‘the just’, and would have been a logical choice for his foundation. Indeed, the name was given to a mosque he renovated in Üsküdar in 1813, and there is evidence that it was also applied ad hoc to the Nusretiye by at least some individuals in the later nineteenth century. The second name, meanwhile, is a transliteration of Fethī Sultan Mahmoud, with fetî — a somewhat unidiomatic way of expressing ‘conqueror’ — used on analogy with ‘adî as an epithet. It is also possible that the correct parsing should be Feth-i Sultan Mahmud, ‘the Conquest of Sultan Mahmud’, which, though less similar to the French translation, is comparable in formation to Nurrosmaniye (originally Nür-i ʿOzmâni, ‘Light of the Ottomans’). Either way, the name recalls Câmiʿü’l-Fütûh, one of the options suggested and dismissed by İzzet, and it would have made a highly unusual label for a royal mosque. Given that the report is unique in the information it relates, and in light of the fact that the mosque was inaugurated as Nusret, the two designations mentioned by the newspaper must be understood as popular or semiofficial alternative names that may for some time have enjoyed greater currency than the official title. All this is further proof of the special concern for nomenclature that surrounded the mosque, as well as the degree to which the monument’s meaning was inflected by contemporary political developments. Even if the reference to conquest was a more general one, encompassing such events as the taking of Missolonghi, the claimed rettiling did not happen before — and thus must have been prompted by — the extermination of the janissaries. The two names thus document the connotative range of the mosque in the context of changing circumstances. Where the first shies away from mentioning an as yet unrealised victory and instead extols the justness underpinning Mahmud’s initiatives, the second — coined after the reforms’ enactment — gives full verbal force to the idea of a triumphal win.

Neither appellation was to stick, however, and in popular usage the name of the mosque remained fluid. An account of Istanbul written by the Englishman Charles White (d.1861), who lived there in the early 1840s, notes the weight of public opinion in deciding how the city’s mosques were referred to:

Thus the noble temple built by Mahmoud II is universally designated Yeni [yen] (new) and not Mahmoudya, or Noosretaya, as enjoined by the imperial founder, under whose reign Turkey was deprived not only of various provinces in the North but also of Greece. Despite the unkind implication that the populace considered Mahmud unworthy of being commemorated in grander terms, it may simply have been the mosque’s newness that led to the situation that White describes, especially since later sources give no indication that the building continued to be identified with this name. A French travel guide published in 1886 tells us that it was ‘generally known by the name of Mahmoudiê’, and according to the Turkish art historian Semavi Eyice, the usual way of referring to it by the twentieth century was as the Mosque of Tophane. Even if less striking than Nusretiye,
both of these names—one a reference to the patron, the other to the site—would have conveyed something of the mosque’s significance. Their widespread use probably resulted from their relative normality; unlike the actual designation, they are entirely consistent with wider mosque nomenclature.

But in the Ottoman sources, at least, the official name came swiftly to prevail, albeit most often in the adjectival form of *Nusretiye*. This variant—used by White and already mentioned in İzett’s memorandum—followed the idiomatic preference for the -iyé ending seen in Istanbul’s other sultanic mosques and became the most consistent written designation from the 1830s onwards. In a letter sent from Istanbul in 1836, the Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder (d.1891), who served Mahmud as a military adviser, mentions the ‘Moschee Nusrethieh’ and translates its name as ‘the Victorious [die Siegreiche]’, showing that foreign audiences too were aware of the meaning. The applicability of the word to the period’s military sea change is proved by the existence of the *Nusretname*, or ‘Book of Victory’, a versified encomium of the ‘Auspicious Incident’ written in 1826 by the poet Ayni (d.1837). That Mahmud’s new army was dubbed *manṣūre*—denoting ‘victorious’ and derived from the same Arabic root as *nusret*—would have added further lexical resonance, verbally cementing the mosque’s ties to the reforms that may well have inspired its appellation in the first place.

**VICTORY ACHIEVED: THE NUSRETIYE’S IMPACT**

Describing a visit by Mahmud to the Nusretiye in 1828, the British traveller Charles MacFarlane (d.1858) writes that the sultan, who had entered the building in traditional Eastern garb, came out ‘in a most simple military dress’. Mahmud—who would dispense with his traditional costume altogether in 1829—appeared ‘an altered man’ to MacFarlane, whose account testifies to the Nusretiye’s regenerative purport. When in 1831 Mahmud had a medal struck to reward those who had given him loyal service—a highly novel means of conferring honour in the Ottoman context—the image chosen for the reverse was none other than the Mosque of Nusret, so identified by a caption.

