

INTRODUCTION

MATERIAL POLITICS OF ARCHITECTURE IN A FLUID EMPIRE

THE BUILDINGS DESIGNED AND BUILT BY THE ARCHITECT SINAN (D. 1588) IN THE IMPERIAL capital Istanbul, with their stripped-down aesthetic of impressive volumes and monumental domes, have become the epitome of Ottoman architecture. Active from the 1530s until the 1580s, Sinan designed monuments at both the large scale required by the sultans and the smaller one accorded to viziers, admirals, and princesses, as seen in the mosques built for Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent in 1550–77 and for one of his grand viziers, Rüstem Pasha, in 1563. Sinan's work and the work of the office of imperial architects (*hassa mimarları*) define our understanding of architecture in the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century onward, and they were integral parts of the functioning of a centralized empire that tightly regulated its administration and its aesthetic outlook.¹ But while these developments are well known, less understood is what happened in the first half of the fifteenth century, when what we now think of as classical Ottoman architecture began to coalesce. The transformation of Byzantine Constantinople into the Ottoman capital over the course of the second half of the fifteenth century under the patronage of Mehmed II has been examined in detail due to its crucial importance and the scale of the project, yet it has largely been analyzed in isolation from the broader context of architecture across the empire.² Moreover, equally important is the earlier part of the fifteenth century, when a visual identity was being actively shaped in a cultural and political context that was fluid and malleable enough to draw from an extremely varied array of sources and influences.

In this book, I analyze the fifteenth century on its own terms rather than looking backward from the vantage point of the unified imperial architecture of the mid-sixteenth century. As we shall see, Ottoman art and architecture of the fifteenth century stand at multiple crossroads: between Renaissance Italy and Timurid Central Asia, between Anatolia and the Balkans, and between Byzantine and Islamic architectural styles. In this fluctuating world, patrons, artists, and architects explored diverse modes of representation that eventually converged into a distinctly Ottoman aesthetic during the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512). The question is not one of origin – Eastern or Western, local or foreign – but one of how seemingly disparate elements of architecture were combined. Over time, an imperial Ottoman style came to be consolidated in connection to the larger epistemological project of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when knowledge was methodically organized and cataloged. The study here

includes Ottoman monuments built both before and after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, to allow us to consider long-term developments that shed light on the wide range of architectural practice within the nascent empire. Such an approach also connects the dots back to studies that focus on Ottoman architecture built in the fourteenth century, and to the question of Ottoman emergence.³ Chronologically, therefore, this book extends from the early fifteenth to the early sixteenth century, with forays into late fourteenth-century Ottoman and *beylik* (the Muslim-ruled principalities of Anatolia) architecture.

The choices made by the actors involved in these projects as they commissioned, designed, and built monuments form the core of the concept that I define as material politics. This concept includes, on the one hand, the politics of patronage – who commissions what, when, and where – that reflect the shifting power structures in the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, it also addresses the material preferences that are made on and for building sites – that is, the politics of stylistic choices, which come into play in the use of design models adapted from paper, and the hiring of workers with a wide variety of backgrounds, who then contributed to the formation of Ottoman identity through architecture.

Crucially, identity formation within the Ottoman Empire was closely intertwined with the multilingual and multireligious environment of the Balkans and Anatolia. The actors who were part of the fifteenth-century Ottoman landscape embodied the concept of Rūmī-ness coined by Cemal Kafadar. Seemingly disparate elements blended with ease in Rūmī-ness and Ottoman Turkish emerged as its literary expression, but without ethnic identity being fixed, in contrast to what twentieth-century nationalist historiographies state. The Rūmī identity was most fundamentally based on close ties to the geography of the Lands of Rūm.⁴ In the Ottoman imaginary until the mid-eighteenth century, Rūm extended beyond the confines of the defunct eastern Roman Empire, from which the term derived, to include both the Ottoman Balkans (Rūm-ili, Rumelia) and Anatolia up to but not south of the Taurus Mountains.⁵

