

New Publics, Old Islam

Eyüp in the 1950s

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* begins with Hayri İrdal, the book's narrator, introducing himself with a distinctively urban account of his reading practice:

Those who are acquainted with me know that I don't have a great interest with these reading and writing things. In fact, everything that I've read—if you take out the Jules Verne and Nick Carter stories I read as a child—consists of works like the stories of Tutiname, 1001 Nights, Abu Ali Sina, along with a few history books where I skipped over all the Arabic and Persian words. In the times that followed, just as I glanced at the children's schoolbooks once in a while while unemployed before the founding of our institute, I read the small, serialized sections and articles in the times when I was required to read the newspapers front to back in the cafes of Edirnekapi and Şehzadebaşı where I would sometimes spend my entire day.¹

The passage is, of course, a work of fiction, but it asks us to think about the messy urban geographies of reading. Books, magazines, and newspapers were picked up, dropped, forgotten, perused, borrowed, purloined, and encountered in a variety of ways. They cost different amounts of money, a fact that shaped uneven levels of access to them. Far from existing within hermetic containers, various genres existed in conversation with each other, particularly on the pages of Istanbul's newspapers. Pulp detective novels sat alongside classic Persian stories and history lessons. As for how people read these stories, their modes of reading could have ranged from the careful to the inattentive. Hayri İrdal's opening description of himself thus helps us imagine reading and writing as an urban practice. These threaded forms of print culture wove the city together.

During the 1950s, Istanbul and its print cultures were dramatically reconfigured by a set of interrelated political, economic, and social transformations. These transformations helped to spark anxious debates about everything from clothing

to gender relations to cultural identity to Westernization and beyond. In many cases these debates were also deeply entangled with discussions about Islam. In the process, this new print culture helped to create overlapping publics whose orientation toward Islam could take many forms.

Scholars have provided us with careful accounts of these debates, but their work has largely taken the “nation” as the operative geographical frame. As a result, they have spent less time analyzing how newspapers, books, encyclopedias, and magazines circulated through and were embedded within the material landscapes of the city. Indeed, even as Istanbul was narrated from sites ranging from Eminönü to Beyazit to Şişli to the Golden Horn to Zeytinburnu to Florya to Kadıköy, the many newspapers, pamphlets, magazine articles, and other forms of print culture only rarely provided a map of the city. This suggests that many of Istanbul’s residents—or at least those who wrote, edited, and published these stories—shared a tacit imagined geography of Istanbul that “located various social groups [and religious sites] by emplacing their identities and histories in different areas.”² How and why did these identities and histories come to be placed in the city? How and why did those forms of emplacement change over time?

Eyüp in the 1950s provides a rich site from which to answer those questions. Examining how a range of writers encountered Eyüp during this decade, this chapter shows how Eyüp was enacted as a place of Islam in a moment of flux and transformation. It follows debates between “popular” and “proper” histories; it traces how authors both grappled with vanishing forms of social life and celebrated new projects of urban transformation; and it highlights how Eyüp was described both as a site for others’ practice of Islam and as a crucial site for writers’ sense of “our” Islam. In the process, it makes two linked arguments.

First, it argues that 1950s print culture should be read not simply in reference to “global” or “national” questions but also in relation to Istanbul’s urban geography. In doing so, this chapter engages directly with Gavin Brockett’s argument that during this decade “national identity [in Turkey] came to be incorporated within a preexisting repertoire of popular identities, among the most important of which were those associated with Islam.”³ Despite the richness of Brockett’s argument, he tells us relatively little about the *places* in and in relation to which these popular identities were lived, experienced, and defined. Shifting the frame of analysis from the nation to the lived topographies of Istanbul—and its places of Islam—provides one way to continue that project. Focusing on Eyüp helps us better understand how debates about history, heritage, tradition, social identity, urban transformation, tourism, modernization, consumer culture, and Islam were worked out in new ways.

Second, this chapter argues that a focus on urban print culture provides a crucial supplement to Talal Asad’s formulation of Islam as a “discursive tradition.”⁴ In a variety of ways, authors who wrote about Eyüp during the 1950s did so to link themselves and their readers to the past and (often) orient them toward the future.

However, this project of transmission and circulation did not occur in a vacuum. It was entangled with the messy realities of urban life, printed in newspapers that blurred boundaries and genres and circulated in many ways. By foregrounding the urban contexts in, from, and through which Eyüp's importance as a place of Islam was articulated and transmitted, this chapter opens a more nuanced geographic account of Islam.

URBAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PAST IN 1950S ISTANBUL

The 1950s were a decade of rapid transformation, especially for Istanbul. During this time political shifts, new cultural economies, and social upheaval radically reconfigured what the city looked like. Although many of these dynamics emerged before the 1950s and many would continue well after 1960, "1950s Istanbul" nevertheless provides a useful frame for making sense of these transformations. Before turning to Eyüp and the ways that authors encountered it as a place of Islam, I highlight four especially important dynamics.

The first involved shifting political dynamics in a variety of venues, ranging from national elections to international alliances to local mayoral races. Between Turkey's establishment in 1923 and the 1946 national election, the country had been governed as a one-party state by the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP). In 1946, however, an opposition party—the newly established Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, or DP)—contested the national election. Following the gradual loosening of legal restrictions on the press and political mobilization between 1946 and 1950, the Democrat Party achieved a resounding electoral victory in the May 1950 national election.⁵ Celal Bayar replaced İsmet İnönü as president and Adnan Menderes became prime minister. The Democrat Party would win two more general elections in May 1954 and October 1957 but increasingly faced criticism for economic mismanagement and its authoritarianism. On May 27, 1960, a military coup d'état resulted in the arrest of President Bayar and Prime Minister Menderes and the eventual promulgation of a new constitution.

