

Architectural history thesis

The influence of Mimar Sinan on later generations during the 20th century

Abstract

Mimar Sinan is a well-known architect from the ottoman empire, during the 16th century. Rather than focusing on his style this thesis will, focus on the influence of his work on later generation of architects during the emergence of modernism. By analyzing how his architectural features are reflected in modern buildings and how his work was discussed during the 20th century. It will also be interesting to see how the interpretation of his work differed overtime. This will be achieved by compering magazines from the early stages (1920-1950) of modernism with those from the later stages(1960-1980) and by comparing the sources from turkey with the international ones. Overall the answer to the questions such as how his work was discussed, what did they find inspirational in his work and the differences in perspectives between Turkish and international sources, will create an understanding of how Sinan has influenced the later generation of architects.

Key words

Mimar Sinan, Ottoman Architecture, Influence on later generations, modernism, Süleymaniye Mosque

Mimar Sinan served as the chief royal architect of the ottoman empire for 50 years. In those 50 years a number of 477 structures are attributed to his name which include mosques, schools, bridges and palaces. He is seen, by many scholars as the greatest architect of the ottoman empire in the 16th century.¹

But what happens when his legacy is viewed through a lens of modernism? How do the later generations of architects interpret and incorporate his architectural principles into their own (modern) designs?

¹ Demet Binan, "Defining, Preserving and Sustaining Traces of Mimar Sinan", in *ISLAMIC URBAN HERITAGE*, z.d., https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267266394_Tu_r_k_i_s_h_-_I_s_l_a_m_i_c_A_r_c_h_i_t_e_c_t_u_r_a_l_Her_i_t_a_g_e_o_f_To_k_a_t.

Instead of focusing on his style this research, supported by academic resources, investigates how Sinan's architectural style has influenced later generations of architects during the emergence of modernism. By analyzing architectural magazines, published during two periods of modernism: the early stages (1920 – 1950) and the later stages (1960-1980). By examining articles, critiques and discussions within these magazines, the thesis aims to clarify how Sinan's work was perceived and interpreted over time.

This methodological approach, combining archival analysis and comparative perspectives, creates a deeper understanding of Sinan's significance in modern architectural discourse.

From a devşirme child to one of the most famous architects.

Before diving into the presentation of Sinan in modernist magazines, this research provides a brief introduction to Sinan's life and origins. His biography is widely discussed, for example in his autobiography (Tezkiretü'l Bünyan and Tezkiretü'l Ebniye), detailing his projects and architectural reflections.

However, despite these detailed records, Sinan's exact origins remain uncertain and are widely debated among scholars. Around 1513 he became a devşirme child, which is the ottoman practice of recruiting young talented Christian boys from the Balkan, converting them to Islam and training them to become elite soldiers or bureaucrats. Within this practice he was part of the Janissaries, which is a military unit.²

Later on, around 1526, he became a colonel, and thanks to this he was able to explore different cities due to military expeditions. During his military training he was given the command to construct ships. Despite the lack of tools, he managed to fulfill this task in a short time and was praised by being appointed as the captain of the ship.³ He was assigned to more construction works. While helping with the constructions he got the opportunity to gain experience in architecture from its masters. He has also helped with reconstructing monuments from cities they had seized, which increased his experience with architecture. Along with his military duties Sinan started designing around 1529, when he was in Istanbul for 4,5 years, before he left for another military expedition.

In 1530 he already prepared to become a Hassa architect, which are architects designing palaces for the Sultan.⁴ It didn't take long for him to get promoted. In 1538, Due to the passing of the Chief Hassa architect, Sinan was asked to take over the title. This would mean that he had to step back from his military duties. The thought of leaving his path as a janissary caused him sorrow, but he decided that by designing mosques he would contribute to worldly and spiritual aspirations and agreed to the transition.⁵

² Aptullah Kuran, *Mimar Sinan* (Hürriyet Vakfı, 1986), <https://ia601608.us.archive.org/21/items/aptullah-kuran-mimar-sinan/Aptullah%20Kuran%20-%20Mimar%20Sinan.pdf>.