Definitions associating Anatolia with the territory of the Republic of Turkey and with Turkish ethnic identity emerged in the early twentieth century, in close parallel to the establishment of a nation-state in 1923. In history writing, M. Fuad Köprülü (1890–1966) was a central figure in the 1930s and 1940s for his work on the emergence of the Ottoman enterprise and on medieval Anatolia as a place where Turkish Islamic culture, including its literary and religious expressions, developed.⁶ Köprülü pushed back against Western notions that presented the Ottoman Empire as a simple copy of the Byzantine Empire, which made no cultural contribution.⁷ From the 1930s onward, cultural unity under the umbrella of *Anadoluculuk* (Anatolianism) was claimed as part of the Turkish nation-state's identity, with significant impact on the study of art history and archaeology, as Scott Redford explains.⁸ Importantly, Anatolianism did not emphasize Islam as a unifying feature, but rather claimed that Anatolia had been a coherent political and cultural space since the Hittite period in the second millennium BCE. Beginning in the 1950s, historians of medieval Anatolia such as Osman Turan (1914–78) and İbrahim Kafesoğlu (1914–84) shifted to an approach that emphasized the emergence of a specifically Turkish and Muslim culture in Anatolia with the rule of the Saljuqs (*Türk-İslam sentezi*), starting in the late eleventh century.⁹ Further, the notion of a Saljuq–*beylik*–Ottoman sequence was adopted for the study of the region, as Oya Pancaroğlu notes, erasing complex historical and cultural dynamics.¹⁰ The Turkish Islamic culture proposed by Turan and others for the medieval period was correlated with the territories of the Turkish nation-state, especially Anatolia. National-territorial narratives of this sort emerged not only in Turkey but also in other nation-states – such as Armenia, Georgia, and Iran – that held territories in a wider region that was marked by close economic and cultural ties in the Middle Ages (and beyond).¹¹

New scholarship over the past three decades has proposed to disentangle medieval and early modern Anatolia from nationalist historiographies; the concept of the Lands of Rūm is crucial in this body of

work.¹² Within the context of architectural histories of the Lands of Rūm, attention to Rūmī identity is a way to escape the historiographical ballast of, on the one hand, nationalist designations of Ottoman, *beylik*, and Saljuq architecture as exclusively Turkish and, on the other hand, the blanket term “Islamic” with its attendant problems.¹³ In this book, in line with my earlier work on the architecture of central and eastern Anatolia under Mongol rule, I view the region as one of cross-cultural interaction, multiethnic and multilingual populations, and complex political dynamics involving a wide range of actors.¹⁴ Within this framework, architecture is strongly influenced not only by regional dynamics but also by transregional networks extending from the Mediterranean to Central Asia.

While these aspects of cultural formation can be traced in writing where literati and scholars in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere in the Islamic world are concerned, they are also relevant for the makers (such as stonemasons, tile makers, calligraphers, and architects) who created buildings. Many of these makers remain anonymous, but their buildings give them voice. The “maker’s share,” a term that Svetlana Alpers established while studying the eighteenth-century Italian painter Tiepolo, is central to an understanding of works of art that moves beyond the roles of patron and viewer.¹⁵ As Ethan Lasser explains in a study of nineteenth-century American decorative arts, the notion of the maker’s share allows conceptual access to process.¹⁶ Such an approach provides crucial insights into the emergence and consolidation of the Ottoman artistic milieu over the course of the fifteenth century, when written sources are much more attentive to scholar-bureaucrats and military and religious elites than to makers. The role of the architect – and indeed the very meaning of that term – and the roles of other building professionals are central points of discussion throughout this book, which covers a time period that saw changes to the ways in which construction sites were organized and run, from the design process to the completion of the building. These processes too constitute material politics.

Within the larger exploration of how the process of creating a monument functioned in the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire, this book animates a number of central questions. How were architects trained? How did theory and practice intersect? What was the role of workshops? Who were the architects participating in the construction of Ottoman imperial commissions? How were building sites organized? Such questions are not exclusive to the study of Ottoman architecture: in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe, the roles and education of architects, engineers, and designers similarly shifted.¹⁷ In the Persianate world beginning in the fifteenth century, architects became increasingly visible in inscriptions on buildings that they created. Sussan Babaie notes that practices of architecture and the social standing of architects varied widely across the Islamic world, arguing that this fact has not been sufficiently taken into account in scholarship.¹⁸ Thus the question of how architecture is conceived of and created has a global dimension in the fifteenth century that is not simply a matter of influence across regions.¹⁹ By attending to the details of artistic production, then, we can gain an understanding of how architecture was shaped by those who worked on construction sites, from the planning and commissioning of a monument to its completion. Loose and shifting associations of makers connected the practice of architecture to networks of ulema, Sufis, scholar-bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, and poets, reaching beyond the text-based connections that have been traced in studies of such figures’ writings.²⁰