These political shifts were closely linked to several reforms to the state's governance of Islam. In the run-up to the May 1950 general election, for example, the CHP established two *imam-hatip* schools in January 1949 for the training of authorized religious personnel,⁶ reintroduced religious education into the primary school curriculum, and inaugurated a new Faculty of Theology at Ankara University.⁷ In March 1950, the government also officially opened to the public a small number of tombs, ending twenty-five years of closure.⁸ Following their May 1950 electoral victory, the DP continued and expanded these changes. In June 1950, for example, the language of the call to prayer (*ezan*) was officially changed back to Arabic from Turkish.⁹ The DP also benefited from the support of religious networks like those of Said Nursi; those who supported the May 1960 coup cited this relationship and others like it as justification for the military intervention.

These domestic dynamics played out in relation to a second, linked dynamic: a new geopolitical landscape. With the end of World War II, the United States moved quickly to develop new economic and military alliances to combat the perceived threat of the Soviet Union. Turkey's entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its participation in the Marshall Plan helped to expand projects of "Westernization" (*batılılaşma*) and transformed the country's consumer landscapes.¹⁰ Crucially, these projects of Westernization were often linked to a particular kind of "modernization" embodied above all as "hotels and highways."¹¹

The 1950s were a decade in which Turkishness and Westernization were woven together in new ways, but they were also one in which the distinction between "Turks" and "Greeks" became much more sharply drawn. As with so many divisions, this distinction had a complicated history. In 1924 a population exchange between Turkey and Greece had resulted in the deportation of Greeks from Anatolia; however, a sizable community of Greeks remained in Istanbul. In September 1955 and during debates over the future of Cyprus, pogroms targeted Istanbul's Greek population and helped to spur that community's exodus from the city.¹²

Third, the decade was also characterized by a rapidly changing social landscape. In quantitative terms, Istanbul's population grew by roughly 8 percent between 1945 and 1950. Over the next five years, it grew by a further 30 percent.¹³ The overwhelming majority of these migrants arrived from rural Anatolia, although migration from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and other Balkan states was also important. The massive expansion of the city's population generated new debates and anxieties about housing, infrastructure, and urban ways of life.¹⁴ As noted above, Istanbul also became increasingly "Turkish," especially following the 1955 pogrom that targeted the city's Greek-speaking population.¹⁵

Yet beyond these numbers, this decade also marked a generational shift. Eyüp was a special object of interest for a generation of writers born during the Ottoman Empire but were ambivalent observers of a rapidly changing city. Most of the writers discussed in this chapter were born in the two decades between 1890 and 1910, meaning that even the youngest were adolescents when the Republic was founded in 1923. They learned to read and write using the Ottoman script and would have been teenagers when that script was replaced with a modified Latin script.¹⁶ Similarly, they would have witnessed a city and country reshaped by the economic privations and political expulsions of the 1930s. By the time that social mores, migration, and urban change were reshaping Istanbul and the country beyond in the 1950s, most of these writers would have been between thirty-eight and (in the case of Sermet Muhtar Alus) sixty-three years of age. While many of these writers wrote with one eye on the international context for their work, their lives were also embedded in Istanbul's social topographies.¹⁷ This embeddedness impacted how they came to write about Eyüp and Islam, precisely because the place, its people, and its religious significance were so tightly woven together.

The final dynamic that defined the 1950s was a new cultural economy. Turkey's participation in the Marshall Plan and the decade's economic liberalization greatly

expanded the availability of imported consumer goods. American blue jeans, German toys, and other foreign products thus came to be part of a particular social lifestyle. Even for those who were unable to buy these new goods, their presence was still visible in magazines and newspapers. Both as material objects and objects of desire, these new consumer goods came to circulate in complicated ways.

Alongside those consumer goods, the newspaper market expanded on a massive scale. By one measure, the quantity of newsprint produced in Turkey tripled between 1945 and 1955.¹⁸ As the newspaper market expanded metropolitan newspapers competed for readers and advertising dollars. Innovations in color, the use of photographs and cartoons, and the commissioning of serialized romances, mysteries, historical novels, and memoirs all became techniques for newspapers to attract greater readership.¹⁹ Beyond newspapers, two new institutions were also established in the 1950s: the Association of the Conquest (Fetih Derneği, originally established in 1950)²⁰ and the Istanbul Institute (İstanbul Enstitüsü, established ca. 1955). Through their activities and their publications, these new actors helped to further expand the writing about Istanbul and Islam.²¹

The political, the social, and the cultural came together most visibly in the explosion of “public histories” written during this decade. The founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 had been marked by an intentional historiographical project that distanced the new nation from its immediate imperial predecessor. New legal codes, forms of dress, professional institutions, political vocabularies, spatial practices, and urban planning helped to signal a modern country defined in opposition to the Ottoman past. Beginning in the 1940s, however, and especially as the five-hundredth anniversary of the 1453 conquest of Constantinople approached, new debates erupted over how the Ottoman past should be commemorated in a modern Istanbul.²² Although engagements with the Ottoman past took many forms in 1950s Istanbul, one especially visible vision of the Ottoman past overlapped with an ethnically pure and triumphalist version of Turkish nationalism.²³

Even beyond 1453, the past emerged as a new site of interest in the public culture of the 1950s. Writers penned regular columns in major newspapers with titles like “According to History,” “A Page from the Calendar,” “Pages from History,” and “Historical Topics.” Alongside these daily newspapers, a range of popular history magazines were also published during this decade. These included *Illustrated History Journal*, *The Treasury of History*, *The World of History*, and *Life Illustrated*.²⁴ Beyond history-specific journals, there were also publications from a wide variety of political and cultural backgrounds, including *Yedigün* (which closed in 1951),²⁵ *Akbaba* (published from 1922 to 1977, with breaks in 1930–31 and 1950–51),²⁶ and *Büyük Doğu* (edited by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and variously published and banned between 1943 and 1978).²⁷

Another important venue was the magazine published by the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club, a bilingual journal in Turkish and French that addressed a

wealthy transnational audience who had begun to look at the country through the automobile.²⁸ In the background were also exceptional projects like Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *Istanbul Encyclopedia*, first published in 1944, which set out to document the entire city in glorious detail.²⁹ In short, this was a decade in which writers gained the ability to address their audiences in a new way. This novelty included not simply new columns and publications but also new ways that discussions of religion were embedded within a much larger and messier world.