The mosque’s iconic force would remain potent after Mahmud’s death, as demonstrated by two pendant depictions of the sultan from a mid-nineteenth-century album of royal portraits now in Konya. The contrast between these two pictures is uncannily reminiscent of MacFarlane’s earlier description. Whereas in the first image Mahmud appears in a turban and caftan enthroned before a heavy curtain, in the second he is neatly attired in modern uniform, the curtain behind his throne now lifted to reveal a gleaming white mosque with a cannon in front of it. The depicted building is instantly recognisable as the Nusretiye, and the use of it as the backdrop for the second of these before- and-after portraits underscores its enduring legibility as an emblem of Mahmud’s transformative reign. His descendants were evidently keen to perpetuate and build on this legacy, as demonstrated by the numerous modifications they made to the complex. Besides continuing as an object of sultanic patronage, the Nusretiye retained its importance as a locus of ceremonial, such that by the 1850s it was ‘ancient custom’ for the sultan to go there ‘in his state caïque’ to pray during *Laylat al-Qadr* (the Night of Power), the high point of Ramadan, when the monument’s unusually slender minarets were strung with lamps arranged to form the tughra (imperial monogram).

The meaning attached to the Nusretiye as a physical and spatial entity is, as I have shown, inherent also in its name. Although the mosque has been variously dubbed over the years, the official appellation remained in one form or other the most persistent, being today the normal label. The outright claim that the mosque commemorates the ‘Auspicious Incident’ cannot, from what I have found, be traced earlier in writing than an Anglophone guide to Istanbul published in 1868, and nor did it become a commonplace in the literature until the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is impossible for the name not to have been correlated from the outset with the bold reforms to which the mosque itself was conceptually and practically linked. Without having to refer specifically to the events of 15 June, the designation of ‘Victory’ was surely redolent of Mahmud’s modernising struggle, even as it was being fought and especially after it was won. An Ottoman document from the end of 1826 concerning payments for the Nusretiye’s furnishings plays on its name to describe it as the sultan’s ‘Victory-Bringing Mosque’, as if the appellation had delivered on its promise.

His efforts notwithstanding, Mahmud ultimately failed to hold on to the lands that he was fighting to keep, with Greece achieving independence in 1829 and other territories also falling away. But he fared substantially better in his war to redefine the political and military landscape within his own realm, setting the Ottoman Empire on a modernising course that it would follow into the twentieth century. The fruits of his overhaul—and particularly his destruction of the janissaries—gained wide acclaim both during his lifetime and in the years that followed. Built as that overhaul was taking shape and located on ground already associated with progress, the Nusretiye was indeed designed as a monument to Mahmud’s reformist enterprise, and a herald of its expected victory.
Figure 15. A and B
VICTORY IN THE MAKING: THE SYMBOLISM OF ISTANBUL’S NUSRİYE MOSQUE
Note to the reader: Ottoman personal and place names are generally written with minimal diacritics in accordance with modern Turkish orthography, though medial 'ğ' has been transliterated where appropriate. I have used full diacritics when discussing terminology and nomenclature, even in the case of place names. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

This article grew out of a series of discussions on the Nusretiye with Edhem Eldem, and I owe him a great debt of gratitude for his generous help and interest at every stage of the project and particularly for his comments on an earlier draft. I should also like to thank Sami De Giosa and Alison Ohta for inviting me to present a paper on this topic at the Royal Asiatic Society in London, where I received much useful feedback. I am likewise grateful to Tim Stanley for his helpful suggestions, which have made my text more readable, and to Serpil Bağcı for her kind assistance in tracking down images. As always, I thank Andrew Halladay for his tireless encouragement and support.

My interest in better understanding the Nusretiye and its circumstances goes back to my first scholarly encounter with the building under the tutelage of Doris Behrens-Abouseif, who defied long-standing art-historical prejudice by featuring the Balian Family among the material she taught her students. Her inclusion of the Nusretiye was motivated by more than just a sense of curricular conscientiousness, however; she also made amply clear that the mosque was one of her very favourites, thus claiming her place alongside its numerous admirers. It is particularly appropriate, then, that my present investigation of this remarkable monument — already so meaningful to Doris — should be dedicated to her.

1. For the architectural transformation of Istanbul in the nineteenth century, see Çelik, Z., The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century, Seattle and London, 1986; and Ersoy, A.A., Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary: Reconfiguring the Architectural Past in a Modernizing Empire, Farnham and Burlington, 2015.