PASTS, PRESENTS, FUTURES: ARCHITECTURE AND SOURCES

With the foregoing in mind, I examine uses of past, present, and future in Ottoman architecture, frameworks that are closely tied to the ways in which the Ottomans wrote about and fashioned their own place in history. Since many of the first major Ottoman histories that have been preserved in full were written during the late fifteenth century, our perceptions of the earlier period are strongly influenced by those later historians’ views. Titles of rulership, architectural patronage, and support for the arts and scholarship all tie into questions of Ottoman self-representation, as does history writing intended for the

purpose of shaping a dynastic framework.²¹ As Kafadar notes, however, the narratives that emerged during the reigns of Mehmed II and especially Bayezid II are by no means homogenous, and their authors' identities affect the ways in which they depict events and figures of the late thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, just as their affiliations determine how they judge their own present.²² As these authors write about the past, they construct it according to the present's canon and establish narratives that make the present appear predestined.

In the early fifteenth century, crisis shook the Ottoman principality. Moving into Anatolia, Timur defeated Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402) at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. The sultan never returned from captivity and his sons became embroiled in a civil war as large swaths of territory in Anatolia were lost to the local rulers who had held them before the initial Ottoman expansion in that region.²³ The Ottomans' ways of writing their own history changed profoundly during and after the ensuing interregnum (1402–13). As Dimitri Kastritsis and Baki Tezcan have shown, the trauma of the Timurid conquest led to new narratives that asserted Ottoman legitimacy based on a claim that the Rūm Saljuq sultan (a constructed fictive version rather than a precise historical reality) had given authority to Osman.²⁴ Thus pre-Mongol Anatolia is strongly evoked in a period when the Timurids – Genghisid through Timur's marriage and subsequent claims – represented a threat equal to the one the Mongols had posed to the Rūm Saljuqs in the mid-thirteenth century.²⁵ Few histories written at this time have survived, but the ones that do exist provide unique views on this period in which the Ottoman principality was reshaped.²⁶ The long-lived 'Aşıkpaşazāde (1393–1502?), raised in the *Wafā'ī zāviye* of Elvan Çelebi in Mecidözü near Çorum, wrote a major history that includes eyewitness accounts beginning with the reign of Mehmed I.²⁷

Mehmed I (r. 1413–21) emerged after the decade of interregnum and warfare as the new if contested ruler and set about rebuilding the realm. This effort went hand in hand with architectural patronage, particularly in the city of Bursa, closely associated with dynastic memory.²⁸ Buildings erected there between the 1410s and 1430s were essentially malleable monuments: the Byzantine architecture of the city, earlier and contemporary Islamic architectures of Anatolia, and contemporary monuments in Iran and Central Asia were all drawn upon in what was built in this Ottoman dynastic center. During the reign of Murad II (r. 1421–44, 1446–51), this engagement continued as architectural patronage expanded across the realm and cultural interests extended into the Mediterranean, while Edirne, the Ottomans' frontier capital, was a crucial site of patronage.²⁹

In sources written during Mehmed II's reign (r. 1444–46, 1451–81), authors particularly praised the sultan for his role as conqueror of Constantinople and the corresponding rise in importance of the Ottomans and their empire, headed by a universal ruler.³⁰ Under Mehmed II, direct contact with artistic centers of the European Renaissance, as well as engagement with the Byzantine heritage and building fabric of the new capital Istanbul and the internal tradition of Ottoman architecture created since the early fourteenth century, led to numerous innovations.³¹ During the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), with which this book concludes, central workshops were established for most art forms produced for the Ottoman court. Simultaneously, new design practices brought architecture closely into the frame of an Ottoman project of knowledge gathering aimed at consolidating imperial ideology. These two practices led to the emergence of an Ottoman style that is easily recognizable in its plan schemes and volumes. This Ottoman imperial style offered a synthesis of the Ottoman architectures of the preceding century and firmly established the foundation of a new Ottoman future to be realized in the sixteenth century. Such specific engagements with past(s), present(s), and future, I argue, were a hallmark of the material politics of Ottoman architecture.