TALE OR HISTORY? TELLING POPULAR STORIES

In April 1950 the top story in the Istanbul press was the upcoming national election—the first in which the incumbent Republican People's Party and the Democrat Party would contest the election on relatively even terms. Coverage of the campaign dominated the headlines, with speeches, party lists, accusations, and intrigues all competing for space on the front page. Beyond the election newspapers also brought their readers into a wider world: parliamentary elections in England, a new government cabinet in Greece, fraught diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey.

But even amidst these national and international stories, Istanbul itself was also an object of attention. The daily press reported regularly on urban development projects, fires, the city's changing cultural life, and more. To compete in an expanding market, newspapers also commissioned exclusive serials to attract a regular readership. Several of Istanbul's best-known tombs had recently been reopened, so perhaps a customer stopping by a newsstand on the evening of April 8 may have noticed an announcement in bold letters across the top of the evening newspaper *Son Saat* (*Final Hour*):

Eyub Sultan. Ziya Şakir has prepared it for you. *Son Saat* once more presents a new work to its readers. EYUB SULTAN. Among the best religious works that you'll read. The best work that Ziya Şakir, benefiting from seventy-three sources, has written.³⁰

Over the next two months Şakir would take his readers on a journey across time and place, bringing them from the Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina to the messy industrial present of Istanbul's Golden Horn. Although Eyüp had been an occasional object of interest for writers and journalists during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, Şakir's serial marked one of the first instances in which Eyüp was turned into a sustained topic for a mass-market readership.

Born in 1883, Ziya Şakir (Soku) was a well-known writer who had been publishing regular columns for newspapers like *Son Posta*, *Tan*, *İkdam*, and *Vatan* since the late 1920s.³¹ Although he published on a wide variety of topics, his histories almost always took the form of historical novels, light on archival documents and instead filled with anecdote, narrative, and character.³² Şakir's work thus fit squarely within the genre of popular histories that exploded during the 1950s.

Şakir's column typically ran on page four, which was the home for most of *Son Saat*'s regular serials. His "Eyüp Sultan" thus sat alongside an eclectic mix of topics. There was a serial about Doğan Bey, the Hero of Niğbolu, which told the story of the 1396 Battle of Nicopolis and the Ottoman defeat of an allied Christian army. One column over there was the long-running serial *From the Victory in Izmir to the Assassination in Izmir*. As its title suggests, it told a story that started in September 1922, when forces led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) captured Izmir from Greek forces, and ended in June 1926, when an assassination plot targeting Mustafa Kemal resulted in a clampdown on opposition movements in Turkey.³³ Finally, and immediately adjacent to Ziya Şakir's column, there was *Poisonous Smile*, Zahir Törömküney's novel of intrigue and love. In short, Şakir's column about Eyüp Sultan existed in relation to a set of histories and geographies and topographies.

Şakir's serial about Eyüp Sultan began not with a map of Istanbul nor even a visit to Eyüp but with a novelistic retelling of the story of the Prophet's flight from Mecca. It began by setting the scene: "The weather was scorching hot. Abu Bakr and his daughters were sitting on the low sofas in their home, looking out the window." Şakir's serial drew upon standard tropes: there was the Prophet hiding in a cave to avoid the forces of Abu Jahl, his encounter with Zübeyr, his establishment of a small masjīd in Quba, and his eventual arrival in Medina. Şakir then brought Halid bin Zeyd into the story: not wishing to disappoint any of the residents of Medina who wished to host him, the Prophet instead left the choice to his camel, who eventually knelt in front of the home of Halid bin Zeyd.

At least in its broad contours, this story of the Prophet Muhammad's life may have been familiar to the readers of *Son Saat*, but, with its focus on Halid bin Zeyd, the account was novel enough to encourage readers to buy the paper every day. Şakir's language throughout the serial was simple, accessible, and largely consistent with his reputation as a writer of popular histories. As his readers followed along, Şakir listed the many qualities that made Halid bin Zeyd exceptional. Although "not rich," Halid bin Zeyd "possessed a generous heart," spent all his time in the service of the Prophet, and earned the name Host of the Messenger (Mihmandar-ı Resul) on account of the great hospitality he showed the Prophet.³⁴

Although Şakir's serial drew on the contemporary genre of the newspaper serial, his story also drew on a second genre: popular stories about the prophets (*kıss-ı enbiya*). This genre, as Brett Wilson has noted, "played a far greater role in the teaching of the Qur'an and the shaping of popular understandings of Islam than Qur'anic translations or commentaries."³⁵ His serial thus offers one example of how new articulations and understandings of Islam came to circulate during the decade.

