

**CLAIMING MOSQUE SPACE: WOMEN'S AGENCY IN
MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY**

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By
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July 2022

To my beloved ones



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We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

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ABSTRACT

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M.S. in Architecture

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Traditionally, there has been an attribution of public spaces to males and private spaces of domesticity to females; moreover, mosques have been patriarchal spaces. Since the 90s, as both Islamism and feminism are on the rise, public places and topics on women’s roles have been reinterpreted. Under the power of an Islamist party, Turkey witnessed an increase in women’s role in mosque architecture in the last 20 years. Mosque projects that consider and welcome women are carried out, and women as mosque designers became visible. Unlike Islamist feminists’ debate around the world, in which the topic is on ‘women-only’, ‘gender-mixed’, and ‘women-focused/women-led’ mosques, in Turkey, the debate has been on the two genders sharing the same space. This research is an inquiry into the changing role of women and their relation to the production of mosque spaces, focusing on Turkey. Firstly, the research focuses on creating a theoretical framework and gives information on gender politics and Islamic space. Later, it looks into women as the agents; users of mosques where they appropriate the men’s space, and designers of mosques and their roles in relation to the authority in mosque architecture. Five different case studies by different female architects or designers are chosen in which they occupy various positions in the mosque design. Field research, observations, architectural analyses, and literature review are done; also, interviews are conducted with the architects. This research aims to contribute to feminist discourse with the inclusion of Muslim women and tries to understand women’s claim and their work on equality in the religious space.

Keywords: Gender politics, mosque architecture, women architects, Islamic feminism, women’s agency

ÖZET

CAMİ MEKANINDA HAK İDDİA ETMEK: ÇAĞDAŞ TÜRKİYE'DE KADINLARIN CAMİ MİMARİSİNDEKİ AKTÖRLÜĞÜ

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Geleneksel olarak, kamusal alanlar erkeklere ve ev içi özel alanlar ise kadınlara atfedilmiştir; camiler de ataerkil mekanlar olarak karşımıza çıkar. 90'lı yıllardan itibaren hem İslamcılık'ın hem de feminizmin yükselişte olmasıyla birlikte kamusal alanlar ve kadınların rollerine ilişkin konular yeniden yorumlanmaya başlandı. İslamcı bir partinin iktidarlığı altında Türkiye, son 20 yılda cami mimarisinde kadınların rolünün artışına tanık oldu. Kadınları gözetten ve kucaklayan cami projeleri yapılmaya başlandı ve kadın cami tasarımcıları görünür hale geldi. Dünya'da İslamcı feministlerin 'kadınlara özel', 'erkek ve kadının yan yana ibadet ettiği' ve 'kadın odaklı/kadınların önderliğindeki' camiler üzerine çalışmalarının aksine, Türkiye'deki tartışma iki cinsiyetin aynı alanı paylaşması üzerinden oldu. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'ye odaklanarak, kadınların değişen rolü ve cami mekanlarının üretimiyle ilişkisi üzerine çalışmaktadır. İlk olarak araştırma teorik bir çerçeve oluşturmaya odaklanıp toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları ve İslami mekan hakkında bilgi vermektedir. Daha sonra, kadınların aktörlüğünü ele alır; kadınların cami kullanıcısı olarak erkeklerin mekânlarını kullanmasına ve cami tasarımcısı olarak rollerinin otoriteyle olan ilişkisine bakar. Çalışma için farklı kadın mimar veya tasarımcıların cami tasarımında çeşitli pozisyonlarda yer aldıkları beş farklı örnek çalışma seçilmiştir. Alan araştırması, gözlemler, mimari analizler, literatür taraması ve mimarlarla röportajlar yapılmıştır. Bu araştırma, Müslüman kadınları feminist söyleme dahil ederek kadınların dini alanda eşitlik konusundaki iddialarını ve çalışmalarını anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları, cami mimarisi, kadın mimarlar, İslami feminizm, kadın aktörler

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.2. AIM AND SCOPE	4
1.3. METHODOLOGY	5
1.4. STRUCTURE.....	6
2. GENDER, SPACE AND ISLAM.....	8
2.1. MOSQUE SPACES AS GENERATOR OF PATRIARCHAL POWER STRUCTURES	8
2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENDER AND SPACE IN THE MOSQUE	10
2.3. ISLAM AND FEMINISM	22
2.4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE MOSQUE IN MODERN TURKEY	24
2.5. WOMEN AND MOSQUE SPACE: CONTEXTUALIZING THE TURKISH CASE GLOBALLY	29
2.6. CONCLUSION REMARKS ON WOMEN AND MOSQUE IN TURKEY..	36
3. WOMEN MOSQUE USERS.....	40
3.1. SEPARATION OF MEN’S AND WOMEN’S SECTIONS IN MOSQUES .	41
3.2. TOP-DOWN APPROACHES OF <i>DİYANET</i> TOWARDS FEMALE MOSQUE USERS.....	44
3.2.1. A Project for the Beautification of Women’s Sections in Mosques	49
3.3. BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES OF FEMALE MOSQUE USERS.....	51
3.3.1. Transgressing Boundaries: ‘Women in Mosques’ Campaign	53
3.4. PATRIARCHY’S RESPONSE TO FEMALE MOSQUE USERS	61
3.5. WOMEN’S SPATIAL PRACTICE INSIDE MOSQUES.....	64