Such reflections are also relevant for the writing of history in that period. Murat Cem Mengüç argues that, rather than viewing history writing during Bayezid II's reign as a centralized, state-sponsored project, we should see the emergence of a range of histories as an expression of “emerging historical

self-consciousness” among those who endeavored to write such texts and those who might read them.³² According to Mengüç, historians acted on their own initiative; he notes that only Ruhi (d. 1522) states that he wrote at the sultan’s behest.³³ This corresponds to Kafadar’s observation that varying perspectives appear across different histories, so that, for instance, ‘Aşıkpaşazāde’s Sufi affiliation is clear throughout his work, including when he severely criticizes Mehmed II for taking away the lands of *gazi* families and Sufi communities, both instrumental actors in the rise of the Ottoman Empire throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³⁴ Neşri (d. ca. 1520), on the other hand, works within the premises of his position as a member of the ulema.³⁵

Diverse as these histories may be, in them and in the major biographical dictionary by Ahmed b. Mustafā Taşköprüzāde (d. 1561), *Şaḡā’iq al-nu‘māniyah fī ‘ulāmā’ al-dawlah al-‘uthmāniyah*, which includes scholars whom the sixteenth-century compiler deemed important for the Ottoman context, narratives are shaped that conform to late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman worldviews.³⁶ Since Taşköprüzāde himself was a *mudarris* and kadi trained in the Ottoman madrasa system, his choices are influenced by that specific background and his work is therefore also selective in that it includes and excludes individuals according to their place within the Ottoman system. The work’s title, specifically evoking scholars tied to the Ottoman state (*dawlah*), is programmatic in that sense, tying into the centralized madrasa system that emerged with the construction of the Semaniye madrasas connected to Mehmed II’s mosque complex in Istanbul.³⁷

History writing and self-fashioning through sixteenth-century lenses, then, gloss over some of the complex social and material dynamics of architecture in the fifteenth century. Architectural history can offer certain correctives if we examine sources that record earlier views or stages of development. In his study of the Ottomans’ emergence, Cemal Kafadar has demonstrated how effective sources such as hagiographies and epics can be in providing perspectives that were omitted in later history writing.³⁸ Architecture can offer similar insights. For example, inscriptions on monuments provide information about founders, dates, functions, and sometimes individuals involved in the construction. Many fifteenth-century buildings that today function as Friday mosques (Arabic *jāmi‘*, Turkish *cami*) or smaller prayer spaces (Arabic *maṣjid*, Turkish *mescid*) were originally built as multifunctional structures that served the activities of dervish groups along with travelers, scholars, and other guests. Although such buildings lost their original functions as part of a larger transformation of imperial structures circa 1500, their foundation inscriptions retain the terms originally used. This allows us to recognize the overwhelming presence of such buildings, otherwise invisible in the current day due to later changes and modern naming.³⁹ These inscriptions are thus testimonies to those dervishes who, gathering converts to Islam in much larger numbers than many ulema, were crucial to the Ottomans’ success, especially in formerly Christian-ruled lands.⁴⁰ In one particular case, that of the Alibey Camii in Manisa, a sixteenth-century inscription tells the story of the building’s transformation into a Friday mosque.⁴¹ Founded in 831 AH / 1427–28 CE by ‘Ali Beğ b. Timurtaş, the building was not used for the Friday prayer. In 975 AH / 1567–68 CE, the founder’s descendant, Haydar Çelebi, turned the building into a Friday mosque. Finally, in 978 AH / 1570–71 CE, Cafer Çelebi had the roof restored and added a *minbar* and minaret – elements visibly marking the building as a Friday mosque – as well as commissioning a new decorative program. While nothing survives of the Alibey Camii’s fifteenth-century substance or sixteenth-century decorative program, the story of the monument’s transformation can be read in the five lines of text that make up its inscription and in the building’s minaret.

While I fully discuss the use of specific terms in foundation inscriptions when addressing specific examples, it is important to note here that *waqfīyas*, the endowment deeds connected to foundations, also provide information about buildings’ functions, staff, and related financial arrangements. A substantial number of fifteenth-century Ottoman *waqfīyas* survive, in several cases jointly with the buildings for which they were established. Thus these documents offer glimpses of fifteenth-century worlds – albeit

within the clearly delineated framework of endowments (*waqfs*) in Islamic law – that are not always available in other sources. This is, for instance, true for the lists of staff positions, where one or two posts often entail being responsible for the maintenance of a building's structure or of specific elements such as water features. Such mentions, along with the occasional appearance in inscriptions of the names of individuals who designed buildings or parts of their decoration (such as stonework or tiles) and furnishings (such as doors and *minbars*), provide insights into the building crafts of the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

While Ottoman histories generally refer to the arts only in passing or as they relate to patronage, such inscriptions and mentions in *waqfiyyas* allow for insights into the composition of the workforce at building sites, the kinds of roles available during and after construction, and at times the planning process. Together with close attention to architectural elements, then, such sources are helpful in making methodological inroads into a more comprehensive understanding of Ottoman architecture in the fifteenth century. This brings us to the question of architecture itself and of the monuments covered in this book.