Yet Şakir's serial was also a story about place. After relating various stories about the Prophet Muhammad, Halid bin Zeyd's virtues, the importance of Halid bin Zeyd to the Byzantines, and his grave's miraculous rediscovery, Şakir turned to Eyüp itself. He described, for example, how visitors used to crowd the mosque

on the first Friday of every *hijri* month: “Those who wanted to realize their wishes would give things like handkerchiefs, scarves, ties, and shirts to the müezzın, who would recite the *salâ* from the minaret. When these müezzın would begin the *salâ*, waving these things in their hands, this great crowd would suddenly begin moving.”³⁶ Everyone, he continued, would ask for help (*istimdat*) from the spirit (*ruhaniyet*) of Halid bin Zeyd. Şakir’s serial provides one portrait of a devotional practice channeled through material objects and enabled by the mosque staff themselves. Today such practices have been largely eliminated following a coordinated campaign against “superstitious” practices.³⁷

Indeed, Şakir’s Eyüp was one in which Islam was woven into a vision of cultural authenticity. As he wrote, “The village that we today call Eyüp Sultan used to be called during those times the Town of Ebâ Eyyüp [Belde-i Ebâ Eyyüp] [*sic*]. In this way a sort of privilege was granted there. . . . There is no doubt that it benefited from his blessed spirit.”³⁸ On account of that spirit, Eyüp was a place that was able to preserve its traditions and sense of identity despite the far-reaching changes that reshaped its contexts. For example, even as the Ottoman Empire transformed during the Tanzimat and Western fashions and modes of living became more fashionable, the residents of Eyüp (Eyüplüler) “preserved their religious and national ancestry [*dini ve milli asaletleri*],” “showed respect and deference in the spiritual presence of Hz. Halid,” and “gave no place to pleasures and debauchery [*zevk ve sefahatler*] that morals and the sharia would not approve.”³⁹

When Şakir’s serial was republished as a book in the late 1950s, he expanded on his argument about Eyüp’s capacity to preserve its ancestry: “The people of Eyüp changed nothing, from the clothing that they’d been used to for centuries to their simplest manners and customs” and “did not rush to accept the requirements [*icaplar*] of the Tanzimat.”⁴⁰ In Şakir’s account, this essential quality of Eyüp had been lost. Ending his column by describing Eyüp as it appeared in the 1950s, he mourned its transformation into what he called an “exclusively workers’ town” (*münhasıran işçi beldesi*). This mode of comparing Eyüp’s idealized past to its fallen present would emerge as a potent rhetorical trope for those who took Eyüp as their object.

Şakir’s novelized history of Eyüp Sultan, however, drew critiques from writers such as Haluk Şehsuvaroğlu, who insisted on a sharp distinction between “History” (*Tarih*) and “Tales” (*Masal*). Şehsuvaroğlu’s career as a writer, like those of many of his peers, overlapped with several other activities, including a successful effort to establish the Naval Museum (Deniz Müzesi) and an honorary position at the Topkapı Palace Museum.⁴¹ He had begun writing public history columns in the late 1940s for the daily newspaper *Akşam*, but in the early 1950s had transitioned to writing for the leading paper, *Cumhuriyet*. In 1953 he had helped to compile a lavishly illustrated newspaper spread entitled “Istanbul through the Centuries” (“Asırlar Boyunca İstanbul”).⁴² In a column that took its title from the distinction between History and Tales, Şehsuvaroğlu took aim at those “historical novels that

have recently been in great demand” because their “writers frequently stray from historical facts and change the truth of events as much as possible.”⁴³

To write more “historical” work, Şehsuvaroğlu focused on documentary sources: archives, mosque inscriptions, Divan poetry, and Evliya Çelebi above all. Even though he generally avoided commenting on contemporary Istanbul, his writing was often shaped by an implicit comparison. For example, in an article about the mansions (*yalılar*) that had once lined the shores of the Golden Horn, Şehsuvaroğlu noted that “once, Eyüp’s tombs and cemeteries had been more orderly [*muntazam*] and its neighborhoods and market more well tended [*bakımlı*].”⁴⁴ For him, Eyüp functioned as a place of the past. It was valuable precisely because it seemed to be unchanged while surrounded by a rapidly changing city. This focus on Eyüp was also consistent with a broader complaint about the lack of attention paid to history and especially the Republic’s Ottoman inheritance.⁴⁵

Even though Şehsuvaroğlu typically focused on buildings and other inanimate objects, there were exceptions to this rule. A March 1957 column opened with a rueful observation about the relative lack of interest in the lives of those Istanbul residents who had been witness to a century’s worth of urban change: “What a shame that these have not yet been recorded, only listened to by those with a curiosity or interest in the old. Where, in fact, in a country where the social history has not been written, the importance of these memories is obvious.”⁴⁶ In the 1950s discussions were emerging not only about Eyüp and Islam, but also about the ways that the “past” should be defined and located in specific places.

LOST OR RESTORED? EYÜP AS A PLACE IN BETWEEN

Eyüp’s material and social landscapes, however, were rapidly shifting over the course of the 1950s. For many, the landscape’s disappearance provoked broader consideration of changing social mores, relationships, and geographies. Consider Sermet Muhtar Alus’s essay in *The Treasure of History (Tarih Hazinesi)*, published in December 1951. Born in 1887, Alus had made his living as a writer by cataloging a city of vanishing things.⁴⁷ He began his essay by identifying the three things that made Eyüp famous: “Its kebabs, its cream, and its toys.” He proceeded to describe in vivid detail the smells, shapes, textures, and sounds of these objects that once defined Eyüp.

