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Original article

THE FUNCTIONAL IMPACT ON THE LAYOUT OF HIRKA-I ŞERIF MOSQUE 1267 AH./1851 AD. IN ISTANBUL

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Abstract:
This research paper discusses the impact of function on the planning of Hırka-i Şerif Mosque, one of the octagonal mosques in Istanbul. Although uncommon in Ottoman mosques, the architect sought to select the most suitable designs to fulfill the various functions. At the same time, our reasons for choosing the mosque for the paper include its unique layout and the reasons behind this layout, as well as the architect's design. The study adopted the comparative analytical approach to highlight the unique planning of the mosque and demonstrate how the architect, leveraging his architectural experience and professional distinctiveness, implemented the most appropriate planning for the function without affecting the function of other main units of the mosque. The paper also addressed dating and the cause of fame of the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque, as well as the reason for its fame with this name, whether or not its attribution to the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, is true.

1. Introduction

1.1. *Location and historical background*

Hırka-i Şerif was established in the İskender neighborhood of the Fatih district, near the Fatih Mosque and Complex, Istanbul, in 1267 AH./1851 AD. [1], fig. (1). It began when Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid I, 1194 AH./1780 AD, who built a chamber to preserve the Hırka-i Şerif (holy mantle) that the family of the companion Uwais al-Qarani had , and in the same site, the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque Fountain. Due to the large number of visitors to the destination, the chamber was expanded and rebuilt in (1227 AH./1812 AD.) by the commission of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II. The current construction of the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque was commissioned in (1263 AH./1847 AD.) by Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I [2], featuring an octagonal chamber in front of its southern wall, which was designated for the conservation and display of the holy mantle [3]. Thus, the building fulfilled a dual function in terms of being a house of worship and a shrine that kept the mantle of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace [4].

a

b

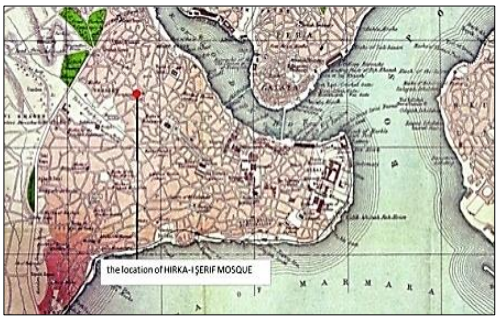


Figure (1) site of Hırka-i Şerif mosque **a.** (*After: Google Earth 2023*), **b.** the remaking of Istanbul, portrait of an Ottoman city in the 19th (*After: Çelik, 1993*) [5].

1.2. *Architect*

The architect Garabet Balyn[(a)] [6,7] initiated the actual cons-truction of the mosque was in 1264 AH./1848 AD., lasted for three years and was completed in 1267 AH./1851 AD. [8], supervised by the architect Abdülhalim Efendi, head of the construction office at the time. Therefore, some were confused and attributed it to Abdülhalim Efendi based on his signature on the construction document numbered BOA, EV, d33853.ca. 1264 (H),7.04.1848 (m), fig. (2). However, he signed the document because of his position as the head of the construction office in the Ottoman Empire[(b)] [9], which was a supervisory committee of all Ottoman structures, especially in Istanbul [10]. He signed every document of the office, especially after the dissolution of the office of imperial engineers in 1831, that was com-

missioned with the construction of imperial buildings [11]. Hence, the head of the construction office was the first one in charge. To make the work legally implemented, he should sign the construction documents. Some mention that Italian architects were consulted in the layout of the mosque; it is highly likely that Hırka-i Şerif Mosque was the work of one of the members of the Balian family, who had a monopoly on the design of important public buildings during the rule of Sultan Abdülmecid I especially Garabet Amira Balian [2]. This is what we will explain: that architectural work is one of the most important works of Garabet Amira Balian by artistic and architectural connotations and comparisons.

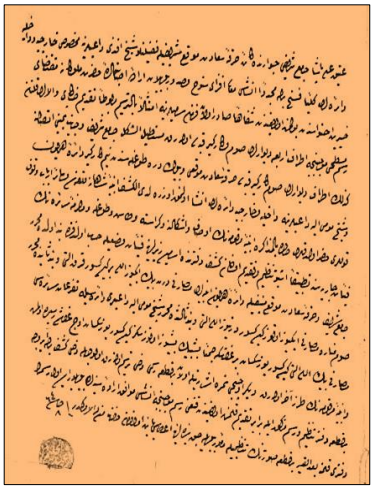


Figure (2) the foundation document of the Hırka-i Şerif mosque stamped by the architect Abdülhalim (*After:* Can, 2015) [9].