³ Sâî Musatfa Çelebi, *Yapılar Kitabı: Tezkiretü'l-Bünyan ve Tezkiretü'l-Ebniye* (Kocbank, 2003), https://www.academia.edu/30488076/Yap%C4%B1lar_Kitab%C4%B1_Tezkiretu_%C3%BCl_B%C3%BCnyan_ve_Tezkiretu_%C3%BCl_Ebniye_Mimar_Sinan_n_An%C4%B1lar%C4%B1_Sai_Mustafa_%C3%87elebi_pdf.

⁴ Kuran, *Mimar Sinan*.

⁵ Çelebi, *Yapılar Kitabı: Tezkiretü'l-Bünyan ve Tezkiretü'l-Ebniye*.

1. Mimar Sinan's style (as a brief introduction)

Before looking into the modern perception of Sinan's work, it's important to briefly understand the characteristics of his architectural style. This introduction of his style and cultural and historical context of his work allows for a better understanding of how and why later generations engaged with his legacy.

1.1 His style

Mimar Sinan was the chief royal architect of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. He formed the classical Ottoman architectural style.⁶ He excelled in designing large spaces, functional use of elements and central space planning, especially in mosque design.⁷ The Selimiye mosque in Edirne Turkey, is seen as Sinan's masterpiece. It was designed in 1560, the peak years of his artistic mastery.⁸ The mosque features a dome with a 31.3 meter diameter, which is supported by eight self-supporting elephant feet with eight arches. Because of the self-supporting feet, even if the walls are broken down the dome is not to be ruined.⁹

The four pillars of each 70,89 meters, are located on the four corners of the mosque, framing and emphasizing the central dome. This masterpiece collects all the architectural innovations that were developed up to that time, both by Sinan and by the Ottoman architecture in general.¹⁰

1.2 The cultural and historical context of his work in the ottoman empire.

Sinan's designs were shaped by cultural policies and religious symbolism, which were promoted by the Ottoman Empire. His structures embodied Islamic ideology's and imperial authority, symbolizing both political power and spiritual devotion. Necipoğlu (2005) emphasizes that Sinan's work must be viewed within the broader context of Ottoman imperial ideology, which aimed at visually expressing the Ottoman empire's greatness, unity, and religious authority. Sinan's architecture responded directly to the Ottoman state's cultural policies, particularly the empire's desire to represent itself as both a universal Islamic caliphate and a dominant imperial power. Not only did Sinan's buildings serve functional purposes, it also transferred symbolic meanings tied closely to the Ottoman Empire's religious and political ambitions. He expressed a sophisticated visual language that reinforces the empire's cultural and ideological objectives. He did this through the incorporation of symbolic motifs, intricate geometric patterns and the harmonious use of proportions. Sinan reflects the scholarly and intellectual climate of the period, because his work illustrates the Ottoman engagement with contemporary currents, drawing from the scientific, philosophical and aesthetic developments of his time.¹¹

⁶ Demet Binan, "Defining, Preserving and Sustaining Traces of Mimar Sinan", in *ISLAMIC URBAN HERITAGE*, z.d., https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267266394_Tu_r_k_i_s_h_-_l_s_l_a_m_i_c_A_r_c_h_i_t_e_c_t_u_r_a_l_Her_i_t_a_g_e_o_f_To_k_a_t.

⁷ Didem Erten Bilgiç en Kadir Bingöl, "Sinan The Architect's Process Of Creating Spatial Typology", *Prostor* 31, nr. 2(66) (27 december 2023): 280–97, [https://doi.org/10.31522/p.31.2\(66\).11](https://doi.org/10.31522/p.31.2(66).11).

⁸ Kuran, *Mimar Sinan*.

⁹ Binan, "Defining, Preserving and Sustaining Traces of Mimar Sinan".

¹⁰ Kuran, *Mimar Sinan*.

¹¹ Gulru Necipoglu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Reaktion books, 2005).