3.5.1. Ramazanoğlu Mosque.....	65
3.5.2. Çamlıca Mosque	72
3.5.3. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque	83
3.5.4. Şakirin Mosque	91
3.5.5. Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque	99
3.5.6. General Comments	103
4. WOMEN ARCHITECTS AND MOSQUES.....	106
4.1. MOSQUE DESIGN AND DESIGNERS IN TURKEY	107
4.1.1. Bureaucratic Framework: Construction Management.....	110
4.1.2. Ideological Tendencies: Framing Design	113
4.2. WOMEN DESIGNER’S POSITIONS IN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE ..	119
4.2.1. Public Servant	119
4.2.2. Competition Entrant.....	125
4.2.3. Designer	130
4.2.4. Supervisor in Construction	136
4.3. ISSUES REGARDING WOMEN DESIGNERS IN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE.....	138
4.3.1. Agency	138
4.3.2. Authorship	146
4.3.3. Identity	154
4.4. CONCLUSION REMARKS ON WOMEN MOSQUE DESIGNERS	158
5. CONCLUSION	162
REFERENCES.....	168
APPENDIX	183

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Survey form in the circular supplement.....	48
Table 3.2. The number of mosques available to women during different prayer times	48
Table 4.1. Actors and actions in mosque building process	110
Table 4.2. Actors' relationships in mosque building process	111
Table 4.3. Classification of case studies and designers	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Kocatepe Mosque	26
Figure 3.1. Women praying in front of the screen	55
Figure 3.2. Women's section in Şehzadebaşı Mosque photographed in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members.....	57
Figure 3.3. Women's section in Üsküdar Kuşkonmaz Mosque photographed in 2020 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members.....	58
Figure 3.4. Süleymaniye Mosque diagram showing the unequal distribution of spaces made in 2018 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members.....	59
Figure 3.5. Hüseyin Ağa Mosque diagram showing the old and new space distribution made in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members	60
Figure 3.6. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque diagram first and second floor showing the unequal distribution of spaces made in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members.....	61
Figure 3.7. Location of Ramazanoğlu Mosque.....	67
Figure 3.8. The change in space usage based on gender.....	68
Figure 3.9. Women's section in Ramazanoğlu Mosque	70
Figure 3.10. Measures for gender segregation	72
Figure 3.11. Circulation paths based on genders	72
Figure 3.12. Location of Çamlıca Mosque.....	74
Figure 3.13. The functions and space usage based on gender	78
Figure 3.14. The relationship of the women's section with the main hall and the mihrab view.....	78
Figure 3.15. Women's section in Çamlıca Mosque	78
Figure 3.16. Lounge on every basement floor	79
Figure 3.17. Circulation paths based on genders	79
Figure 3.18. Clearly separated men's and women's areas	81
Figure 3.19. The screen used in the female's section	82
Figure 3.20. The screen used in the male's section.....	83
Figure 3.21. Location of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque and its surroundings	84

Figure 3.22. The functions and space usage based on gender	86
Figure 3.23. Women's section in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque	87
Figure 3.24. Railings in the women's section and the mihrab view	88
Figure 3.25. The tile motifs in the women's section.....	88
Figure 3.26. The signboard reads "Women's Section (Belongs to Men During Friday Prayers)"	90
Figure 3.27. Circulation paths based on genders	91
Figure 3.28. Location of Şakirin Mosque and its surroundings.....	93
Figure 3.29. The functions and space usage based on gender	94
Figure 3.30. Women's section in Şakirin Mosque.....	95
Figure 3.31. View from the women's section while standing and sitting.....	96
Figure 3.32. Courtyard and signage directing women	97
Figure 3.33. Circulation paths based on genders	98
Figure 3.34. Entrance to the courtyard when the mosque was first built.....	99
Figure 3.35. Location of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque and its surroundings.....	100
Figure 3.36. Geometrical shapes creating the mosque.....	100
Figure 3.37. The functions and space usage based on gender	101
Figure 3.38. View from the women's section while standing and sitting.....	102
Figure 3.39. Women's section in Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque.....	102
Figure 3.40. Circulation paths based on genders	103
Figure 4.1. Süleymaniye Mosque aerial viewpoint.....	121
Figure 4.2. Süleymaniye Mosque entrance	122
Figure 4.3. Süleymaniye Mosque inside view	122
Figure 4.4. Ramazanoğlu Mosque aerial viewpoint.....	123
Figure 4.5. Ramazanoğlu Mosque entrance	124
Figure 4.6. Ramazanoğlu Mosque inside view	124
Figure 4.7. Abdülhamit Han Mosque in Kahramanmaraş	126
Figure 4.8. Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul	126
Figure 4.9. Çamlıca Mosque competition, second place	128
Figure 4.10. Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul	129
Figure 4.11. Doğramacıade Ali Sami Paşa Mosque's screens in the women's section	131
Figure 4.12. Doğramacıade Ali Sami Paşa Mosque, women's section.....	132
Figure 4.13. Adana Otogar Mosque	148

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mosques have been the center of social life in Islamic societies for years. They are the community's spiritual heart, as well as a place of learning and discussion about important social, political, economic, and religious issues; they are the places that shape and guide a community (Ismail, 2002). They are the material representation of Islam in the public sphere; they create a social site, a sense of community and identity through spatio-practical production (Batuman, 2018b). Historically, they meant much more than being only places of worship, but they served as centers of life (Özaloğlu & Gürel, 2011).

Traditionally mosques are perceived as patriarchal places, serving the men, favoring men's spaces always more than women's. The male section is prioritized, which discourages women from attending regularly (Shannahan, 2013). Men perform religious activities at mosques, whereas women are encouraged to pray at home. The mosque is a socially constructed space that allows and restricts Muslim women's religious creation, identity formation, engagement, belonging, and activism (Nyhagen, 2019). It could police women's clothing, voices, and interactions with men (Shannahan, 2013). If women go to mosques, they have to hide behind curtains or partitions. Sometimes they have to pray underground, which is treated as a storage room, and sometimes they cannot even get to have space in a mosque. Even if they may have a room of their own, the lack of ablution spaces discourages them from going to mosques. Women's place has been perceived as the home for years, and

women were expected to stay and pray at home while men could pray at mosques; today, women are part of the public as much as men. Women can work and study together with men, but they are still not welcome in mosques as much as men. The change in the lives of women, getting higher education, working outside of the home, and increase in their appearance in public space demands a transformation in prayer halls as well (Yılmaz, 2015).