The architectural and technical features of the mosque demonstrate that it was established by Garabet Balian. They largely match those of Dolmabahçe mosque, a masterpiece of Garabet Balian. Additionally, the plaster technical and architectural de-signs of Surp Asdvadzadzin Patriarchal Church in Istanbul, fig. (3-a), largely matched those of the shrine of Mahmud II (1839-40), especially garlands, sun rays, and ray-like structures, which exist in the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque [11], fig. (3-b & c), as well as the clay architectural design in the dome of the holy mantle chamber, fig. (3-d). Furthermore, the architectural design of the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque matched the entrance of the shrine of Sultan Mahmud II 1255 (H)/1839 (M) in Istanbul.

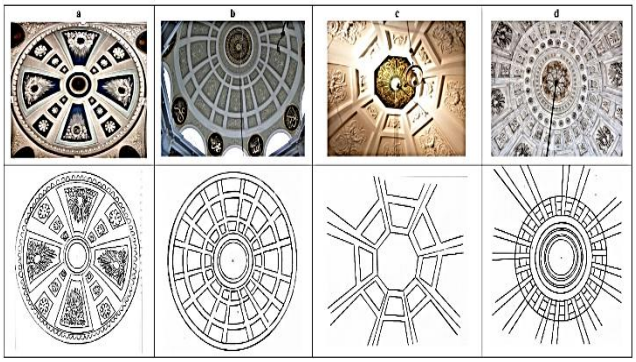


Figure (3) similarity in the geometric design of the distribution of décorations on the interior of the domes, which were all built by Garabet Balian; **a.** the interior of the dome of the Surp Asdvadzadzin Patr-iarchal church, **b.** the dome of the Hırka-i Şerif mosque, **c.** the dome of Sultan Mahmud II's tomb, **d.** the dome of the chamber of the Holy Mantle

1.3. *Name and establishment of the mosque*

The mosque was primarily named after the holy mantle of Prophet Muhammad gifted to the companion Uwais al-Qarani [2,3]. Then, it moved to his brother Shihabuldin al-Awsy in Qush Adasi after his death. At the invitation of the Ottoman Sultan Ahmd I, the family moved to Istanbul [12], where they displayed the mantle to visitors in a rented house. In 1780, during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I, a chamber called the mantle chamber was established. Later, a mosque was built around the chamber [13]. In 1812, Sultan Mahmud II rebuilt the mosque and its annexes and expanded the chamber. In the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I, the mosque and the chamber were expanded, which allowed more people to visit [2] after confiscating about 700 buildings to make room for the mosque and its annexes [14]. Undoubtedly, the mosque took the name only because of the presence of the holy mantle in it.

2. Function and Planning

2.1. *The layout of the mosque*

Studying Ottoman architectural designs requires a comparative study with Byzantine architectural designs. A broad survey of Byzantine architectural designs is also necessary to understand their architectural origins and the extent of their influence on Islamic architecture, particularly octagonal designs. Therefore, it is unacceptable that the octagonal designs were created by Ottoman architecture, but the origins of this planning could be traced back to Byzantine architecture, as it appeared in many Byzantine churches that preceded Ottoman architecture, such as the layout of the 6th century Byzantine San Vitale church in Ravenna 521-534 AD, Sergius and Bacchus Church or Küçuk Aya Sofya 528 A.D [15]. Hence, it could be argued that the octagonal design got its first representative in Europe earlier in the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna. San Vitale architecturally featured a relationship more in line with the Byzantine styles of Constantinople than local Ravenna architecture styles. In the cathedral of Bosra (Syria) in 512 AD. in the east, the church Charlemagne was a replica of the San Vitale in Ravenna. Similarly, the Benedict church in Eschau 770 AD. and other octagonal plans had a direct impact on Ottoman architecture [16]. In this mosque, which takes a double octagonal plan, the inner octagon is where religious rites and prayers are held. The outer octagon consists of two corridors that surround the inner octagonal mosque, leading to an octagonal chamber that precedes the mosque from the southern side, known as the holy mantle chamber. The mosque also precedes the northern side with architectural units known as: (Hünkar mahfili), which is a rectangular section consisting of two floors. The upper floor includes identical architectural units belonging to the Sultan and the Haramlik. These units are two identical halls, both of which overlook the mosque from the inside. The lower floor of the same section contains the toilets and corridors that lead to the mosque and the holy mantle chamber, fig. (4). The Hırka-i Şerif mosque adopts a unique planning in the mosques of the Balian family [4]. It is one of the octagonal Ottoman mos-ques with unique planning among Ottoman mos-ques in Istanbul, i.e. Fuat Paşa Mosque built by Keçecizade Fuad Paşa in 1286 AD/1869 AH, Bala Süleyman Ağa mosque built by Süleyman Ağa in 1460 AD./865 AH., Ali Paşa