But, in a rhetorical move that became typical for those who wrote about Eyüp, Alus transitioned to a more recent visit that took place after some years away. He began,

For perhaps ten years I hadn’t traveled in that direction, [and] I was shocked [*parmağım ağzımda kaldı*]. In every direction, radios, gramophones, not a trace of the kebab sellers, the cream sellers, the toy makers. Only on one store’s wall, a few drums, tambourines, and mortars; in the display case, celluloid babies and balls; soldiers of lead, cars and buses of tin. On all of them, a “Made in Germany” stamp.⁴⁸

The passage condensed a set of tangible material changes embedded into several short blocks in the center of Eyüp. These changes were at once material (from clay, wood, and paper to celluloid and tin), social (because both the shopkeepers and the customers were different), and geopolitical (the “Made in Germany” stamp).

Suggestively, however, Alus’s essay about the special qualities of Eyüp had very little to say about the markers of official Islam. Even when Alus entered the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan itself, his attention focused on the social practices woven through the mosque: “There’s no mark of the funerals, of the beggars. The pigeons beside the holy tomb have declined in numbers. Of the women who sold corn by the dish and the slumbering storks, only one caught my eye. Its feathers fallen out, its flock flown, even its clattering chatter gone. Looking about, sad and depressed, on a single leg.”⁴⁹ Alus’s essay pointed to the mosque’s embeddedness in a set of urban relations that subverted expectations about a purely “religious” experience in Eyüp. Begging in Eyüp was an especially clear example of this. When people would visit the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan to pray for something (for example, good health, a new job, or improved fortunes), they would often leave an offering in return, ranging from distributing charity to beggars to offering food to other visitors to paying for the sacrifice of an animal. This reciprocal relationship between prayer and charity helped to create a situation in which begging was institutionalized in Eyüp.⁵⁰ While we can’t know precisely why the institution disappeared, it is likely that the tomb’s closure and a decrease in the number of visitors led to the disappearance of begging in the way that Alus remembered. This period was also one in which reformers, citizens, and state authorities debated the scale and site for charity and philanthropy.⁵¹

As for the birds of Eyüp Sultan, scholars have highlighted the central role afforded to birds in Ottoman mosques.⁵² Although Alus’s essay does not address this topic, one might explore the ecologies of faith once organized through the mosque and its environs: the pilgrims scattering birdseed, the pigeons and storks that once nested in the trees, birdhouses, and graveyards, and the “affective and intellectual possibilities of connecting to the world not as God’s deputies . . . but as animals once again in kinship.”⁵³ There are few clues as to why the birds disappeared, although it may have been related to ecological changes linked to Istanbul’s industrialization and urbanization. The stork that Alus mentions was a frequent character in contemporary accounts and photographs of Eyüp Sultan.⁵⁴ Whatever the case, the departure of both Eyüp’s beggars and its birds speaks to the changing nature of the relationships and networks within which the mosque was embedded.

Alus’s perspective on Eyüp’s transformations was clear. He closed his essay by describing his return to the ferry station, where he would have taken a small *vapur* to return to Istanbul’s busier districts. Near the station, he wrote, he overheard a conversation between a group of young men. They spoke of “working out, wrestling, the clubs along the Golden Horn,” while one “went on about the ball that would be given that night in Fener, whistling its tangos.” Alus’s essay provides one

fine-grained observation of a changing Eyüp in the early 1950s, but it also demonstrates how writers used Eyüp as a place from which to tell stories about the ruptures, tensions, and incongruous encounters that had come to define Istanbul.

The sense of incongruity was similarly palpable in an essay by the writer and newspaper columnist Nahid Sırrı Örik that was published in May 1954 in *The Majestic East* (*Büyük Doğu*).⁵⁵ Born in 1895, just a few years after Alus, Örik was similarly part of a generation that had lived through a set of traumatic urban transformations. And, like Alus, Örik also began his essay with an arrival story.

Alighting from the ferry and walking the main street in the direction of the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, Örik remarked on the Ottoman-era gravestones pushed to one side to make room for new roads through Eyüp. "Shouldn't we be protecting with great care," he mused, "Eyüp's tens of thousands of old graves and countless tombs?" Passing through the courtyard of the mosque with barely a mention of the tomb itself, Örik moved inland, toward the then outer district of Taşlıtarla.

His attention was drawn once more to the encounter between the old and the new. Negotiating his way along the crowded road, he focused on the buildings on either side: "A few beautiful old houses and quite a number of new apartment buildings, though one or two already in need of repair . . . So-called modern style [*güya modern*] apartment buildings that spoil Eyüp's spiritual view [*ruhanî manzara*]." Finally, he arrived at a bookstore run by an old acquaintance: "When, seeing the quantity and variety of French cinema and fashion magazines in the display window, I expressed my surprise, [the bookshop owner] said that was what he sold the most. In this old and impoverished Istanbul district, what do these young women buying these French, English, and German cinema and fashion magazines and returning to their ruined houses learn from them?"⁵⁶ As he returned to the ferry, Örik broadened his lens: "Just as everything else has taken flight and gone, Eyüp's meaning—along with that of old Istanbul—has also taken flight and gone . . . [i]n its place nothing more than a few traces and blotches."⁵⁷

For both Alus and Örik, Eyüp served two linked functions. First, it was a place of memory. Both men experienced their trip in the 1950s against the backdrop of their previous visits. The incongruity they perceived was thus both geographical (about the "foreign" not fitting in Eyüp) and temporal (involving the "now" and the "then"). More broadly, Eyüp also served as a place where opposites rubbed up against each other: a whistled tango on a dark street down the road from the mosque; imported toys on a street named for the toys once made there; cinema and fashion magazines read in aging houses. Strikingly, however, their essays had little to say about what we might call "official" Islam. There was no mention of the Prophet Muhammad, hadith, or even Halid bin Zeyd. Their work thus suggests a way of thinking about Islam that was woven into the fabric of everyday life and into a certain urban sociability.