2. Discussions on Mimar Sinan's Style during the emergence of modernism.

2.1 Brief introduction of when and how modernism emerged in Turkey.

Modernism in Turkish architecture emerged in the 1930s, by the German and central European architects who worked and taught in Turkey. Modernism experienced a growth in the Turkish Republic, from the early to mid-20th century.

The origins of the architectural modernism in Turkey date back to the late Ottoman period, particularly the second constitutional period, which is from 1908 to 1922. This period is characterized by engagement with European architects, who introduced principles which emphasize simplicity, rational design and functionalism.

Because of the nationalism the architectural culture of the early republic was to reconcile the modern with national instead of international, for a better ideological fit with Kemalism.¹² The early republican government enthusiastically adopted modernist architecture as a key element of its broader political and cultural reform initiatives. Aiming to visually signify a departure from Ottoman traditions and to articulate Turkey's ambitions for modernization and Westernization.¹³

During this transformative phase, Turkish urban planners and architects actively collaborated with European planners and architects. Some of these designers are Clemes Holzmeister and Ernst Egli, whose contributions significantly shaped the modernist architectural identity of Turkey. This collaborations facilitated the development of modern public structures, educational facilities and residential projects. These were mostly defined by minimalist aesthetics and practical functionality.¹⁴

Analysis of magazines

To understand how Mimar Sinan was portrayed and discussed this research compares the different phases of the Turkish modernism, and it divides its analysis into two periods: the early stage of modernism (1920-1950) and the later stages (1960-1980). Architectural magazines from these two periods are analyzed, with attention given to their treatment of Sinan's work and legacy. These periodicals are sourced from Turkish archival collections and provide academic insights. Additionally, comparisons with international resources will reveal how perceptions of his work varied, culturally and temporally. This will offer an understanding of his lasting impact on modern architecture.

¹² Sibel Bozdoğan, "Modernism And Nation Building", Google Books, 2001, https://books.google.nl/books?hl=en&lr=&id=If6lyZ_oOoQC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=modernist+architecture+development+in+turkish+republic&ots=5xAweUlzlq&sig=b860fX0_5fVAxoi33tgtkpPXbyM&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=modernist%20architecture%20development%20in%20turkish%20republic&f=false.

¹³ İlhan Tekeli, "Modernizm, Modernite Ve Türkiye'nin Kent Planlama Tarihi. (Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İlhan Tekeli Toplu Eserler.8, İstanbul.2009)", november 2009, https://www.academia.edu/34077954/Modernizm_Modernite_ve_T%C3%BCrkiye'nin_Kent_Planlama_Tarihi_Tarih_Vakf%C4%B1_Yurt_Yay%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1_%C4%B0Ilhan_Tekeli_Toplu_Eserler_8_%C4%B0istanbul_2009

¹⁴ Bozdoğan, "Modernism And Nation Building".

In the first part of the analysis, each one of the Architectural magazine is introduced separately, to provide context. These individual discussions are then brought together and compared through themes that emerge throughout the analysis.