mosque built by Grand Vizier Ali Pasha in 1289 AH./ 1863 AD. in Mercan, and Orta Camii (Ahmediye) built by the Grand Vizier of Sultan Suleiman and his son-in-law Ibrahim Pasha in the 16th century, renovated in 1331 AH./1912 AD [17]. Consequently, the Hırka-i Şerif mosque is the second Ottoman mosque with an octagonal plan after Orta mosque (Ahmediye); perhaps the aforementioned octagonal mosques had their plan chosen as part of its uniqueness from the mosques of the sultans, which had a square or rectangular plan, as the type of plan does not affect the function of those mosques. The mosque was built of cut limestone, and the mihrab and pulpit was made of dark red marble. The mosque includes 16 windows, eight of which are semicircular, all made from wood-stained glass.

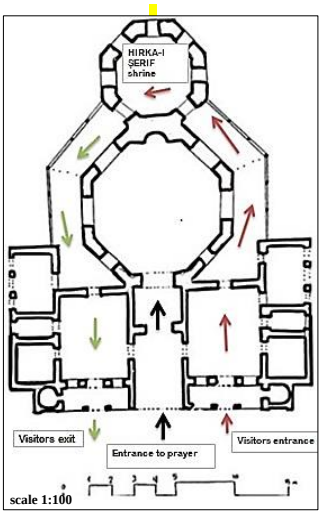


Figure (4) Hirka Sharifa mosque ground floor plan showing the paths of movement of workers and visitors in the building. (*After: Kulcay, 2000*) [18].

2.2. *Impact of function on the layout of the mosque*

The mosques built by the architects of the Balian family are divided into two groups: a northern rectangular group (the lodge) and a southern square or rectangular group. The Hırka-i Şerif mosque is an exception with octagonal planning, fig. (4). Hence, the researcher formulates the statement of the research problem on the reason for selecting this unique planning, arguing that the original function of the mosque was a building constructed for prayers, and the holy mantle chamber was built to preserve the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, there were two side corridors (east and west) to the chamber in order not to affect the function of the mosque. The function greatly affects architectural planning; although the new plan in the architecture of Balinese mosques is new in the architecture of mosques in general, it is not new in its appearance in Islamic shrines and memorial buildings. Rather, the architect might borrow this idea from ancient Islamic structures, such as the Dome of the Rock with its double octagonal plan in the 1st H. century in 72 AH./ 691 AD. [19], fig. (5-a & b). because it was built on top of the Holy Rock, a historical sanctity inherited from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) among Muslims. There-fore, this borrowing is not limited to architecture but the function. Because the purpose of the building resembled visiting the Dome of the Rock, the circular or octagonal plan was the most appropriate to enable flexible and organized movement. Thus, the Hırka-i Şerif mosque had a double octagonal plan [4] influenced by the function of the chamber in front of the southern wall of the mosque fig. (5-c), which could be accessed from two octagonal corridors surrounding the mosque open at both ends to facilitate and organize the visit, without affecting worshipers inside the mosque.