The large number of extant monuments makes it crucial to select specific examples for in-depth treatment.⁴² An interest in understanding interior spaces along with façades has led me to privilege examples in which original interior decorative programs are still extant or ones that, while restored, retain substantial parts of their original character.⁴³ The buildings discussed in this book are located in cities across Anatolia and the Balkans, in provincial centers as well as in the three imperial cities of Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul. However, the survival of fifteenth-century monuments varies across different regions that were part of the Ottoman Empire, and this affects how we can study architecture – low survival rates of buildings can particularly be a factor in former Ottoman lands in southeastern Europe.⁴⁴

SHIFTING ARCHITECTURES, CHANGING ACTORS

The formation of Ottoman architecture drew from two main strands at its outset in the fourteenth century. The Byzantine architecture present in the northwestern Anatolian lands the Ottomans conquered early on, along with monuments in Greece and the Balkans, was a crucial point of departure for Ottoman architecture. The transformation of churches into mosques in cities such as Thessaloniki was a crucial step in these conquests. The same construction techniques that could be observed in these Byzantine monuments continued to be used as the Ottomans had new buildings erected. Some of the makers of these pre-Ottoman architectures, remaining in the region under Ottoman rule, acted as building professionals, supplying knowledge of skills and locally available materials, and played a central role in establishing the technical and stylistic bases for the first Ottoman monuments.⁴⁵ Further, by the late fourteenth century, political and artistic connections beyond the Ottoman lands were reflected in architecture, with Mamluk and Italian elements appearing, for instance, in Murad I's and Bayezid I's foundations in Bursa.⁴⁶

In the early fifteenth century, new aspects of architecture emerged. While earlier elements were still used, the Ottomans became increasingly aware of and interested in the Timurid cultural (rather than political) sphere, which extended from Samarqand to Tabriz. The prestige of Timurid court culture was such that the Ottomans moved to deploy its arts for their purposes. At the same time, a historical narrative was being constructed that erased the Mongol past that the Ottomans shared with the Timurids. Tile decoration in particular emerged as a central element of early fifteenth-century buildings in Bursa and Edirne, along with wall paintings. Gülru Necipoğlu has suggested viewing this set of references as a regional variant of the so-called international Timurid style – that is, the wide adaptation, within the eastern Islamic world throughout the fifteenth century, of stylistic choices that represented the Timurids' cultural clout.⁴⁷

Throughout the fourteenth century and well into the fifteenth, the Ottoman Empire also operated within the post-Mongol context of Anatolia. When Bayezid I expanded his territories into Anatolia in the 1390s, reaching as far east as Malatya, the Ottomans came into close contact with the various political entities active there, from the *beyliks* of western Anatolia to Qadi Burhaneddin Ahmad (d. 1398), who reigned independently in the region between Sivas and Kayseri.⁴⁸ While these conquered Anatolian lands were lost following the Ottomans' defeat by Timur in 1402, Murad II and Mehmed II would again expand eastward, absorbing the *beyliks* of western Anatolia in the 1420s and the Karamanids and the Byzantine empire of Trebizond by 1470.⁴⁹ As I argue in my earlier work, the profound changes in patronage caused by the Mongol takeover of the Saljuq realm led to increasingly regionalized architectural styles beginning in the 1250s and continuing into the early fourteenth century.⁵⁰ Thus neither the imperial architecture of the Mongols in Iran nor the modes of Saljuq royal patronage of the early thirteenth century dominated monuments built by a wide range of Muslim patrons in central and eastern Anatolia between the mid-thirteenth century and the mid-fourteenth century, in large part parallel to the emergence of the Ottomans. Farther east in Anatolia, the Ottomans' rivalry with the Aqoyunlu first came to a head in 1461, when Mehmed II's conquest of Trebizond led Uzun Hasan (r. 1453–78) to withdraw from the region.⁵¹ After the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Otlukbeli (or Başkent) in 1473, the Aqoyunlu ruler was forced to make peace.⁵² Some territories in southeastern Anatolia and beyond the Taurus Mountains remained contested until the early sixteenth century.⁵³