11. For further examples, see Kuban, D., Ottoman Architecture, pp.553–554; and Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp.346–347.

12. A court history written by Hafiz Hüzzî Iyas (d.1864) tells us that the mosque bequeathed by Selim ‘was originally not large enough’ (ʿan aṣl vüsʿatsiz olmaţi) and that Mahmud undertook
to remedy this shortcoming after the fire, believing that ‘the creation in that district of a mosque with two minarets would be counted as a good work’ (o tərəfdə iki mindərə bər cənətı təxəldə sənədəmmənə davamətdən teşəldə sənədəmmənə davamətdən). In the same vein, the author describes the rebuilding as ‘the cause of transformation and rectification’ (əzəli taşıl ilə təşəxxtə), presumably with reference to the site. See Ilyas, H., Osmanlı Sarayında Gündelik Hayat: Leidif-i Erkəy-i Enderûndan, Şükri Çoruk, (ed.), Istanbul, 2011, p.395. While Hızır Ilyas may be overstating the deficiencies of the earlier structure for the sake of flattering Mahmud, the new mosque’s scale and prominence must have been decisive markers of its superiority, from the perspective of both patron and viewer.

13. For the barracks, see Aran, A. and Yetişkin Kubilay, A., ‘Tophane-i Âmire’, pp.279–80; and Arslan (Sevin), N., Gračeva ve Seyahatnamelelerde İstanbul, p.249. Historical images do not give a definitive sense of the barracks’ appearance, and it is clear that they were modified on several occasions. The best indication of their original form is provided by a drawing executed between 1835 and 1836 by Coke Smyth (d.1882) and later lithographed by John Frederick Lewis (d.1876), for which see Figure 4 of the present article. For another relatively early view, see [Tanman, M.B.], Ezyon Öyküleri, pp.92–95 (although, as Coke’s depiction shows, the text is mistaken in stating that the barracks were entirely set back from the shore). As I shall discuss presently in the main text, the barracks underwent their most significant changes after a fire in 1863.

14. With the exception of Goodwin, G., History of Ottoman Architecture, p.419, the scholarly literature seems invariably to mention only the present tower, built by Abdülmejid, but Mahmud’s tower, which was a pagoda-like structure perhaps made of wood, is depicted and exultantly described as a sign of Ottoman progress in Allom, T. and Walsh, R., Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor Illustrated, London and Paris, 1838, vol.1, p.75 (for the illustration, see Figure 7 of the present article). The tower’s absence from the view drawn by Coke in about 1835 provides us with a date range for its construction.

15. The tower was designed by Krikor’s son Nigoghos (d.1858) and the pavilion by the English architect William James Smith (d.1894); see Can, Ç., ‘Tophane Kasrı’, in Diıdend Bagııe Istanbul Ansiklopedisi 7, Istanbul, 1994, p.277; Tuğlacı, P., Role of the Italian Family, pp.391–93; and Wharton, A., Architects of Ottoman Constantinople, pp.38, 81.


17. Aran, A. and Yetişkin Kubilay, A., ‘Tophane-i Âmire’, p.280; and the images in Tuğlacı, P., Role of the Italian Family, pp.77–78 (the text conflates the offices with the associated though separate barracks).

18. The completion date of the fountain and timekeeper’s room is recorded in their inscriptions, for which see note 46 below. Photographs taken in 1854 or 1855 by James Robertson (d.1888) show both structures in their original location — more or less opposite the viewing pavilion of the parade ground — with their original broad-carved roofs; see ‘Street of Tophanna’ [Tophane, Istanbul, Turkey], Royal Collection Trust, http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/27008000/street-of-tophanna-tophane-istanbul-turkey; and Suner, Y., Nusretiye Sehili, in Diıdend Bagııe Istanbul Ansiklopedisi 6, Istanbul, 1994, p.107.


26. The document, which is housed in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive, Istanbul (henceforth BOA), is incorrectly catalogued as pertaining to the construction of the Nusretiye itself; see HAT, 1553/46, dated 29 Dhu’l-Hijja 1235 (7 October 1820).

27. Aksan, V.H., Ottoman Wars, p.315.

28. ‘Constantinople, March 13’, The Times, London, 13 April 1826, p.2. The dispatch is acknowledged as being translated from
L’Étoile, Paris, 11 April 1826. I have not had the opportunity to track down the French original.