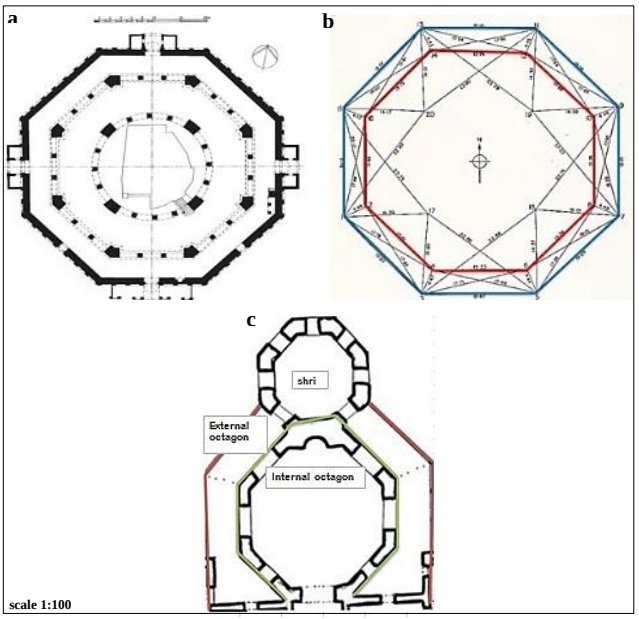
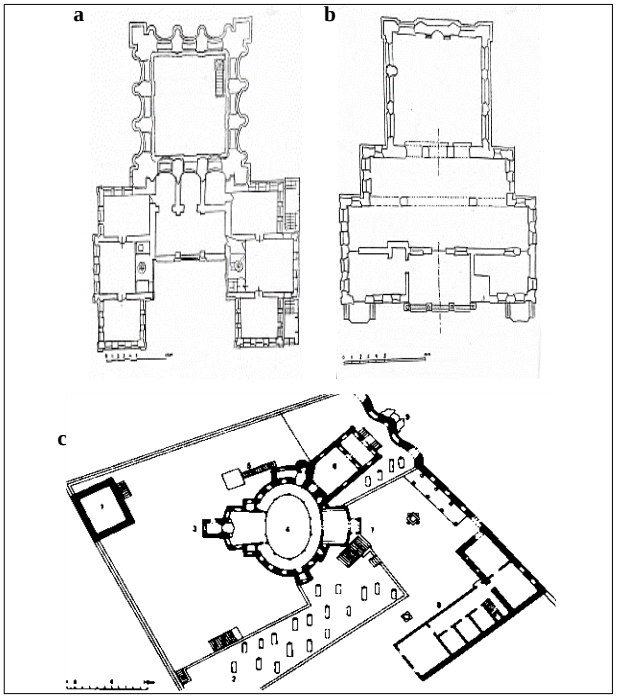


Figure (5) **a.** & **b.** two octagon measurements and a plan of the Dome of the Rock (*After: Creswell, 1969*) [20], **c.** two octagons in the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque plan.

The architect implemented this architectural plan to fulfill the function of the architectural units. He designed the sacred room in the most sacred area of the mosque, i.e., directly in front of the Qiblah, which is the face of Muslims, the focus of their attention, and the most important direction for Muslims. Therefore, the architect may not have found a more suitable place than placing a holy mantle of their Prophet except in the direction of the Qiblah. It could also be commissioned by the patron of art, i.e., the Sultan, because the architect was not a Muslim, and taking the octagonal plan could achieve symmetry with the plan of the mosque. The corridors might be created to achieve organization and ease of movement, not for circumambulation, as some thought. It is worth noting that the architect did not build an octagonal building like the Hırka-i Şerif mosque before, except for the tomb of Sultan Mahmud II (1255 AH./1839 AD.) on Divanyolu St. [21], suggesting that the plan of the mosque was directly influenced by the function of the holy mantle chamber. Furthermore, the mosque was turned into a small college after annexing several architectural units, as the house was constructed for the oldest member of the al-uwaisi family, and barracks were built for the guards of the blessed mantle. The barracks are used today as an elementary school after losing their function. The chamber could be visited in Ramadan, 15-27, which is likely the *laylat alqadr* (Night of Destiny) [22]. Despite its unique planning as one of the octagonal Ottoman mosques, this mosque includes all the architectural elements of Ottoman mosques. It used the same building materials as Ottoman mosques: stone alternating with brick courses, lead panels to cover the ceilings, wooden doors and windows, and marble pulpit and mihrab. It has two minarets matching those of the Nusretiye mosque in the Tophane district in terms of architectural details and dec-