Yet if some writers traced the vanishing of Eyüp's "true" character during the 1950s, other writers looked at the same landscape and told a different story. This

was especially true in 1958 and 1959, as two linked urban projects impacted Eyüp. The first was the urban development spearheaded by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. New boulevards were an especially important part of these “Menderes Operations.”⁵⁸ In addition to completely transforming how traffic flowed through the city, these boulevards often created new squares in front of the city’s major mosques. The second project was the restoration of many Ottoman-era mosques around Turkey, but particularly in Istanbul.⁵⁹ Directed by the General Directorate of Foundations, these restoration projects were often folded into broader debates about the Ottoman past throughout the 1950s.⁶⁰

A two-page spread published in 1958 in *Life* (Hayat) magazine provided one account of how the Menderes Operations and restoration came together in Eyüp.⁶¹ Framed as a narrative of decline and recovery, the article began with nostalgic vision of the past: “Eyüp was once one of Turkey’s most developed places [*en mamur yerlerinden*].” However, “with time . . . Eyüp was forgotten” and the mosque’s surroundings filled in with wooden shacks (*salaş*) and factories. As a result, “Eyüp, with its factories that spewed smoke and smell, became a work site; with its ruined broken historic works, only a pilgrimage destination. . . . It became a place [*mekanı*] of poor, destitute [*çilekeş*] people.”

The author then drew a striking parallel between a devotional practice engaged in by young girls and those down on their luck who would visit Eyüp and the built environment itself: “Some numbers of people have prayed for Eyüp’s good fortune and left the faucets open [as young women would do to pray for an auspicious marriage] so that the development project sweeping the entire country has also included Eyüp. . . . The surroundings of the Eyüp Mosque [*sic*] and its tomb [*türbe*] have been opened.”⁶² This “opening” had a profound impact on the center of Eyüp. A new boulevard linked the Edirne Highway on the ridge above with the network of roads running along the shore of the Golden Horn. In the process, the boulevard’s construction led to the destruction of the market immediately in front of the mosque and the reconfiguration of sight lines and transportation networks through the newly built square.

From the point of view of this article—one addressed to the middle-class readers of *Life* who likely lived outside the district—the key goal was rescuing Eyüp from its ostensible disrepair and transforming it into a “district of monuments” (*abideler semti*) that suited its “sanctity” (*kudsiyet*). Making a place for these monuments thus required the creation of new architectural voids.⁶³ It also required restoration of the buildings themselves, above all the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, whose restoration was completed in March 1959.⁶⁴ A news story in *Life*, for example, celebrated the event by including photos of both the celebration (men eating dates to break their fast during Ramadan) and the building itself (especially the mosque’s repainted central dome).⁶⁵ Haluk Şehsuvaroğlu also mentioned the event in his regular column “Tarihi Bahisler” (Historical Topics).⁶⁶ In keeping with his attitude toward “history,” his column was a detailed account of facts pertaining

to the building, based on the mosque inscriptions (*kitabe*) and documents in the Topkapı Archives. He closed by situating the mosque and district in relation to the contemporary Menderes Operations.

“Eyüp,” he wrote, “received priority consideration [*ayrıca ele alınmış*] during the development operations [*imar hareketleri*].” However, he insisted that these development operations would not make Eyüp “modern” like other parts of the city. “It is without doubt that Eyüp’s mystic atmosphere [*mistik hava*] will not be dispersed, and . . . especially that the rococo and Empire traces, mementos of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, will not be destroyed.” If the Menderes Operations aimed to make other parts of Istanbul “modern,” Şehsuvaroğlu declared that the opposite was true in Eyüp: “Eyüp finds itself made eternal in its spiritual atmosphere [*ruhani havası*].”

The columnist Refi Cevat Ulunay also devoted one of his *Milliyet* columns to the mosque’s restoration.⁶⁷ His column was more explicitly political. Laud-ing the government and especially the prime minister, Ulunay wrote, “The effort that they have shown concerning the rescuing of religious buildings, monuments, and tombs from ruin requires [*mucib olmuştur*] the thanks of all Muslims.” After describing the mosque’s restoration in glowing terms, he ended by quoting a brief conversation with Vasfi Egelı, the project’s lead architect. Vasfi Bey, he said, deflected any praise for the building’s success, saying, “I’m nothing other than a worthless servant [*naçiz hâdim*].”

Although one might assume that urban development projects and restoration projects belong to different worlds, transforming Eyüp into a “district of monuments” was in fact entirely consistent with the project of making a modern city.⁶⁸ What was at stake in this project was establishing clear boundaries between the “new” and the “old.” Yet as Vasfi Egelı’s comment makes clear, this project of development was also not simply a “secular” project but involved complicated feelings of obligation and responsibility to this site of Islam. The journalist Salim Bayar, ending a twelve-part report on Eyüp’s redevelopment in the paper *Tercüman*, summed up this hope: “And this tomb [of Eyüp Sultan] will be a source of Islamic comfort [*İslamın bir teselli kaynağı*] until eternity.”⁶⁹

THEIRS OR OURS? PUBLICS OF ISLAM

For writers like Şehsuvaroğlu, Alus, and Örik, Eyüp was a place connected to their sense of self. Narrating Eyüp became a way to stage a particular authorial persona with which the audience was encouraged to identify. Yet Eyüp could also be presented not as a place of “us” but as a place of the “other,” assumed to be distant from the modernizing worlds of Istanbul. A two-page spread published in 1954 in *Life Illustrated* (*Resimli Hayat*) shows how Eyüp was presented to a middle-class audience that (likely) did not live in Eyüp. It also asks us to consider how Eyüp, Islam, and religious practice came to be woven into the changing urbanity of 1950s

Istanbul. The juxtaposition of text and image in the article, entitled “A Friday in Eyüpsultan,” is notable both for what it showed and what it left out.⁷⁰

The story began with a description of the prayer window (*hacet penceresi*) that looks in from the mosque’s inner courtyard onto the tomb itself. The paired photograph showed several women clustered close to the window itself; behind them stood a small boy dressed for his circumcision (*sünnet*) and a young man dressed in uniform. The accompanying text emphasized the crowds that gather at this place and the variety of dress: “The clothing is of all types. . . . Those wearing *çarşaf*, coats, long-sleeved shirts, short-sleeved, no-sleeved, there are even those wearing blue jeans [*blu cin’li*].”⁷¹ Left unspoken was the gendered nature of this observation: all were items of clothing associated with women.