With the rising awareness of gender equality, worldwide, places of worship of different religions have started to support women's participation in addressing gender issues, with a special focus on providing all members of society with equal access to religious activities; today, in Islamic societies many mosques feature separate facilities for men and women (Aryanti, 2013b). In Turkey, as an attempt to improve women's condition in mosques which is a necessity in today's world, new design solutions such as the use of the mezzanine floor as a women's section have become visible. It is generally a part of the main hall, and it also provides visual access to the mihrab. Additionally, ablution spaces are given importance for women's usage of mosques. Besides, playgrounds started to appear in mosque complexes for mothers and children coming to mosques. The ignorance of women's existence in mosques through undesirable spaces or no space at all is tried to be recovered. The attempt also includes the removal of curtains and prison-like partitions that limits women, which leads to visibility of women and dissolution of the borders between different sections. Spatial design of mosques should consider current behaviors and practices rather than ignoring the social aspect from which transformations arise, but congregation members' collective memory may oppose altering the mosque's prayer hall arrangement, and they may prefer to use the conventional configuration of segregated spaces based on gender differences (Özaloğlu & Gürel, 2011). Even though mosque design may aim to create a better space for women, it encounters resistance from the congregation, which still believes in the hierarchy of the sections and traditional mosque spaces.

Even though the religious officials have started to work on women's involvement in mosques in Turkey, their work would be insufficient without the agents, women users. Women demand better places in mosques and take agency while sometimes

transgressing and resisting, they claim their space within the existing dynamics. When women obtained more public visibility, they came into conflict with the traditions, and it forced them to create a new self-identity. Muslim women's spatial equality demand has taken place in mosques as a challenge to gendered usage of religious spaces. With the new lifestyles, a claim for equal usage of the mosques appeared, and Islamism tried to redefine modernization in itself (Yılmaz, 2015). The act of appropriating and using space is political; one may be empowered or rendered vulnerable depending on the types of spaces they have, do not have, or are refused entry to (Rendell, 2000a). It created new dynamism of power relations for women through mosque space.

Architecture is a constitutive and transforming medium of society, its assemblages, and its subjects rather than a simple reflection or mirror of society (Delitz, 2018). People shape the building, the building shapes the people; it stabilizes the social life, structures social networks and behavioral patterns. (Gieryn, 2002). Gender has an impact on space, also space has an impact on gender. People can be separated and encircled by architecture. Architectural spaces implementing gender ideology by limiting women's access to specific rites and locations through spatial segregation, marginalization, or exclusion may be used in religious organizations as well (Aryanti, 2013b). Accepting that architectural spaces have power over the users, the mosque architecture as the producer of the patriarchal space has also been dominated by male architects' design. Today, women's intervention in mosques is not only limited to the user dimension. Women as architects have the power of designing mosque spaces which ultimately regulates the behavior of women back as users. Therefore, the patriarchal mosques are not only challenged by the woman users but also the woman designers.

1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Researchers on women, gender, and sexuality subjects have been working together with different fields and also brought discourses on space issues and architecture (Spain, 1992; Massey, 1994; Weisman, 1992; Hayden, 1982; McLeod, 1997; Heynen & Baydar, 2005; Rendell, Penner & Borden, 2000; Göle, 1997). Against the Western feminists' tendency to look at Islam as a subordination of women, subaltern studies

and Muslim feminists tried to bring a neutral look and demonstrate a new approach (Mahmood, 2003; Ali, 2014; Afkhami, 1995; Ramazanoğlu, 2011; Wadud, 2006; Meriç, 2012; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001; Mernissi, 1991; Sirri 2021). Mosques as the intersection of Islam and space have been studied in terms of women's role through case studies among scholars from different countries; however, most of them focus on the leadership, access, management, identity, and ideology issues (Ismail, 2002; Jamal, 2005; Nyhagen, 2019; Kıpçak, 2016; Nomani & Nomani, 2003; Lewis, 2005; Shannahan, 2014; Ghafournia, 2020, Kalmbach, 2012, Kuppinger, 2012). Studies that stress the spatial aspect of the problem of women in mosques are very limited (Suratkon et al., 2017; Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019; Nas, 2021, Aryanti, 2013, Kahera, A. et al, 2009; Öz, 2021) and not enough to provide a broad perspective. This thesis focuses on the relationship of women with mosques; it renders how Islamic revivalism in Turkey changed women's visibility and their agency in the creation of mosque spaces.

The thesis not only focuses on how gender issues reflect themselves in mosque spaces, but space itself shapes gender relations. It approaches mosque space as a tool to practice gender ideology and looks into the gender politics of mosque construction processes. It tries to understand the role of visibility and vision and how power relations are created within mosque space. It aims to find answers to questions such as: How is patriarchy produced within Islamic space, and how do architectural forms play a role? How does women's usage of mosques differ from men's, and what kind of spatial changes do Muslim women demand? What are the specificities of mosques in Turkey, and how does gender manifest itself in mosque design? How do women take agency in creating their space in the mosque? How mosques designed by female designers are executed, represented, and met by people? How do female mosque designers situate themselves within the man dominated field?

1.2. AIM AND SCOPE

Islam and political Islam has had a patriarchal character. However, in the last years, under the power of the Islamist party, AKP, Turkey witnessed an increase in women's role in mosque architecture. The mosque as a socially constructed space has the power of enabling and restricting women; however, women also have the

agency of appropriating mosque space. This thesis is an inquiry into the changing role of women and their relation to the production of mosque space with a focus on Turkey. It looks into the spatial and architectural aspects of women's role in mosques and focuses on women as the designers and users.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

The thesis focuses on the topics of gendered space, mosque design, Islamic feminism, and women designers. For the thesis, a mixed methodology is used. Firstly, the literature review on various fields, including theology, philosophy, sociology, political science, history, gender studies, urban design, and architecture helps to create the framework of the study. Later, the spatial analysis of the mosque spaces and the interviews with architects, designers, muftis, head of a department of the Directorate of Religious Affairs demonstrate the gender politics of the mosque spaces and the mosque building processes. For the thesis, I work with qualitative data and do analytical and creative associations. I did field research and did observations and architectural analyses of the chosen case studies following the themes.