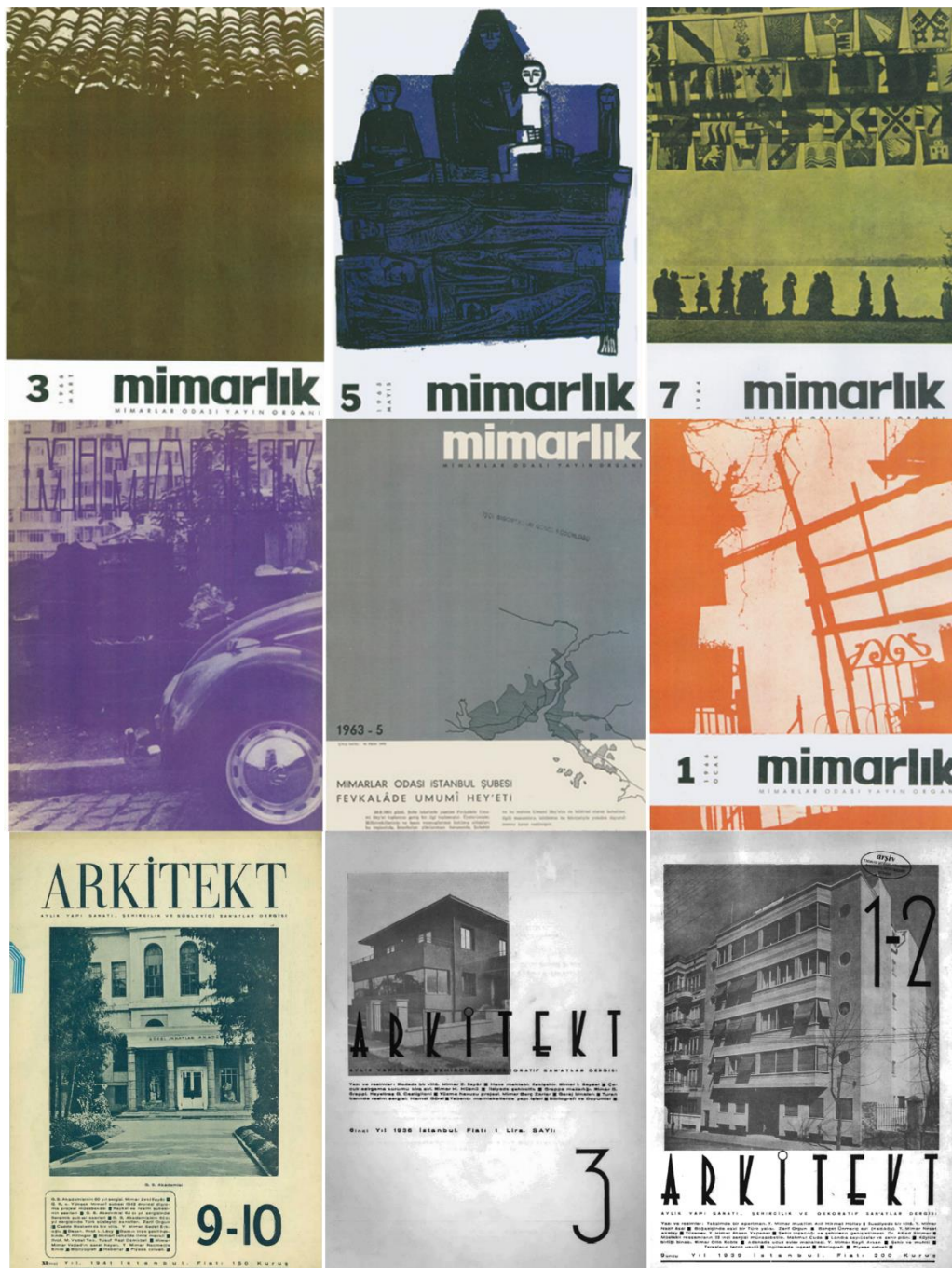


Figure 1. Covers of Turkish architectural magazines *Mimarlık* and *Arkitekt*¹⁵

¹⁵ Collage created by author. Covers of Turkish architectural magazines *Mimarlık* and *Arkitekt*, various issues between 1930-1980.

2.2 Magazines form the early stage of modernism (1920-1950)

In a magazine published by *Mimarlık Dergisi* in 1945 (issue 2-3), architects Saim Ülgen and Talat Özisik, illustrated Sinan's legacy. This magazine highlights Sinan's profound integration of cultural symbolism, meticulous craftsmanship and innovative planning. One of the articles is named "Mimar Koca Sinan ve Sanati" (Architect Koca Sinan and his art) Koca meaning "great" and reflects the respect he has earned for his outstanding architectural legacy. In this article Özisik emphasizes that Sinan's architectural education and experiences were shaped during his travels with Ottoman campaigns. During these travels he enriched his design philosophy merging diverse influences such as roman, byzantine, Seljuk and Persian architectural traditions into Turkish forms.

Özisik details how Mimar Sinan's Structures embodied not only architectural excellence but also symbolic narratives. For example, the Şehzade mosque commemorates the youthfulness of prince Mehmed through floral and delicate ornamentation. Similarly the Selimiye Mosque stands as a monumental representation of the greatness of the Ottoman Empire. His Expertise in harmonizing structures with their geopolitical and urban context is particularly noted in his thoughtful positioning of landmarks.