32. See Ali Satı’s entry in Ayvansarayi, H., Garden of the Mosques, p.481; and Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp.344–45. Much of the literature—including my own dissertation—mediates this renovation from 1810–1811.


36. MacFarlane, C., Constantinople in 1829, pp.289–90; goodwin, S., ‘Selimiye Küşlânı’; Kuban, D., Ottoman Architecture, p.555 (where, however, it is incorrectly stated that the barracks’ reconstruction began in 1625); and Ramazanoğlu, M.G., ‘Selimiye Küşlânı’.

37. See Ali Satı’s entry in Ayvansarayi, H., Garden of the Mosques, p.383 (though the hțiri date is wrongly converted).

38. The impressive height and slenderness of the minarets are frequently remarked upon in the travel literature; see, for example, von Molteke, H.K.B., Briefe über Zustände und Begleitungen in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1839, Berlin, Presen, and Bromberg, 1841, p.26; White, G., ‘Three Years in Constantinople, or Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844’, London, 1845, vol.1, p.242; Gautier, T., Constantinople of To-day, Gould, R. H. (trans.), London, 1854, p.78; and Barth, H., Konstantinopol, Leipzig, 1901, p.166. The minarets are criticised as attenuated in Joanne, A. and Isambert, É., Itinéraire descriptif, historique et archéologique de l’Orient, Paris, 1861, p.384; and De Paris à Constantinople, Paris, 1866, p.190.

39. The connection to the Empire Style was observed as early as the late nineteenth century in a French guidebook to Istanbul; see De Paris à Constantinople, p.190. For the use of Neoclassical modes in Istanbul’s nineteenth-century architecture more generally, see Çelik, Z., The Remaking of Istanbul, pp.126–43; and Ersoy, A.A., Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary, pp.200–05.

40. For example, Duckett, W.A., La Turquie pittoresque: Histoire – mœurs – description, Paris, 1855, p.217; Joanne, A. and Isambert, E., Itinéraire descriptif, p.384; and De Paris à Constantinople, p.190. Duckett opines that the Nusretiye ‘is distinguished by its modern style of construction from all the other mosques, for which St. Sophia has served as a model’.


44. A week later, on the first Friday of Ramadan, the mosque was further honoured with a visit by the grand vizier, who had already presided over a ceremony held there the previous year to mark the start of the raising of the dome. See Efendi, Vâ˘i-ü-nü’s Efendi Tarihi (Bedir Efendi’nin Zeyl ve Hicretiyle), 1127–1241/1812–1826, Yılmazer, Z. (ed.), Istanbul, 2000, pp.460–61, 534–39. For other historical accounts of the inauguration, see Iyâs, H., Osmanlı Sarayında Gündelik Hayat, pp.395–97; and Ali Satı’s entry in Ayvansarayi, H., Garden of the Mosques, pp.384–85. The inauguration was a grander version of the weekly selâmêh, the sultan’s ceremonial public attendance of Friday prayers, for relevant descriptions of which see MacFarlane, C., Constantinople in 1829, pp.250–51; and Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp.342–44.

45. Even so, certain scholars who are aware of the mosques having been inaugurated before the ‘Auspicious Incident’ state or suggest that it was (re)named after the event; see Gurallar, N., ‘Sultan II. Mahmut ve İstanbul’daki Dönümüş’, Mısır 74, April 2011, http://www.misir.com.tr/koseDetaylar.aspx?id=770; and Tüğlaca, P., Osmanlı Mimârîğinde Belgen Ailesi’nin Rolü, Istanbul, 1993, p.47 (where the author contradicts the English edition of the same book; see note 3 above). The impossibility of this notion is discussed in Eldem, E., Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations, Istanbul, 2004, p.137.


48. For an image and partial transcription of the document, which

55. Our knowledge of the original name(s) of the Laleli Mosque, built between 1760 and 1764 by Mustafa II (r.1757–1774), likewise derives from unique sources; see Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp. 64–66.

56. See Ali Satt’s entry in Ayvansaraylı, H., Garden of the Mosques, p. 946.

57. Writing of the First Constitutional Era (1876–1878) in his memoirs, the Ottoman general and grand vizier Ahmed Muhtar Pasha (d.1919) mentions a visit by the sultan to ‘the Adliye Mosque in Topkapi’, by which he can mean only the Nusretiye; Muhtar, A., Anılar 2: Seyahat-i Hayatım’dan Cild-i Sanası, Demirel, Y. (trans.) and Akbayar, N. (ed.), Istanbul, 1996, p. 6.