In the thesis, five case studies by different female architects or designers are chosen in which they occupy various positions in the mosque design. I have chosen Şakirin Mosque in Istanbul, which has a female interior designer, and Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque in Ankara, which has a female interior designer and a female coordinator; Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque in Ankara is designed by a female architect that owns an architectural office, Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul is the product of an architectural competition won by two female architects that co-owned an office, Ramazanoğlu Mosque in Adana is designed by two female architects working under the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and two female architects that own an architectural office. The examples are different in terms of their location and builders, women's position and involvement in the design process, and the mosques' architectural language. These differences will help provide a general understanding of women and mosque relationships on top of their user role.

1.4. STRUCTURE

The thesis is formed into five chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter will begin with discussions on how mosques are patriarchal spaces and women are subordinated via different means. To base the thesis on a theoretical framework, gender and space relationships will be examined; public and private dichotomy and attribution of genders to these spheres will be discussed. It will try to render the power relationships created by visibility and gaze. However, in order not to fall into the error of generalizing Muslim women and looking from a ‘Western’ point of view, Islam will enter the debate, and I will try to look from a post-colonial perspective. While informing the audience about Turkey’s relationship with mosques and women’s role in the state’s ideologies, the chapter will aim to understand women’s relationship with mosques around the world and contextualize Turkey within it.

The third chapter will examine the relationship between mosques and women as their users. It will begin with a brief discussion on how the spatial segregation in mosques works through architectural and physical elements in women’s disfavor. It will look into the Turkish authorities’ approach to female mosque users and their endeavors toward increasing women’s participation in mosques. Then it will examine women’s claims in Turkey, how they take agency, what they want to change and what methods they use regarding mosque spaces. Lastly, I will discuss five case studies in detail to understand how women’s spatial organization is created and how a woman user can move and behave in these mosque examples.

The fourth chapter will start with a discussion on the role of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in mosque architecture. While questioning the agency and decision-making role of woman designers from different positions in mosque architecture, it will discuss how these women define themselves within this patriarchal domain. It will look into the representation of woman mosque designers and how others perceive them.

The fifth chapter, which is the conclusion, will discuss mosques in terms of their ‘women-friendliness’ and look at the considerations of ‘women architects’ for ‘woman users’. It will provide an abstract of the overall thesis.



CHAPTER 2

GENDER, SPACE AND ISLAM

2.1. MOSQUE SPACES AS GENERATOR OF PATRIARCHAL POWER STRUCTURES

Mosques have been associated with men. Women are not commonly visible in public sacred spaces like mosques, and one of the reasons is them being rebuked by their clothes or bodies in general by men (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001). The cultural guardians of society, such as males and older women, define the limits of sacred spaces and privatize them, allowing only those who adhere to strict dress codes to enter (Fenster, 2005). For a woman to be able to participate in the mosque, she needs to be in a certain way; visually covered appropriately, and accept the social role and space given to her. Mosques both ban women's usage and not. Some mosques have a female section, some do not; women are accepted but not as absolute users. They are given a small space by the thought that they are a small community, which needs to be covered and abstracted from space (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). Women's space in mosques is always smaller and in lesser condition than men's. Women are positioned based on the dominant user, men, and the women's space does not hold its sovereignty. They get to pray in rooms often built as storage that looks nothing like a part of a mosque, away from men's eyes. The mosque is thought to be the men's space, women are accepted in mosques, but at the same time, they are denied and tried to be rendered invisible.

The separated space in mosques for women appears to encourage women to attend mosques because they are the proof of women's existence in mosque spaces. However, from the spatial arrangement of mosques, it is understood that the segregating devices govern women's visibility and interactions with males, frequently limit women's access to resources (Aryanti, 2013a). The isolation of women and having their own religious space serves as a barrier for women from the gaze of the public (male) through the use of curtains, walls, and closed gates (Ghafournia, 2020). They act as more than ordinary structural components or plain demarcation marks. The partition walls and screens exist in mosques for visual purposes to hide women rather than its spatial purposes, which in most cases do not favor women. Generally, women enter from the backdoors and sometimes cannot even visit the courtyards. Places women are located in, such as anterooms, leftover hallways, basements demonstrate the intolerance of the congregation against women while they make it difficult for women to see the imam or pay attention to the khutba; additionally, women are informed that this manner of worship is implicitly sanctioned by Islamic teaching (Kahera et al., 2009). Mosques provide separate but unequal accommodations for Muslim women, which some scholars consider 'unIslamic' (Nomani & Nomani, 2003).

Women's secondary position in mosques comes from the belief that it is a men's duty to attend congregational praying, whereas women can pray at home. Islamic teaching orders men to pray in mosques. In comparison, women who do not hold religious roles in public are encouraged to pray at home. The only congregational prayer that women can attend intensively is the tarawih prayer; when it comes to Eid and Friday prayers, mosques do not welcome women due to the intense participation of men and the concern that the presence of women will create discord (Kıpçak, 2016). The limitations on women's attendance at mosques are both mental and physical. Even though culture shapes mosques and excludes women from mosques, the architecture of mosques reinforces this culture of women's exclusion, too. Mosques are designed with the consideration of men, and women are perceived as secondary. Women are forced to pray in lesser conditions if they can find a space for themselves.