The references available in Anatolia for Ottoman builders were a mirror of this hybrid frontier region and their incorporation into Ottoman visual culture deserves careful analysis. This is not to say that Ottoman architecture should be construed as inherently Eastern and Islamic – a view that has been espoused in nationalist narratives to emphasize the Turkish Islamic aspects of Ottoman culture.⁵⁴ Rather, elements that can be traced back to Islamic architecture built by a range of patrons in Anatolia are one small part of the puzzle that is Ottoman architecture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Throughout the fifteenth century, elements adapted from a wide range of styles were combined with remarkable ease, with different types of decoration flexibly used across media, demonstrating the cultural fluidity that would be expressed in Rūmī-ness by circa 1500. Regional powers within the Ottoman Empire remained in place until then and played a central part in architectural patronage. Families such as the Çandarlıs, the Mihailoğlus, and the Evrenosoğlus were major patrons of architecture and powerful political actors.⁵⁵ Figures such as Hajji 'Ivaz Pasha, Bayezid Pasha, and Yörgüç Pasha established pockets of local power, as Chapters 2 and 3 will show, and commissioned monuments in cities where they held influence. Only with Mehmed II's centralization policies were these regional powers dissolved and the powerful *gazi* families marginalized; land reforms affected them along with the Sufi communities who had been crucial in the expansion of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶ Criticism of this treatment by Mehmed II rose to such a point that Bayezid II reversed some of these policies, returning extensive landholdings and *waqfs*.⁵⁷

The Ottoman Empire and its artistic landscape in this period cannot be understood in isolation: they were intimately bound up in a closely connected, transregional cultural and political scene. Circulation of knowledge is a central element in this context. In his study of the intellectual biography of Timurid scholar Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi (d. 1454), Evrim Binbaş investigates an informal network that scholar 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hanafī al-Bistami (d. 1454), who settled in Ottoman Bursa, described as extending across the Ottoman Empire and into Mamluk Egypt.⁵⁸ Among the members of this network were figures such as Şeyh Bedreddin (d. 1416), who later rebelled against Mehmed I, and Şemseddin Muhammad b. Hamza al-Fenari al-Rumi, known as Molla Fenari (d. 1431 or 1434–35), who became the *müftü* of Bursa and was one of the most prominent Ottoman ulema of his time.⁵⁹ As Binbaş argues, Bistami reveals connections that were completely omitted in later Ottoman biographical dictionaries.⁶⁰ This later omission is unsurprising given the bloody suppression of Şeyh Bedreddin's uprising and the fact that

its leader had been a classmate of both Molla Fenari and the poet Ahmedî in Cairo in the 1380s, associations that later Ottoman historians could have found improper.⁶¹ Taken together, these scholars' endeavors are of encyclopedic proportion, addressing everything from astronomy to aesthetics.⁶² These kinds of networks operated in addition to more formal ones – for instance, those established among scholars teaching in madrasas and their students, who could then move on to positions elsewhere. The kind of mobility that we see among scholars and intellectuals was also available to those I refer to as makers – that is, a wide range of people employed on building sites and in the creation of ceramics, books, and other objects. But how do we document their roles, if we often do not even know their names, let alone their biographies?

Due to the difficulties of reconstructing these looser, more diffuse networks, narratives that aim to explain the circulation of ideas and motifs within architectural contexts tend to assign an important role to traveling workshops. Yet such workshops, which tend to dominate scholarly narratives, often appear as abstract, nearly timeless entities that continue over decades, documented only in limited signed works and others attributed to them on stylistic grounds. While inscriptions containing the names of makers are generally designated as signatures, the term does need to be questioned. Thus Sheila Blair proposes a distinction between names included in formal building inscriptions – where they are part of carefully planned epigraphic programs – and informal signatures added in inconspicuous places on objects.⁶³ In what follows, I largely observe this distinction while arguing that some architectural inscriptions might also fall into the informal category. Questions of the workshop members' origin, the issue of possibly fictive labels conferring cultural prestige, and the idea that objects used in architecture could also move – again, either together with or independently of their makers – are rarely raised. In fact, as Jonathan Hay notes, the transfer of motifs does not necessarily require the movement even of objects; instead, a “mere two-dimensional notation, or even a memory, will do” in order to recreate a specific kind of decoration elsewhere.⁶⁴