58. Fâthî is the normal Ottoman word for ‘conqueror’, but one heavily associated with Mehmed II. Fethî—which Redhouse’s Lexicon defines as ‘[p]ertaining to conquest’—had currency as a surname and would have complemented the identically formed ‘adli’. Relevant in this regard is the travel account written by Antoine-François Andréossy (d.1828), French ambassador to the Porte, who tells us that Mahmud, following his triumph over the janissaries, ‘took the title of Fêthî (vainqueur)’ and added it to his cypher, Turna [tagbra]—where previously only that of Adîf (just) could be seen—as it appears on money’. See Andréossy, A.F., Constantinople et le Bosphore de Thrace (…), Paris, 1828, pp. 66–67; and ‘Glance at the Internal State of the Turkish Empire’, The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Its Dependencies 26, no. 154, October 1828, p. 438. Despite Andréossy’s intimate knowledge of the Ottoman Empire, I have found no further evidence (other than later European sources that merely borrow the claim) that such an appellation was adopted by or used of Mahmud, much less that any coin was struck bearing it (coins with ‘adli, on the other hand, were indeed minted). It is likely, then, that Andréossy’s words represent a misunderstanding or elaboration of a genuine piece of information related to—or perhaps even the same as—that underlying the Journal des débats report. Whether or not the title was ever officially approved, it appears that fethî was at least being mooted as a royal epithet in the aftermath of the ‘Auspicious Incident’. For the use of ‘adli’ on Mahmud’s coinage, see Damlâ, A., Osmanlı Sikkeleri Tarihi [History of Ottoman Coins], Ankara and Istanbul, 2010–2014, vol. 8, pp. 753–56; and Olçer, C., Sultan Mahmud II Zamanında Darp Edilen Osmanlı Moderni Paraları, H. 1223–1255, M. 1808–1839, Istanbul, 1970, pp. 136, 145, note 17.


60. Some in Mahmud’s time certainly regarded his defeat of the janissaries as a sort of conquest: besides the French case discussed in note 63 above, we have an eyewitness Ottoman account of the ‘Auspicious Incident’ and the events surrounding it entitled Gökçârî Fethî (Rose Garden of Conquests), for which see Şerâvân Fatih Efendi, Gölçârî Fethî Edi Gökçârî Tanıfanyan Kalemiyle Yemeni Osâgî’nm Kaldıırılış (Incileme, Tahlib, Meva), Beyhan, M.A. (ed.), Istanbul, 2001. Given that the traditional Ottoman notion of conquest pertained to victories over infidel enemies, it is relevant to note that the janissaries—already vilified for their heterodox leanings—were accused of having been infiltrated by Christians. Indeed, the edict read out after their demise claimed that some of the corps’ slain members had been discovered with crosses tattooed on their arms. See Aksan, V.H., Ottoman Wars, pp. 313–36; Reed, H.A., ‘The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June 1826, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1931; Shaw, S.J. and Shaw, E.K., History of the Ottoman Empire, pp. 19–24; and Şakul, K., ‘Auspicious Incident’, in Ağoston, G. and Masters, B. (eds.), Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire, New York, 2009, pp. 60–61. For historical accounts, see Daniş, M., Neticetü’l-Vekayi’ [Memorial of Events], Istanbul, 2005; and Balik, F., Osmanlı’nın Efendisi Tanrıçâ, Istanbul, 2003, pp. 569–617; and ‘Turkey’, The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle 96, part 2, July–December 1820, pp. 66–68.

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63. The tradition of founding a sultanic mosque ‘as a pledge to be fulfilled in return for awaited triumph’ went back to the fourteenth century; see Necipoğlu, G., Age of Sinan, p. 60.