The patriarchal character of mosques and the usage of space cannot be separated from the design. Moreover, designers' role in creating the social and political dynamics within space should not be overlooked. Architecture is not only a neutral structure but also has an effect on shaping people's lives. According to Hayden (1982), the man-made environment discriminates against women, and women must define the space in which they live. Therefore, instead of women always fitting into men-made environments, women architects' designs that consider women's needs may improve their everyday lives. Weisman (1992) states that the difference in gender and relationship with space cause a difference in architectural practice. Since the social identities of women and men are different from each other, they have other priorities in designing and producing space and architecture. With a few exceptions, all mosques were designed by male architects across the globe until recent decades. Turkey's political history had an impact on mosque architecture; however, the thought of mosques as male spaces did render the lack of female mosque designers normal. Today, there are only a handful of mosques in Turkey that are designed by women, and the numbers are increasing every year. Questioning Hayden's claim, the thesis will examine mosques designed by women and their authority in the process. It will also look at the spatial qualities of mosques for women users and how women locate themselves within them.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENDER AND SPACE IN THE MOSQUE

The mosques and the gender relations that occur within them should not be viewed as isolated structures but rather as part of a larger social, cultural, and political context, both when they were first built and by the meaning given by their current users (Aryanti, 2013a). Space is a social product; it is a complex social construction based on values and meanings that affect spatial practices and perceptions (Lefebvre, 1974). Space is not a homogeneous, unified, neutral, and a priori reality that exists independently of subjects but rather arises from a continuous production process involving actors and material components (Baydar, 2012). It is not only a product, but it produces subjects. Gender is also socially constructed depending on the femininity and masculinity attribution of a culture contrary to sex which is biological and assigns someone as male or female (Spain, 1992a). As both space and gender are

results of social construction, they are not independent of time, culture, and context they are created in and are not fixed but dynamic.

In the construction and modification of gender relations, space is crucial. According to Massey (1994), spaces are not only gendered in themselves, but they also reflect and impact how gender is constructed and interpreted through the symbolic meaning of places and the gendered signals they carry to outright exclusion through violence. Spaces are sexed by the occupation of the different sexes but also gendered by the activities that occur within them associated with genders (Rendell, 2000b). For instance, mosques are divided into male and female sections based on the sexes occupying the space, but the perception of congregational praying as men's responsibility associates mosques with men.

Femininity, masculinity, performative attributes are inseparable parts of space (Baydar, 2012). According to Butler (1990), space and gender are parallel; gender depends on the spatial exclusion of bodies; the space is also a location to perform gender. Butler (as cited in Öz, 2021) claims that gender is a cultural construct and not an internal way of being; therefore, it cannot be read externally as an identity; moreover, gender identities are constructed and inscribed through repeated behaviors and gestures within specific cultural settings. Identity is performative; moreover, gender is remade through repetition in different spatial contexts.

Women and their usage of public space are often overlooked in space studies. Even when women are visibly missing, space is considered natural and innocent, and this belief leads to increased gender discrimination (Aryanti, 2013a). Bringing women back into the picture and adopting a more conscious gender perspective while looking at space would give a social awareness to comprehend space and the experiences and meanings that arise from inhabiting it (Aryanti, 2013a). This perspective would also help to understand how power is generated and expressed through the built environment.

Architecture is formed by its bodily occupation; it plays a significant role in the formation of identity and how people perceive their own environments (Rendell,

2000a). Rendell (2000c) emphasizes that man-made environments discriminate against women, and patriarchal ideology is inscribed in space. Fenster (2005) claims that the urban is designed in such a way that it traps women due to the lack of attention to gender in design which prevents women from feeling belonging to their environment. Women may feel excluded from public spaces because of issues such as safety and think that they are transgressing when entering public. In terms of identity and space, the limitation on women's mobility has been a fundamental tool of subordination (Massey, 1994).

Gender associations and dualistic distinctions greatly influence the understanding of gender and space relationships. By dividing individuals into opposing groups, a social framework is created that justifies and sustains human exploitation and male supremacy; one group is given power and prestige, while the other is made powerless and inferior (Weisman, 1992). Gender and space have a relationship that is characterized by power dynamics. Urban life hosting intellectual activities, power, danger, and important events are perceived the world of men and suburbs as safe and domestic places are perceived the world of women (Weisman, 1992). Moreover, women and female bodies have been associated with a home, a nest, a womb, and a safe space. However, the binary association of genders to spheres is not as strict in non-Western countries, and conducting research in a non-Western country requires postcolonial studies and an understanding of its culture; therefore, utilizing Western theories but not directly applying them.

The research in Muslim societies requires analyses with reference to postcolonial debates. The Muslim female identity manifests itself as a hybrid identity between the traditional and the modern, the local and the global, led by globalization and analyzed by postcolonial discussions (Yılmaz, 2015). Orientalists have defined the other in an exclusionary way which was a method of self-definition (Harvey, 1996). Westerners attributed rationality to democracy and irrationality to Islam (Mernissi, 1995). Moreover, Western feminists who wanted to talk about the problems in the East represented Third-World country women as homogeneous subjects. They were represented as oppressed, uncivilized, and uneducated citizens living in a backward country (Zubair & Zubair, 2017). These discourses reinforce the Western hegemony

while diminishing the non-Western experiences (Afkhami, 1995). In the early ages of women's studies, they were constricted to Western civilization history, later it became more inclusive, turned into gender studies while adding into their agenda topics related to race and sexuality, they worked interdisciplinarily, and feminists started to take into consideration of different times and places in broader perspectives (Rendell, 2000a). In a similar way, this thesis will define the women and religious space relationship within its own context, without drawing an 'other' and without an idealization towards the West, it will not see Islam as oppression on women.