In the same magazine (issue 2-3) but different article named "Mimar Sinan" Saim Ülgen highlights the unique contribution of Sinan to Turkish architecture through his innovative integration of rationality, functionality and aesthetic simplicity. He notes that Sinan's ability to creatively adapt and enhance architectural forms by making subtle yet influential modifications to traditional plans. Selimiye and Sehzade mosques are great examples of Sinan's emphasis on proportion, balance and spatial harmony.¹⁶

Both perspectives in the magazine underline Sinan's legacy in his architectural mastery, but also his approach to urban planning. Sinan's thoughtful integration of his buildings into their surrounding contexts and his development of comprehensive architectural complexes, significantly enhanced urban coherence and aesthetic appeal. These principles strongly resonate with the ideals of modernist architecture. As a result, Sinan is portray as a foundational figure whose influence extends well beyond his historical era and continues informing modern architectural discourse.

In the first issue of the *Mimarlık* magazine in 1944, Sinan's artistic talents are praised once again, but this time by focusing specifically on the Sokullu Mehmet pasa mosque, located in Istanbul. Sinan's architecture is describes as remarkable in both aesthetic beauty and structural sophistication. The article highlights the mosque's careful proportions, elegant material and functional creativity. The mosque is characterized as a diamond, enhancing the beauty of the golden horn area. Yet again in this magazine Sinan's unmatched ability to harmonize architectural form with its surrounding landscape is emphasized.¹⁷

¹⁶ Saim Ülgen en Talat Özisik, "Mimarlık Dergisi 1945 - Sayı 2/3", MD1927 Mimarlık Dergisi, 1945, <https://mimarlikdergisi.md1927.org.tr/sayilar/mimarlik-dergisi-1945-sayi-23#page=1>.

¹⁷ "Mimarlık Dergisi 1944 - Sayı 1", MD1927 Mimarlık Dergisi, 1944, <https://mimarlikdergisi.md1927.org.tr/sayilar/mimarlik-dergisi-1944-sayi-1>.

In the 4th issue of the magazine *Arkitekt* in 1931, Mimar Sinan is portrayed as a master whose works define the pinnacle of the Ottoman architecture. Burhan Arif presents Sinan as the most modern architect of his time, because of his mastery of proportional balance, structural clarity and spatial harmony. Arif argues that Sinan should not be viewed only as an imitator of past traditions but also as an innovator who incorporated various influences into a unique Ottoman architectural style.¹⁸

Arif critiques the approach to see Sinan through a nationalistic or stylistic lens.¹⁹ He believes that Sinan's significance lies in his scientific approach to architecture. Later Ottoman styles were often only dictated by trends or superficial ornamentations, while Sinan's designs reflect a deeper understanding of geometry and material efficiency.²⁰

His structures are described as timeless models of architectural discipline. Even the smallest wall or structural element is a conscious act of design, not just a decorative addition. Arif warns against viewing Sinan's buildings as a set of stylistic motifs that can simply be copied.²¹ He insists that modern architects should study Sinan's design logic, his ability to create structural clarity, spatial rhythm and balance between form and function.

In the 4th issue of the *Arkitekt* magazine from 1932, Mimar Sinan is again described as the defining figure of the Ottoman Architecture. The author, Celal, critiques later architectural developments, and argues that European influences weakened the purity of Ottoman architecture.²² The once structurally sound and cohesive Ottoman style, which was perfected by Sinan, was compromised by foreign, less skilled architects.

Celal further argues that Sinan's architecture was not simply about domes, arches or tiles. It was about an architectural philosophy grounded in simplicity and structural clarity.²³ Sinan's work achieved monumental beauty through proportion and spatial harmony. Additionally he claimed that if Sinan had been European, his legacy would have been extensively studied and documented, but even his homeland has failed to fully recognize Sinan's significance.²⁴

The author reflects a frustration with how the early Turkish Republic, which was in a search for a western and secular modern identity, overlooked Sinan's architectural genius. As discussed earlier, modernism in Turkish architecture was shaped by European architects who introduced minimalism and rational design principles.²⁵ These values that were introduced by European architects could align with Sinan's architectural style, but the cultural break from the Ottoman Empire, created a lack of recognition for Sinan.