orative elements, which are predominantly Baroque. The levers of the mosque include columns, supports, and walls like other Balian mosques. Moreover, the mosque has four free façades interspersed with arches, including windows and entrances, especially the northern façade. The means of covering the mosque include domes, vaults, and flat roofs. Studying contemporary architectural works reveals that the Hırka-i Şerif mosque was built in 1851, as an example of the eclectic manner of the time [23]. The plans of the Ottoman mosques built by the architects of the Balian family were almost square or rectangular, fig. (6-a & b). Then, the oval plan emerged, such as the Küçük Efendi mosque 1241 AH./1826 AD. in a complex in Istanbul in the Haji Hamza district [21], with a clear effect of the function because this mosque was attributed to the Halvetiliğin Sünbüli sect. Thus, the plan of the mosque served the religious activity of the sect, fig. (6-c) [24]. Finally, the octagonal plan appeared in the Hırka-i Şerif mosque in 1851. Consequently, the plan of the Hırka-i Şerif mosque is unique among the octagonal Ottoman mosques highlyghted earlier [17]. Despite the prevalent octagonal planning in funeral buildings in the Ottoman era and before the construction of the mosque, such as the tomb of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II in 1839, which was built by Sultan Abdülmecid I [25], we could return to the period of the architect Koca Mi'mâr Sinân Âğâ with some octagonal tombs, such as the tomb of Sultan Suleiman the magnificent (1566-1568 AD), fig. (6-d), surrounded by an octagonal canopy [26], which was similar to the arcade of the inner octagon of the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque. Note that the style of polygon tombs was the most common in Ottoman architecture [27], especially in the tombs of sultans, viziers, and grand viziers. Although the octagonal plan was common in funerary buildings and the aforementioned mosques, it appeared in the unique plan of the Rüstempaşa School in 957 AH./1550 AD. [28], in which Sinan copied the plan of the Kabi Ağası School, fig. (6-e) in Amasya in 894 AH./1488 AD. [27]. In the Hırka-i Şerif mosque, this planning is unique among the mosques of Istanbul.



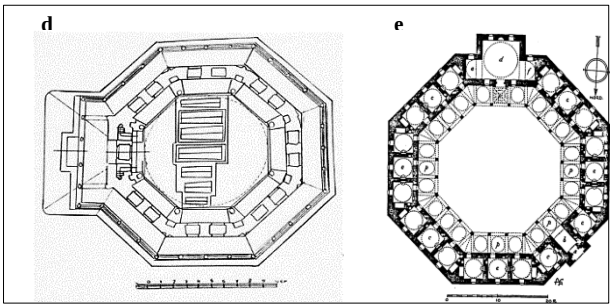


Figure (6) square and rectangular plans; **a.** Ortaköy mosque 1264 AH./1848 AD. **b.** Tesvikiye mosque 1271 AH./855 AD. re-edited (*After: Kulcay, 2000*), **c.** horizontal plan of Küçük Efendi mosque in his complex in Istanbul, **d.** horizontal plan of the tomb of Sultan Suleiman the magnificent in Istanbul (*After:* Ülgen, 1940 [29] & *Alhadad, 2002*) [27], **e.** horizontal plan of Kapı Ağa medresesi in Amasya (*After: Alhaddad, 2002* [27].

1.3. *Attribution of the mantle to the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him*, fig. (7)

According to historical books, Muslims have known only two mantles attributed to the Prophet Muhammad [30,31]. As for this mantle, there is great doubt regarding its attribution to the Prophet Muhammad and its attribution to Usair ibn Jaber[(c)] [32].

Figure (7) The Holy Mantle in a chamber next to the southern wall of the mosque.

3. Results

The Hırka-i Şerif mosque, one Ottoman mosque with an octagonal plan, is unique among the mosques of the Balian family and the Ottoman mosques in general. The artistic and architectural features of the mosque and other works of the architect Garabet Balian demonstrated that it was his work. The architect succeeded in choosing the most appropriate plan to achieve harmony between the building and the function, as well as fostering the sanctity of the mantle by placing it in front of the Qibla wall from the outside and not in a separate building. It was determined that it was octagonal to create a kind of symmetry with the plan of the mosque. Thus, the success of the functional role of the building depends on the accuracy of its planning. Having the octagonal corridor around the mosque was only to facilitate regular visits without affecting the worshippers in the mosque.

4. Discussion

The plan of the mosque is unique. When it was compared with the traditional planning of Balian and Ottoman mosques, it was found to be unique among octagonal Ottoman mosques. This uniqueness could be because of the function of the plan of the mosque, as it has multi-functional

architectural units, such as the holy mantle chamber. It is the only mosque that includes two double-covered corridors, each of which connects to the Hirka-I serif chamber. As for the signature of the architect Abdülhalim Effendi on the building document, it was only to give it legitimacy because he served as the chief of the construction office.

5. Conclusion

In sum, the function of construction is the largest part of its planning, and the success of the functional role of construction depends on the success in the optimal choice of its architectural planning. Moreover, studying Ottoman architectural designs requires a comparative study with Byzantine architectural designs. A comprehensive survey of Byzantine architectural designs is also necessary to understand their origins and the extent of their influence on Islamic architecture, particularly in the realm of octagonal designs. Therefore, it is unacceptable that the octagonal design, a creation of Ottoman architecture, is traced back to Byzantine architecture, as it was present in many Byzantine churches that preceded Ottoman architecture for centuries.