Models and paradigms of Western feminism cannot be applied without difficulty to a context with a different cultural history, especially a socio-religious context where women's empowerment must be conceptualized differently (Zubair & Zubair, 2017). In their study of Islamic feminism in Pakistan, Zubair and Zubair (2017) found that women reconstruct submission to patriarchal ideology and norms as a type of agency within gender discourse. Submission or silence, for them, might be proactive and strategic and can be utilized as a form of resistance to patriarchy's dominating culture. From a Western feminist perspective, Pakistani women's actions could be rendered as oppressed and victimized. Not only the Westerners but also some scholars from Third-World countries also set the West as a model, the modern and ideal (Kandiyoti, 1977). As Orientalists define themselves through the other, non-Westerners also should not identify themselves as against the other, the West, and aim to define themselves within themselves instead (Afkhami, 1995; Spivak, 1993). According to Spivak (1993), self-creation in the Third-World countries by their otherness to the West resembles the definition of women by its otherness to men. Furthermore, the knowledge created in the West, and exported to the East, like any other commodity, aims gain (Spivak, 1993). While looking at East within Eastern dynamics, postcolonial theory has served Islamist women as a theoretical resource. They started to question both Western understanding of modernization and the new state of Islamism and religiosity (Yılmaz, 2015).

The main type of knowledge on women's space and role in congregational prayer came through Qur'anic interpretations, which are mostly generated through patriarchal power's views and societal attitudes, reinforcing unequal cultural norms

and beliefs (Kahera, 2009). Utilizing Lefebvre's concept of the spatial triad, Edward Soja (as cited in Öz, 2021), defines three kinds of spaces; Firstspace which is physical, can be measured and seen, Secondspace which is mental and based on how the people inhabiting the space conceive it, and lastly, Thirdspace which is social and about the way that people live in and experience the space. Besides physical obstacles, Secondspace has an impact on women's lived experiences since it mandates a set of norms that are reproduced in everyday activities and governs women's performative acts while men are responsible for the production of information (Öz, 2021). Women's exclusion from the production and interpretation of knowledge reinforces existing gender dynamics, while physical segregation limits women's access to information (Spain, 1992b). It is possible to see its echo in mosque spaces with religious knowledge. Men decide on the conditions of women's relationships with mosques which does not favor women's participation within mosques. Women who do not hold the knowledge accept the situation and reproduce unjust situations.

Mosques also disrupt the people's lived space, Thirdspace by Soja; mosques become places where people perform the lived space based on patterns of unequal power relationships, domination, and subordination, as what Massey (as cited in Öz, 2021) calls 'power-geometry'. Furthermore, men's and women's relationship with mosques is quite different. Mosques have been built and perceived as male-dominated places, and women are seen as transgressing this male-dominated space as out-of-place subjects (Mernissi, 1991). Moreover, women do not hold decision-making power in mosques. Within this unequal power relationship, 'power-geometry', men have much greater control over the spatial organization of the mosque, and women are left secondary in this spatial organization.

There are historically set distinctions between public and private in the Western context, and these distinctions are not independent of power hierarchies embedded in gender roles (Baydar, 2012). In the representation of gendered space, there are separate spheres that are oppositional and hierarchical, consisting of the city, the place of production, the dominant public male realm, and the home, the place of reproduction, and a subordinate private female realm (Rendell, 2000b). There is the

understanding of man being the breadwinner and women being the homemaker. Women and houses are inextricably linked due to the traits of nurturance, cooperation, subjectivity, and emotionalism; in contrast, objectivity, competitiveness, rationalism, and meaningful labor are attributes related to men's world, the public world (Rendell, 2000a).

The public and private distinctions are not sufficient to understand the dynamics of gender and space. Feminists started to question the construction of the binary and oppositional character of spaces. The private is linked with women and perceived as feminine, while according to feminist geographer Gillian Rose (as cited in Baydar, 2012), the authority of hetero-patriarchal norms that state the public as the arena of politics also keeps the private under its power. Therefore, the dual spheres are not symmetrical, and the binarism favors the masculinist power relations as it attributes the public space, power-holding space, to men. Despite the perception that public spaces are static and open to everyone, they are not always fixed or accessible to all; instead, they may be in flux (Johnson & Miles, 2014). In addition, when males utilize open space, it is defined as more public, but when women use it, it is regarded as an extension of the private sphere (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001).

Based on the concept of the right to the city by Lefebvre (as cited in Fenster, 2005), inhabitants have the right to appropriate the urban space and use it in their everyday lives; moreover, they have the right to participate, have a role in the decisions regarding the production of the space. Lefebvre does not mention power relations or gender in his explanation of the right to the city. Some feminist scholars suggest that his definition of public excludes women; while stating 'public', he refers to the middle-upper class, heterosexual men (Fenster, 2005). Fenster (2005) argues that since the decision-making regarding using public space occurs within private space, this exclusion takes away their right to use the private space as well. Therefore, rather than the problem of public and private separation, women's spatial limitation is caused by the masculinist power relations.

The public and private distinction cannot be directly applied to the Islamic context. In Islamic countries, the private and public distinction is determined by the Islamic

concept of mahram (a person with whom one cannot marry) and na-mahram (a person with whom one can marry). Interaction with na-mahram is troublesome for both women and men; consequently, spaces are neither intrinsically public nor private; rather, it is based on whom one interacts with that makes them such (Öz, 2021). The fluidity of the public and private difference in Islamic civilizations stems from limits on women's movement in public spaces, which are dictated by rules that prevent sharing space with people of the opposite sex except for one's husband and those with whom marriage is explicitly banned (Johnson & Miles, 2014).

Stefan Maneval (2019), in his historical study of public and private in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, questions the assumptions that public is only public and private is only private. The borders of the public and private areas are not as fixed as the Western scholars think but are more fluid and can change. Women exchange news indoors; hence the home is not strictly a private sphere (Maneval, 2019). Massey (2005) believes that public spaces are shaped by unequal power relations and exclusion. In the case of women's formation of 'public' in the 'private', Nancy Fraser's (1990) concept of the weak and strong public becomes useful. According to her, the weak public does not hold decision-making power. This concept shows the power asymmetry between men and women but also renders women's domestic public unimportant as they do not hold decision-making power (Maneval, 2019). Women in Jeddah, creating their own so-called weak public through their formal and informal networks are great examples of fluid borders. Furthermore, Maneval states that women have never been absent on the streets but limited. While going from one place to another, women did not spend much time outside to protect their honor; moreover, when women were outside, men were obligated not to look (Maneval, 2019). Therefore, rather than confining women to a separate sphere, the aim was to prevent both genders from coming together if they were not relatives. Thus, the segregated spheres were equally exclusive. In addition, in order for this segregation to apply, one has to have enough financial capacity (Maneval, 2019). Poor women who need to go to work are more visible in public, or poor families who do not have big houses cannot separate rooms for men and women.