¹⁸ Burhan Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat", *Mimar*, nr. 4 (1931), <http://dergi.mo.org.tr/dergiler/2/59/502.pdf>.

¹⁹ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

²⁰ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

²¹ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

²² B Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü", *Arkitekt*, nr. 4, 1932, <http://dergi.mo.org.tr/dergiler/2/80/814.pdf>.

²³ Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü".

²⁴ Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü".

²⁵ Bozdogan, "Modernism And Nation Building".

2.2.1 Conclusion early stage of modernism

During the early stages of modernism Sinan was mostly celebrated for his architectural logic that aligned with modernist values. During this time the early republic wanted to modernize and distance itself from the Ottoman identity. The architectural writings of this time reveals how Sinan's image was shaped to serve the needs of the early republic: a combination of both modern and national.

2.3 Analysis of magazines during the later stage of modernism (1960-1980).

The article "Osmanlı camiiinde mekan sorunu" (*spatial issues in Ottoman mosques*), originally written by David Gebhard and published in The Art Bulletin in 1963, was translated by Selçuk Batur and published in the 3rd issue of Turkish magazine *Mimarlık* in 1966.²⁶ It is notable that during this period, *Mimarlık*, frequently published translations of international articles. This reflects the growing interest in global architecture.²⁷

Gebhard examines the spatial qualities of Ottoman architecture through the works of Mimar Sinan. He questions the common view of the western scholars that Ottoman architecture is simply a copy of the byzantine designs. Instead he argues that Ottoman architecture, especially Sinan's designs represent a clear stylistic combination that transformed various influences into a combined architectural expression.²⁸

According to the author, Sinan's genius lies in his approach to spatial fluidity. Unlike earlier traditional architecture, where structures were often defined by their solid forms, Sinan's designs emphasize an impressive spatial experience. His use of domes, half-domes and supporting vaults create a continuously flowing interior.²⁹

The exterior is also discussed by Gebhard, where he emphasizes how Ottoman mosques are not just isolated structures but are harmoniously integrated into their urban surroundings. They were designed by a carefully considered urban planning strategy. Gebhard concludes that the European influences on the Ottoman style disturbed the clarity and rationalism of Sinan's works.³⁰

Three years later in 1966, Orhan Erdenen published an article in the *Mimarlık* magazine titled, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları" which means "Architects, their assistants and organizations in the Ottoman period".³¹ In this article he writes about the role of architects in the Ottoman Empire, with a particular focus on Mimar Sinan. Erdenen emphasizes that Sinan is the most

²⁶ Selcuk Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu", *Mimarlık*, nr. 3 (1966), <http://dergi.mo.org.tr/dergiler/4/327/4656.pdf>.

²⁷ ..[| Mimarlık Dergisi |..], z.d., <http://www.mimarlikdergisi.com/index.cfm?sayfa=arsiv>.

²⁸ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

²⁹ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

³⁰ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

³¹ Orhan Erdenen, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları", *Mimarlık*, nr. 1 (1966): 15–18, <http://dergi.mo.org.tr/dergiler/4/325/4636.pdf>.

renowned figure in Ottoman architecture, but his achievements were built on the foundation laid by earlier architects. He argues that Sinan was not only a product of his own genius, but was supported by a highly skilled team of builders engineers and craftsmen. The author states that while Sinan was a visionary leader, the excellence of his monumental works depended on the expertise of those around him.