From there the article highlighted several other practices and objects that defined the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. These included the collecting of forty-one pieces of corn (another practice considered something that women engage in), a brief description of the famous stork Hacı Baba who once lived on the grounds of the mosque, and the “Pigeons’ Hilton” built to house the pigeons. The second page added more curiosities for the readers of *Life Illustrated*: a description of a particular tomb linked to young boys’ circumcision and the desire for children, identified only as one of the “greats” (*büyükler*); the auntie (*teyze*) selling prayer beads (*tesbih*) to women; the vendor trying to pass off a guinea pig as a rabbit; and the queue waiting to look through the stereoscope at Mecca, Medina, the Kaaba, the capital of America, the beaches of Miami. For five *kuruş*, the author noted, the traveling *sinemacı* would show seven poses. There were—of course—several *çarşaf* women waiting around, along with lots of children. “The *sinemacı* knows which pictures he’s going to show based on the customer’s clothing.”⁷² The tone of the article was mocking. A Friday in Eyüp seemed to be filled with charlatans and cheap cons.

Missing, of course, was the central act of Friday in Eyüp: the Friday prayers. In fact, this two-page spread said nothing about the “orthodox” forms of Islam that one might expect to find in Eyüp. Its vision and description of religion were affectionate but also highlighted “superstitious” behaviors. In the process, the article positioned religion not as a vital and ongoing part of urban life but as a sort of remnant, distant in time and place from the lives of the author and their readership.

In contrast, there were a number of texts in the 1950s that sought to instruct their readers in how to visit Eyüp “correctly.” One of the most extensive was Hacı Cemal Ögüt’s *The Famous Eyyûb Sultan*, but a small pamphlet prepared in 1958 provides another example. Its front cover showed a photo of the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan taken from the adjacent square. Ironically, the photo could not have been taken only a few years previous, as the photo was taken from the spot where the market complex would have stood.

The title of the pamphlet, printed on the back cover, was *The History and Manner of Visiting Hz. Halid* (*Hazreti Halid’in Adabı Ziyareti ve Tarihi*). It was published by a man identified only as M. Akif Bencoşar, a bookseller (*kitapçı*) whose address

was listed as the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan itself. A note on the pamphlet's back cover indicated that the pamphlet was itself a selection from an older book, *The Key of Visitation and Its Manners* (*Müftahı Ziyaret ve Adabı*).⁷³ The end of the pamphlet gives the date of the text as January 26, 1921 (16 Cemaziülevvel 1339), which helps to explain the relatively stilted style of the pamphlet's language, which is rich in Persian and Arabic cognates and markedly different than Şakir's far more readable serial. The pamphlet's existence also speaks to the ongoing work of transmission, the acts of copying and recopying through which understandings and practices of Islam were communicated across time and place.

Those who purchased the short pamphlet during their visit would have found three linked sections. The first provided a brief history of both Halid bin Zeyd and the mosque in which the pamphlet's readers found themselves. It stressed Halid bin Zeyd's excellence, citing the well-known story of the Prophet Muhammad's camel choosing the house of Halid bin Zeyd in Medina, and his position as a beloved Companion of the Prophet. It included a version of Halid bin Zeyd's death during the siege of Constantinople, his burial under a stone inscribed "This is the tomb of Ebu Eyüp" (*Hâzâ kabri Ebi Eyüb*), the destruction of his tombs by the Greeks (*Rumlar, kabri şerifi bozmuşlar*), their rebuilding of the tomb, and its later destruction. Its history closed with a brief story of the discovery of Halid bin Zeyd's tomb by Shaykh Akşemseddin and the endowment and later embellishment of the mosque by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror and his successors.

The pamphlet then transitioned to a description of how the people of Istanbul would visit Eyüp. It had become, the pamphlet wrote, a tradition of "the righteous of Istanbul's people" (*İstanbul ahalisinin sulehası*) to visit the tomb before engaging in something "auspicious" (*hayırlı*), before enrolling their children in school or celebrating their circumcision, upon finishing a complete reading of the Qur'an (*Hatmi Şerif*), or upon memorizing it. "There are those," it continued, "who, on becoming old and infirm, lament that 'This year I was not able to visit.'"⁷⁴ The pamphlet stressed the experience of those who had been alcoholics, addicted to gambling, or womanizers (*sarhoşluk, kumarbazlık, hovardalık*) and—upon visiting this "blessed station" (*mübarek makam*) and repenting and praying to God for forgiveness—had been redeemed.⁷⁵

Finally, the pamphlet presented a series of justifications for why visiting the tomb was religiously appropriate. Its references were eclectic, including Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (referred to as Şazeli Hazretleri) and Abū l-Mawāhib al-Shādhilī (referred to as Şeyh Ebülmevâhib), perhaps indicating that the pamphlet's author was associated with the Shadhiliyya Sufi order.⁷⁶ Yet the pamphlet continued by citing a wide range of other religious authorities.⁷⁷ The seemingly eclectic nature of the citations suggests that the pamphlet's author was likely a part of an intellectual and religious milieu organized around Sufi orders, but those knowledges circulated between many kinds of people and many kinds of authority. The pamphlet's author ended with a brief note about how one ought to visit the

tomb: "Pay attention to the friend that you come with; if you want to give charity, you can, but you can also refrain. In a crowd of visitors, don't rush, be patient and respectful. Let's remember with charitable prayers all our religious brethren who work to protect this blessed place."⁷⁸