Perception of women's place as private causes their further exclusion in the design of public spaces and creates physical and cultural barriers for them. Spatial segregation also reduces access to knowledge. Since the knowledge is in the public realm, women are in a disadvantaged position to get it. Moreover, women's exclusion from the production and interpretation of knowledge reinforces the existing gender dynamics (Spain, 1992b). Attending mosques for women is a form of joining public space; preventing them from using mosques means limiting their access to public life. Women have been excluded and even denied from mosque areas instead of being free to worship, and it demonstrates that mosques are used as a political venue to promote patriarchal gender ideologies (Aryanti, 2013a).

Women's attendance in public spaces cannot be separated from the private space. According to Kıpçak (2016), when equality in the private sphere is ensured, women's participation in the mosque will become easier and increase accordingly. Women who are imposed with housework and childcare due to their gender, struggle to participate in public; when women are liberated from these imposed obligations and the private workloads are distributed among genders equally, women will be able to attend mosques more easily. In addition, women's attendance at places of worship will shift the understanding of the spheres. According to Maritato (2017), women's participation in religious activities in mosques decreases the duality between the public and private spheres, and religion generates a personal third space where the borders between what is inside and outside the house appear to be constantly shifting. Therefore, even though mosques may dissolve the binary character of spheres with women's attendance, the spheres are not symmetrical for men and women, which discourages women from attending from the beginning. Moreover, putting the women secondary is a general problem, but in mosques, the situation is supported by the cultural interpretation of religion.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault explains a new type of discipline, people constantly taking charge of their bodies and maintaining them according to socially and culturally prescribed guidelines; through not only social surveillance but also self-surveillance. Surveillance and gaze regulate people's actions and affect their relationship with space. Men and women follow feminized and masculinized

standards through the use of these gazes (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008). As Foucault illustrates in his interpretation of the panopticon, the ones who gaze upon the subjects are accepted as strong, while those under surveillance are deemed less powerful.

Vision has a vital role in the creation of subjectivity. The placement of bodies in the same locations relative to one another and their visibility to one another create multiple dimensions of the same space (Öz, 2021). Moreover, vision divides space differently depending on whether its subject is a man or a woman (Kirby, 1996). Gender differences are structured on the oppositions of looking and being looked at, desiring and being desired: the male gaze and the female spectacle (Rendell, 2000b). Women are subjected to gaze, especially sexual gaze, being targeted by ‘the power’, the men (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008). Therefore, traditionally women are visual objects that are looked at, and the gaze, inscribed with power, is mainly associated with masculinity. For Kaplan (1983), even though gaze is not a male component, it is accepted as masculine; women can only receive and reciprocate a gaze but are not able to act on it. Kirby (1996) comments that women can obtain the gaze but obtaining it and being where traditionally men were can be interpreted as getting the negative attributes associated with masculinity and losing the good attributes of femininity like the mothership, graciousness, and humaneness.

According to Berger (1972), men’s and women’s social presence is different; being born a woman means being confined into spaces defined by men. Iris Marion Young (2005) states that the culture and the society render women as the ‘other’ and the object compared to men. While being a human means being the subject, having autonomy and creativity, the female human is denied those and has to live in contradiction (Young, 2005). Men look at women while women watch them being looked at; therefore, women are split into two: an object that is surveyed that is female and a subject that does the survey that is male (Berger, 1972). A woman not only looks outside, but she constantly watches and surveys herself and her image. The surveilling gaze of males causes women to focus on their own behavior in a self-surveilling way (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008). They see the outside but are also constantly aware of how they are seen; therefore, their relationship with space

depends on the duality. Furthermore, women's femininity and womanhood are directly related to men as they internalize the object position that comes from men watching women.

In architecture, there is a split between inside and outside; women are treated as hidden objects, objects of desire (Colomina, 1992). In Colomina's analysis of modern houses, it is seen that the one holding the gaze is in a more powerful position than the object of the gaze, as in the case of the house owner and the guest. While the guest can only see the silhouette of the owner, the house owner, the guardian, can detect the guest very easily, which conveys the power. However, contrary to women's being objects of the gaze, in the representation of these modern architectures in various mediums, it is shown that women look at men and men look outside. Unlike the subject having power due to gaze, here, men's looking outside shows their relationship with the outer world, whereas women's world is men. Even though the dynamics of the gaze are changed in this example, it is still men who hold power.

In Islam, women's visibility in public spaces is strictly regulated, as sex segregation is often regarded to be an Islamic requirement (Aryanti, 2013a). As an extension of public spaces, mosques follow the segregation and create power dynamics based on visibility and vision. Women's visibility is first to be given up in the names of coherence and order in mosques. Moreover, women are also always conscious of themselves in the mosques trying to hide due to the accepted norms and hearsays, such as a woman's prayer would not be accepted if a man sees her. Just like men perceive her, she accepts herself as the 'other' in the religious sphere.