6. Endnotes

(a) Garabet Balian was born in 1800 in Istanbul, worked as an architect in the Ottoman Empire, and built many Islamic and Christian religious structures and other funerary ones. He served as the architect of the palace architect until his death in 1866. The construction of the Mosque was supervised by the architect Abdülhalim Efendi (the last architect to hold the position of Chief Imperial Engineer in 1831).

(b) Concerning the architectural restoration projects of the 19th century in Istanbul, an official report details the re-construction of Atik Ali Paşa Camii and its associated religious and service annexes, particularly those adjacent to the Hırka-i Şerif, overseen by the appointed sheikh responsible for this sacred site. By supreme Sultanic order, it was resolved to demolish and reconstruct the entire interior and exterior structures of the site to preserve its sanctity and create an architectural form worthy of its religious and symbolic status. The decree suggested benevolent Sultanic intentions inspired by charitable and Sharia intentions. It was verbally communicated to the relevant authorities and formally documented in accordance with Ottoman administrative protocols. Accordingly, the attached official layout was submitted to the Sublime Porte and included detailed descriptions of the new structures. The project featured four-sided fortified stone walls, the rectangular mosque with a processed brick dome, the Hırka-i Şerif chamber to the right with a matching architectural style, the Daire-i Hümayun using large-scale brick, and interior and exterior spaces for the supervising sheikh. A delegation from the Imperial Council's Office of Architects, comprising master builders, engineers, and specialists, conducted on-site evaluations and detailed discussions of the architectural descriptions, potential works, materials (e.g., wood, stone, and brick), and cost estimations. Accordingly, detailed ledgers recorded projected costs, totaling 4.251 keses and 46 kuruş for the mosque, the Hırka-i Şerif chamber, and the Daire-i Hümayun. The stone minaret cost 230 keses and 456 kuruş, and the sheikh's quarters cost 1,056 keses and 181 kuruş. In sum, the total cost was 5,538 keses and 183 kuruş. A third detailed layout of the potential structures with a supplemental ledger was prepared and submitted to the Sublime Porte. Following Sultanic approval, the project was registered in the imperial records, and an official copy would be distributed to the supervising officials. The sublime Sultanic decree was issued on 8 Jumada I 1264 AH. Abdülhalim. In this regard I could be concluded that: The document does not mention that Abdülhalim Efendi implemented the project but made the report in his capacity as the Head of the Imperial Construction Office. Furthermore, he prepared an official copy to be delivered to the supervising officials following the Sultanic approval. The delegation dispatched to the site included official construction experts, with no mention of him. Those who conducted inspections and detailed discussions of the architectural descriptions were master builders, engineers, and specialists. Thus, the implementing architect was Garabet Balyn, not Abdülhalim Efendi.

(c) Muslims reported two mantles attributed to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. First, the mantle of Ka'b ibn Zuhair ibn Abi Salma (D. 36 AH./646 AD.) that was passed down by Muslims after him. It was argued that Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan bought it from the heirs of Ka'b. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate, it passed to the Abbasids. When the Mongols invaded the Islamic world and killed the Abbasid Caliph Al-Muqtadir Billah, the Mongols burned the mantle and threw its ash in the Euphrates River. It was also said that when Al-Zahir was pledged allegiance to as Caliph, the Prophet's mantle was on his shoulder. The other was the mantle of the King of Ayla. When he presented the Prophet with a white mule, the Prophet gave him his mantle and provided a safety statement. Historical accounts varied regarding that mantle, but it is most likely that it was the mantle owned by Ibn Uthman after they took over Egypt. They obtained it either because Selim I requested it from the people of Ayla, or they presented it to get closer to the Sultan. The Sultan put it in a box and sent it to Istanbul. Consequently, the Turkish Encyclopedia differed from Arabic sources on the attribution of the holy mantle to the Prophet. It was not mentioned that the Prophet recommended his holy mantle to Uwais al-Qarni. According to Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr (The Major Book of Classes) by Ibn Saad (D.230 AH.), Usair ibn Jaber presented his mantle to Uwais al-Qarni when he missed him in the council of the Muhaddith of Kufa (reporter of the Prophetic hadith) at that time. Ibn Fahd reported that when Omar bin Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, performed Hajj in 23 AH./ 643 AD., he asked about Uwais and asked him to pray for him, but did not mention the mantle. In sum, Uwais al-Qarni only had the mantle of Usair ibn Jaber, in contrast to what was mentioned in the Turkish Encyclopedia.

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