64. The Times, 26 July 1826, [p. 1].
68. Eyice, S., ‘Nusretiye Camii’, p.275, based on Eyice’s entry on the same subject in Türkçe Asitoplojisi 25, Ankara, 1977, p.354. Indeed, a short piece on the Nusretiye written by Ahmet Refik (d.1937) in 1936 is entitled ‘Tophane Camii’ (see note 72 below). A number of nineteenth-century European sources also refer to the building as the Mosque/mosque of Tophane, though it is not always clear whether the toponym is being treated as the monument’s actual name or merely as a locational descriptor; see Boulden, J.E.P., An American among the Orientalists: Including an Audience with the Sultan, and a Visit to the Interior of a Harem, Philadelphia, 1855, p.155; Bazancourt, C.L., The Crimean Expedition, to the Capture of Sebastopol: Chronicles of the War in the East, from Its Commencement to the Signing of the Treaty of Peace, Gould, R. H. (ed.), London, 1856, vol.1, p.75; and Hornby, E., Constantiopole during the Crimean War, London, 1863, p.340. Unusually in relation to other Ottoman sources, which prefer the official name, the famous photograph collections that Abdulhamid II (r.1876–1909, d.1918) gave to the British and Americans between 1893 and 1894 label the Nusretiye in both Turkish and French as the Mosque of Tophane; see Abdul Hamid II Collection, Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001069065/; http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003063560. The matter is complicated by the fact that other Ottoman sources often referred to the nearby Kılıç Ali Pasha Mosque as the Mosque of Tophane; see, for example, Ayyansarayi, H., Garden of the Mosques, p.381; and Raif, M., Mihr-i Istanbul, p.338.

69. This is in contrast to the sultanic mosque of Mustafa III, which quickly shook off any sort of official appellation and came to be known even in governmental documents as the Laleti Mosque, in reference to its location; see Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp.264–66.

70. İzet treats Nusretiye as a separate name from his favoured Nusret, including it in the list of alternatives with which he concludes the document. Nevertheless, use of the adjectival form evidently developed out of, rather than separately from, the official appellation, for the reasons I discuss.

71. In official Ottoman documents, the name Nusret remained common, and perhaps usual, in the decades immediately following the mosque’s construction, with Nusrettıye gaining ground during the second half of the nineteenth century. For examples of both usages, see BOA, İ.DH., 479/32183, dated 17 Rabi‘ I 1278 (22 September 1861); and İ.DH., 627/43623, dated 21 Dhu‘l-Qa‘da 1287 (11 February 1871). For early examples of the form ‘Nusrettıye’ in Western sources, see ‘Türkeli’, Güzeller Zeytin, 3 August 1839, [p.2]; and ‘Constantinopolii’, Ristretto Dei Foglietti Universali, 25 April 1845, [p.1]. It is notable in this regard that the name of the Nuruosmaniye (Nur-i Osmaniye) Mosque was similarly changed from its original form of Nur-i Osmani; see Rüstem, Ü., Architecture for a New Age, pp.159–60, note 3.


extremely grateful to George Manginis for providing me with a careful translation of the Greek original.

81. Other than the book discussed in the preceding note, I have identified only two sources from before the second half of the twentieth century stating (without any citations) that the Nusretiye commemorates the ‘Auspicious Incident’: Riggs, C.T., ‘The Minarets of Constantinople’, Art and Archaeology 28, no. 4, October 1929, pp.141–42; and Chandler, D., ‘The Transformation of Turkey: New Hats and New Alphabet are the Surface Symbols of the Swiftest National Changes in Modern Times’, The National Geographic Magazine 75, no. 1, January 1939, p.23. The earliest claims to this effect that I have found in the Turkish literature date to the start of the 1970s: Baruçu, Ö., İstanbul’un Tarhı ve Camileri, Ankara, 1970, p.115; and Ziyaoglu, R., İstanbul Kadınları – Şehremini – Belediye Reisleri ve Partiler Tarıhi, 1453–1971: İlahı – Sırayı, Istanbul, 1971, p.468. The one earlier Turkish commentary on the name that I encountered — though it does not propound a link to the janissaries — comes at the end of a short piece written by Ahmet Refik in 1936. Discussing the mosque in light of Moltke’s description of it and his interactions with Mahmud II, Refik concludes that the name was a product of the sultan’s penchant for the army and for military victory: see Refik [Altınay], A., ‘Tophane Camii’, especially p.129; and note 72 above.


83. Aksan, V.H., Ottoman Wars, pp.343–98; and Shaw, S.J. and Shaw, E.K., History of the Ottoman Empire, pp.29–35. Ironically, the elimination of the janissaries and the ensuing military overhaul may have diverted Mahmud’s energies and resources away from the Greek conflict, contributing to the Ottomans’ eventual defeat; see Aksan, V.H., Ottoman Wars, p.297.

84. In addition to the predictably eulogistic Ottoman sources cited in notes 58 and 73 above, see, for example, Allom, T. and Walsh, R., Constantinople, vol.1, pp.xxvi–xxviii; Andréossy, A.F., Constantinople, pp.63–71; Boulden, J.E.P., An American among the Orientals, pp.80–81; Constantios I, Ancient and Modern Constantinople, p.121; and Riggs, C.T., ‘Minarets of Constantinople’, pp.141–42.