As an example of scholarly insistence on a workshop scheme, the Masters of Tabriz – tile workers who may or may not have actually come from that city – appear prominently in studies of fifteenth-century Ottoman tiles, and at times an argument has been made for the continuity of a single workshop over several generations from the 1420s to the 1470s. Builders from the Mamluk context seem to have arrived in late fourteenth-century western Anatolia. Thus there was clearly cross-pollination between the Ottoman Empire and other regions, but a central question to pursue is how much of it needs to be explained with the movement of people, and how much can be attributed to moving objects and works on paper. Art historian Michael Meinecke firmly stood on the side of moving workshops, an argument he pursued in focused studies of Mamluk architecture and of tiles in Anatolia from the Saljuq to the early Ottoman period, as well as in general study of patronage as a main motor for artists' movements.⁶⁵ In what follows, I argue that the movement of ideas, plans, drawings, and objects also played a central role.

Paper, which had become increasingly available since the fourteenth century, is an important presence – though often an invisible one – behind designs, calligraphies, and templates for architectural decoration.⁶⁶ Harder to trace is how building plans traveled, and the extent to which paper was relevant in those cases, at least before the late fifteenth century, when rare architectural drawings survive in the Ottoman context.⁶⁷ Design practices that include carefully aligned, custom-designed inscription panels, for instance, suggest that paper templates were used in some way by the late fourteenth century. It was especially likely that such templates would be useful as a means of communication in a process that required measurements of buildings to be provided to calligraphers, who would then create appropriate, proportional inscription designs that could be sent in small size to building sites and ceramic workshops to be scaled up when necessary for monumental use.

From these observations emerge three larger topics of discussion. First, the question of drawings in the process of architectural production needs to be examined in relationship to extant monuments and how

they might have been planned, as well as in relationship to knowledge production. Second, the issue of how workshops were put together, how flexible they might have been, and how much we can read into their names is a central one. Third, the movement of objects – and this includes tiles, often silently assumed to be produced near the building site – appears as an important mode of transfer.⁶⁸ Such a collaborative environment, where relationships between teachers, students, and members of a workshop were crucial, also relates to the *kitabkhāna* setting – namely, workshops that produced books as well as designs for a wide range of objects. The notion of workshops, however, should not lead us to assume that the same members were always collaborating in a set formation: considering the changing nature of building sites in particular, we should imagine environments in which individuals could move around and changing sets of workers could collaborate on various projects.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE RENAISSANCE

The idea of the Renaissance, which scholars over the past three decades have reframed in global terms that extend beyond Italy, played a crucial role in the Ottoman context, particularly beginning in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ As Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton note, with the recognition of these connections “comes the inevitable recognition that cultural histories apparently utterly distinct, and traditionally kept entirely separate, are ripe to be rewritten as shared East/West undertakings.”⁷⁰ Within the Ottoman context, Gülru Necipoğlu and Julian Raby have conducted extensive research to uncover these shared undertakings and to highlight the crucial contribution of Ottoman patrons and artists to a pan-Mediterranean Renaissance.⁷¹ In architectural history, such work allows for a study of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean that places the Ottoman Empire on equal footing with cultural and political centers of the Renaissance in Italy and generates an understanding of how ideas relating to building were received across this space in both directions – and such a study naturally poses many challenges.⁷²

Working on Venice, Deborah Howard has examined the impact of Islamic art on the built environment of that city from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.⁷³ Exhibitions such as *Venice and the Islamic World* have examined connections between Venice and the Islamic world beyond the Ottoman context, from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries.⁷⁴ While objects, paintings, and drawings play a large role in these exchanges – being rife with imitation, copying, and catering to patrons’ specific taste – the place of architecture in this dynamic of transfer is at times harder to trace.⁷⁵ And yet mutual influence is present in architecture: for instance, in the increasing symmetry of Ottoman mosque complexes starting with the mosque of Mehmed II in Istanbul (1463–70), which Necipoğlu argues was due to the influence of Italian models of urban planning.⁷⁶ The presence of artists such as Gentile Bellini (1429–1507), who stayed at the Ottoman court in 1479, contributed to exchanges governed by trade and diplomatic missions.⁷⁷ Mehmed II’s efforts to invite artists and architects from Venice and Florence, his interest in classical Greek and Latin culture and history, and the translations from Greek and Latin into Arabic and Ottoman Turkish created at his court were part of the sultan’s project of shaping Ottoman imperial identity – and his own claim to rule – as universal. Such invitations continued under Bayezid II, displaying persistent efforts to enhance artistic contacts with the cultural centers of Italy.⁷⁸ Thus, Bayezid II’s unrealized project of building a bridge over the Golden Horn elicited correspondence in 1502 with Leonardo da Vinci, who got as far as making a sketch and writing a letter to the prospective patron, as well as with Michelangelo before 1506.⁷⁹