Moreover, Sinan is praised for his ability to integrate function, form and decoration seamlessly, ensuring that every element served both artistic and structural purposes. The article specifically highlights how the ornamentation in Sinan's works complements the architecture, rather than overwhelming it. This is a principle that separates his style from later, more ornamented Ottoman designs. Due to European influences, the later Ottoman style led to loss of rational, disciplined approaches that defined Sinan's era.³²

A similar emphasis on Sinan's personal philosophy appears in an article that was written by Erdem Yücel in 1973 in the *Arkitekt* magazine.³³ The article is named "Mimar Sinan'ın türbesi" meaning "Mimar Sinan's tomb" and provides insights into Mimar Sinan's architectural philosophy, by exploring his tomb. Yücel describes how Sinan decided to build his tomb next to his masterpiece, the Süleymaniye mosque, which indicates his deep personal connection to his work. Unlike the tombs of the sultans, Sinan's tomb is modest yet precisely designed, reflecting his architectural principles of proportion, harmony and simplicity.

Additionally Yücel discusses Sinan's role as the chief royal architect and how he shaped the architectural landscape of the Ottoman Empire. He demonstrates that Sinan's influence was more than individual buildings, by highlighting his contribution to urban planning and infrastructure.³⁴

2.3.1 Conclusion later stage of modernism

During the later stage of modernism, Sinan's architecture was analyzed with a more critical and academical approach. The writers of the magazines, Gebhard, Erdenen and Yücel explored his spatial strategies and architectural philosophy. Also his role as an urban planner was explored more explicitly. Their focus reflected a modernist interest in function, structure and design logic. This positioned Sinan as a timeless thinker whose ideas aligned with contemporary architectural discourse.

³² Erdenen, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları".

³³ Erdem Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi", *Arkitekt*, nr. 4 (1973): 189–90, <http://dergi.mo.org.tr/dergiler/2/282/3956.pdf>.

³⁴ Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi".

2.4 The discussions on Mimar Sinan during the different stages of modernism

The perception of Mimar Sinan has evolved across different periods of modernism, reflecting broader shifts in architectural criticism. In the early stages (1920-1950) Sinan is seen as the pinnacle of Ottoman architecture, by emphasizing his technical mastery, national importance and symbolic architectural narratives. In the later stages (1960-1980) there is a more analytic approach, exploring his spatial innovations, integration into urban planning and his lasting influence on modern architecture. This section explores these evolving perspectives through four theme's.

2.4.1 Sinan as a symbol of Ottoman architectural identity

In the 1920s-1950s, Sinan was celebrated as the ultimate Ottoman architect who formed the roman, byzantine, Seljuk and Persian influences into a unique Turkish style. Ülgen and Özisik³⁵ praised his ability to harmonize structures with their geopolitical and urban contexts, while Arif³⁶ and Celal³⁷ emphasized his proportional balance structural clarity and timeless design logic. These authors framed him as an architectural genius whose work defined the purity of Ottoman aesthetics. Differing it from later Ottoman styles which were Influenced by Europe and therefor seen as weaker and less disciplined.

2.4.2 Architectural philosophy and design logic

Ulgen, Arif and Celal all underline Sinan's disciplined architectural language, which is based on rationality, simplicity and proportion. Celal³⁸ highlighted how Sinan's beauty did not rely on superficial ornamentation, but on structural harmony. Arif³⁹ warned against copying Sinan's stylistic elements without understanding his design logic. Similarly, Yücel⁴⁰ analyzes Sinan's tomb to explore his personal architectural philosophy. This design embodies Sinan's ability to balance harmony and simplicity.

2.4.3 Spatial Innovation and urban planning

In the 1960s-1980s, scholars focused on Sinan's spatial mastery and urban planning strategies. Gebhard⁴¹ argued that Sinan's mosques are not just static monuments but immersive spatial experiences. By the use of domes, half-domes and supporting vaults a spatial fluidity is created. Erdenen⁴² adds on this, portraying Sinan as part of a larger architectural community, formed by teams of craftsmen, builders and engineers, to shape large-scale architectural and urban solutions. Yücel⁴³ further emphasized that Sinan's influence extended beyond individual structures, into shaping the broader urban fabric of the Ottoman Empire.

³⁵ Ülgen en Özisik, "Mimarlık Dergisi 1945 - Sayı 2/3".

³⁶ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

³⁷ Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü".

³⁸ Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü".