Another example of a text addressing its readers as fellow Muslims was Süheyl Ünver's short book *The Tombs of the Companions in Istanbul*.⁷⁹ Because of the number of Companions buried there or in adjacent districts, Eyüp was a key place in Ünver's guide. Like the pamphlet's author, Ünver sought to transform how his readers would encounter these tombs. He argued that developing this awareness should be part of the five-hundredth anniversary celebrations. This was because the Companions and holy warriors (*Sahabe ve mücahitler*) had played an important role in the project of making Istanbul both Turkish and a Muslim city (*millileştirme ve Müslümanlaştırma*).⁸⁰ Evaluating the state of these tombs after nearly thirty years of closure, he drew a link between the (Muslim) spiritual life of Istanbul's residents and the actual administration of the city: "Just as people cannot live without spirituality [*mâneviyatsız*], cities cannot endure nor be administered without history and spirituality."⁸¹

In contrast to the gently mocking tone of the spread in *Life Illustrated*, books like Hacı Cemal Ögüt's *The Famous Eyyûb Sultan* and Süheyl Ünver's *The Tombs of the Companions in Istanbul* and pamphlets like *The Key of Visitation and Its Manners* were deeply concerned with religious instruction. In various ways, these texts and those like them sought to "instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice."⁸² In doing so, readers were asked to "relate conceptually to a past . . . and a future . . . through a present."⁸³ Rich as Talal Asad's framework is, however, these texts and the broader production of public culture in 1950s Istanbul point the way toward two crucial conceptual insights.

First, these texts were not just concerned with instructing their audiences about proper practice; they were focused on linking those practices to a particular *place*. In other words, discursive traditions are always embedded in and entangled with the messiness of the world. This is not to reduce the "religious" to merely an effect of context; rather, it requires us to think about the complicated ways that writers sought to connect themselves to their audiences and the world around them. This work of connection involved citation practices, the transmission of hadith, the realities of book printing and distribution, the forgetfulness or attention with which people carried these books through the city, and more.

Second, and following on that point, the work of transmission was and remains a material practice, reliant on the capacity of texts to be transcribed, circulated, reproduced, stacked, shelved, and even destroyed. The pamphlet's material qualities—stamped on cheap paper, simply produced, and sold for only forty *kuruş* by M. Akif Bey—shaped the meanings that it carried and how it moved through the city. At the other end of the spectrum, Süheyl Ünver's book relied on a careful practice of reading gravestones and inscriptions (*kitabe*) on mosques and tombs.

In contrast to manuscripts and pamphlets, Ünver's media of transmission were powerfully inert.

CONCLUSION

Where was Eyüp? Although Eyüp was the frequent subject of articles in the 1950s—articles that were often printed alongside photographs of its central mosque, tomb, and graveyards—readers were never provided with a map. Instead, authors almost always relied on a shared topography of Istanbul, one in which certain identities and histories were linked to different places. However, that topography required work to create and maintain. Istanbul's print cultures played an important role in that project.

The 1950s were a decade of tumult and change during which a generation of writers engaged with Istanbul and its histories in new ways. Eyüp was a crucial place for many of them. They wrote about many topics: its monuments, its urban changes, its social life, and, of course, the Companion buried at its center. What emerged was not a single self-contained place of Islam but instead something composite. There was Ziya Şakir's serialized popular history and Sermet Muhtar Alus's evocative account of a vanished social fabric; there was Haluk Şehsuvaroğlu's insistence on proper documentary history and *Life Illustrated's* picture of Islam as something that people other than its readers did; and there were new texts that sought to educate and instruct readers in what it meant to be Muslim. Rather than drawing clear distinctions between "secular" and "religious" versions of Eyüp, this chapter has sought to highlight how Eyüp came to be defined at the border between multiple visions. These new publics encountered an old Islam in ways that were contingent, contested, and never a foregone conclusion.⁸⁴

In doing so, this chapter makes two conceptual contributions. First, it asks us to think more expansively about the "labors that go into writing and reading" these stories in order to "see them as elements of [places] in motion rather than static representations."⁸⁵ One danger of writing about Eyüp is that we look only at self-identified "Islamic" writers like Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. Instead, this chapter shows us how places of Islam were articulated through many different genres, thus complicating that idea that there was a single "correct" Eyüp. Eyüp circulated through newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, and encyclopedia subscriptions. In moving through the city in diverse ways, these material objects helped to make Eyüp a place in multiple, overlapping ways.

Second, this chapter suggests that we expand how we think about the geographies of Islam during the 1950s. In a 1952 article assessing the visibility of Islam in Turkey, Bernard Lewis argued that many of the new Islamic journals were "somewhat disappointing," written by men who "show all too plainly the scars of thirty years of frustration and isolation."⁸⁶ In his view, their visions of Islam were limited by a separation from the experiences of the broader Muslim world.⁸⁷ On the one

hand, Lewis identified an important rupture between communities in Turkey and networks that once spanned the Ottoman Empire. On the other, however, Lewis missed the way that this geography was also experienced as an *urban* transformation. Even as we continue to explore how Islam and nation were reconfigured during the 1950s, it is also important to think about the uneven topographies that continue to define Istanbul. Working from Eyüp provides one such approach.