In addition to these direct attempts at artistic exchange, trade between Europe and the Mamluk and Ottoman realms played a central role; major port cities such as Alexandria and Istanbul and trading centers such as Cairo and Bursa were of particular interest in these exchanges. Increased trade became possible after the lifting of a papal ban on trade with non-Christian lands that had been in effect from 1320

to 1344, and Beirut, Aleppo, and Damascus once more became major destinations for Venetian merchants.⁸⁰ Trade networks established in previous centuries, such as the caravan routes in Anatolia marked by many caravanserais created under Saljuq rule in the early thirteenth century, persisted. These trade routes connecting Anatolia and Iran were expanded by the Ilkhanids in the early fourteenth century in order to facilitate access to Tabriz, while Genoese trading colonies existed in Pera and the Black Sea.⁸¹ Studies on trade demonstrate that cities such as Tabriz were major nodes in trade networks that extended from Genoa and Venice to China, with the Ottoman Empire as a crucial intermediary and point of passage in between.⁸² Glass, soap, textiles, and paper were coveted goods taken from the Islamic world to Venice and Genoa.⁸³

Of these goods, textiles in particular long played an important role in trade connections between the Islamic world and Europe. In the fifteenth century, the Ottoman Empire took on a role in this trade as increasing volumes of silk, mainly from Iran, passed through Bursa.⁸⁴ Onward trade to Europe consisted of both raw silk and finished textiles made in Bursa, although the raw material represented a larger part of the trade.⁸⁵ The manufacturing of textiles in Bursa increased in the sixteenth century, and at the same time fabrics were also made in Istanbul, where production of brocades and velvets peaked between 1550 and 1600.⁸⁶ In the other direction, the Ottoman Empire became the biggest export market for Italian textile producers due to demand created by the Ottoman court.⁸⁷ Producers of velvet in Italian centers – primarily Venice and Lucca – and in Bursa mutually influenced each other and similar motifs appeared on both sides of the Mediterranean as each market catered to the other while imitating imported products that appealed to local tastes.⁸⁸ At times, distinguishing between Italian and Ottoman productions is difficult or nearly impossible without close attention to minute technical details of weaving.⁸⁹ These connections are one manifestation of a mutual interest in similar types of objects that also extends to metalwork, ceramics, and glass, influencing production and consumption in multiple locations.⁹⁰

STYLES, INTERNATIONAL AND OTHERWISE

While style is a concept ingrained in and derived from the framework of Western art history as an academic discipline, internal practices of connoisseurship and art appreciation can clearly be traced in Islamic art, especially beginning in the late fourteenth century.⁹¹ In the Ottoman Empire, fifteenth-century ekphrastic poems exalting buildings demonstrate practices of aesthetic appraisal, as I examine in Chapter 1. In the seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi uses the term *tarz* to designate style in a building that he admires during a visit to Bursa, to be examined in Chapter 2.⁹² Within the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire, we observe an epistemological project that involves art and architecture in the same way as history writing, science, philosophy, and poetry. While manuscripts and correspondence between scholars, scientists, and administrators provide a crucial base of sources that, when meticulously studied, provide access to the thinking behind this knowledge project, we often have to find ways to let objects and buildings speak for themselves as we work to appraise them within this same framework. Therefore style remains an indispensable tool in the analysis that follows. Furthermore, as transregional exchange and connections are crucial throughout the fifteenth century, the conceptual issue of international styles needs to be addressed at the outset.

Also crucially related to the aesthetic interpretation of objects and buildings, I trace the notion throughout the book that monuments built in this period reflect a complex engagement with sensory perception that reaches from the built environment onto the written page. In poetic inscriptions and poems, monuments were praised for their beauty using natural and cosmological metaphors. Poetry at times serves to guide sensory perception, highlighting ways in which a site should be experienced and providing points of comparison with natural, spiritual, and imaginary worlds. Within buildings, the visitor was immersed in spaces decorated with tiles, eliciting wonder at the artifice of their creation, and