³⁹ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

⁴⁰ Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi".

⁴¹ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

⁴² Erdenen, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları".

⁴³ Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi".

2.4.4 symbolic meaning in Architecture

Ülgen and Özisik⁴⁴ examined how Mimar Sinan's mosques embodied historical narratives, such as the Sehzade mosque, which represents youthfulness and the Selimiye Mosque, symbolizing Ottoman imperial Grandeur. Similarly, Celal (1932) saw Sinan's work as monumental beauty created by proportion and spatial harmony, rather than excessive ornamentation.

Both periods, early and late modernism, recognize Sinan's role in shaping urban landscapes, but with different emphases. In earlier perspectives his impact is often linked to expressing Ottoman identity and aesthetic purity, while later analyses by Gebhard,⁴⁵ Erdenen⁴⁶ and Yücel,⁴⁷ emphasizes Sinan's functional urban strategies. Also his collaboration with skilled teams and the philosophical intentions behind his designs are emphasized. These evolving views show that Sinan's legacy is not unchanged but continually reinterpreted by contemporary architectural values and priorities.

⁴⁴ Ülgen en Özisik, "Mimarlık Dergisi 1945 - Sayı 2/3".

⁴⁵ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

⁴⁶ Erdenen, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları".

⁴⁷ Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi".

Conclusion

By analyzing Turkish architectural magazines from both early and later periods of modernism, it becomes clear that Sinan was not only remembered as a historical figure. He was actively recontextualized in architectural discourse to serve both national and modernist narratives.

In the early stages of modernism (1920-1950), his style was presented as the peak of Ottoman architectural achievement. Writers such as Ülgen, Özışık⁴⁸, Arif⁴⁹ and Celal⁵⁰, emphasized how Sinan was able to integrate multiple cultural influences into a unique Turkish style and his symbolic architectural narratives. Sinan was described as a genius who represented the purity of Ottoman aesthetics. His rational and harmonious design approach was contrasted with later, more European-influences and ornamental styles.

In the later period of modernism (1960-1980), there was a more analytical focus on Sinan's architectural philosophy, spatial innovation and his contributions to urban planning. Gebhard⁵¹, Erdenen⁵² and Yücel⁵³ highlighted the spatial fluidity in Sinan's mosque designs. They also focused on his integration of architecture into large-scaled urban fabric and his collaboration with skilled teams of engineers and craftsmen. Sinan's legacy was viewed as more than a symbolic or national identity, it was tied to the functional and conceptual foundation of modern architecture.

Throughout both periods Sinan's influence remained significant. While the influence shifted from symbolic inspiration to structural and theoretical relevance, the modernist architects continued to find value in his work. Most of Sinan's qualities align with the ideals of modernism, for example his mastery of spatial harmony, urban integration and structural clarity. This allowed for his work to remain relevant within the architectural debates of the 20th century.

In conclusion, Koca Mimar Sinan's work was celebrated but also critically engaged with during the emergence of modernism. His influence on later generations of architects did not come from simply copying his style, but from the way his ideas about space and function continued to inspire. By designing buildings that were both structurally efficient and aesthetically balanced, his work became relevant to modernist values. This enduring relevance proves that timeless architectural principles can continue to inform and inspire throughout evolving eras.

⁴⁸ Ülgen en Özışık, "Mimarlık Dergisi 1945 - Sayı 2/3".

⁴⁹ Arif, "Mimar Sinan ve Yeni Sanat".

⁵⁰ Celal, "Mimar Sinan ve Ekolü".

⁵¹ Batur, "Osmanlı Camiinde Mekân Sorunu".

⁵² Erdenen, "Osmanlı Devri Mimarları, Yardımcıları Ve Teşkilâtları".

⁵³ Yücel, "Mimar Sinan'ın Türbesi".

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Figure 1

Collage created by author. *Covers of Turkish Architectural Magazines Mimarlık and Arkitekt between 1930-1980. Mimarlık Dergisi & Dergi.*
<http://mimarlikdersi.com/index.cfm?sayfa=mimarlik&DergiSayi=80#>. &
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