While having the gaze is associated with power, and traditionally women are the objects of the gaze, the situation is different in mosques. Women stand behind men during the prayer. While in an unobstructed space, women can see both the male congregation and the mihrab (a niche on the wall of the mosque that directs Mecca and the way of the prayer), men can only see the mihrab. Unlike the expectation, owning this one-way gaze does not empower women over men. It does not render men 'objects' or cause them constant self-surveillance. Today, screens are commonly

used as separators of the men's and women's praying spaces. However, they did not stem from taking the power of the gaze away from women. On the contrary, the screens have been used as a tool to conceal women from the male gaze that may occur before or after the prayer. While not preventing but obstructing the gaze of women, screens are applied to women. Instead of limiting the vision of the 'dangerous' possible gaze owner, men, in mosques, women are confined. Therefore, in a patriarchal space, the power derived from the gaze is still very much bounded to the patriarchal structures, and the gaze cannot challenge these imbalanced power dynamics but only be shaped accordingly.

Women's exclusion in space is not limited to being users but also as professional designers; until recently, they had been excluded from architecture history. The way history is represented is a particular version of the history that is gendered based on the perspective of the author in the past and the historian of today (Rendell, 2000a). Feminist historians concerned about women's exclusion from the field of architecture have attempted to create an alternative history of architecture by revealing evidence of women's contributions to the field, and they reclaimed female designers' work (Rendell, 2000a). Women's contribution is started to be rendered visible; moreover, women started to fight to exist to remain in the male-dominated profession. Women have always been assumed to be linked to the interior and decorative aspects of the profession. Other aspects of design, management, and construction of a building have been perceived as men's jobs, which raises an authorship issue on the building (Rendell, 2000c). Feminist architectural history has expanded to include the importance of theory, particularly critical and gender theory, in interpreting historical architectural representations; on the other hand, women in the architectural profession continue to be polarized between those who want to remain gender-neutral and those who want to be vocal about their feminist aims (Rendell, 2000c). Many women prefer to be known and mentioned as professional architects rather than being called women architects.

'Woman architect' implies gender to the term and draws an other to architect, which is male; on the other hand, the masculinity in the supposed-to-be gender-neutral term diminishes (Burns, 2012). According to Burns (2012), the term 'woman architect' is

rather political and not only a description; it is situational and depends on why it is used on by whom it is used. Theorizing the differences between women's descriptions of their agency and identity and the various political uses of the term 'woman architect' may be aided by the flexible use of the phrases 'male architect' and 'female architect', as well as recognition of gender's instability and constant formation and reformation (Burns, 2012). Even though she dislikes the term, Burns prefers to use 'woman architect' as a short-hand device as means of women in architecture. In this thesis, I will also be using woman architect/designer and sometimes female architect/designer, male architect/designer in order to talk about the gendered dimension of the profession. However, even though the unified 'Woman' category can be used as a way for political gain for all women, it should be noted that the 'Woman' is not monolithic (Burns, 2012). Therefore, while the term 'Woman architect' sounds specific, it is also diverse.

Mosque architecture is a field dominated by male designers. For this thesis, based on the interviews conducted with female mosque architects, it became visible that some of them do not want to be identified by their gender and think that it does not have any relation to their design, while others emphasize how their design reflects their feminist ideals. On the one hand, the need to stress gender comes from the man being always the subject. The absolute, 'man' designates human beings in general; women emphasize their 'otherness' with this specification (De Beauvoir, 1956). On the other, this emphasis on the gender of female architects helps to render women visible in the profession and normalize their existence in the field.

There is no fixed mosque prototype coming from the religion itself, but both architects and clients depend on cultural or regional models based on the customs and habits of the Muslim society (Kahera et al., 2009). Moreover, architects also produced innovative mosque designs during the modern period. A difficulty the architects designing mosques face is since mosques are adequate for flexible design, how to arrange the women's section; moreover, there is a variety of standpoints by women users as well. Some women prefer segregated areas because they are accustomed to them; others see spatial segregation as a source of discomfort, repression, and prejudice since it prevents full participation in the congregation and

violates the Qur'anic commandment that men and women should be treated equally (Kahera et al., 2009).

For De Certeau (1984), using and belonging to space are linked. For women to feel belonging to the mosque, they need to use the space as part of their daily life. The cultural-symbolic connotations of space determine women's spatial mobility; in this sense, religious and cultural standards produce spaces of belonging and not belonging, which in certain societies become banned and authorized places for women (Fenster, 2005). Women's attendance at mosques is much less in comparison to that of men; furthermore, they are not consulted sufficiently in a new mosque construction which does not allow them to participate in the design and decision-making processes (Kahera et al., 2009). Architectural space is cultural; culture enables women's exclusion from the mosque. To start a new beginning and encourage them to participate in the mosque more, women must be part of the decision-making process in the design (Kahera et al., 2009).

2.3. ISLAM AND FEMINISM

Mernissi (1991) argues that contemporary Muslims forget to remember the equality of sexes once existed. Today, Muslim women get subordinated by both secular and Muslim men. Secular men look down on Islamist women because of their headscarves and see them as backward; Islamist men use religion to silence women because they believe they have the right (Marshall, 2008). For women, religion is used against them to reinforce their secondary position. Moreover, Muslim women are mistreated more than Muslim men because, unlike Muslim men, their headscarf prevents them from blending into the rest of society. Their beliefs are reflected on their bodies. However, these challenges do not stop devout women from demanding their rights.

Islamic feminism attempts to advance a progressive agenda for women's rights within an Islamic context, and Muslim feminists are women's rights activists with religious sensibilities; they believe Islam is the solution to the inequality problems (Gonzalez, 2013). It is a new type of feminism rooted in Islamic discourse to empower women within Islam (Zubair & Zubair, 2017). Scholars argue that the

inferior status is not given to women by Islam but caused by men's gender-biased interpretation of the Qur'an (Shaaban, 1995; Wadud, 2006). Furthermore, they think keeping women ignorant and preventing them from joining public life is against Qur'an (Shaaban, 1995). Their works can go beyond the search for gender equality in Qur'an, and they may question power relations in the Muslim societies where men gained power and kept it (Sirri, 2021).

Muslim feminist gets challenged by both Muslim patriarchy and white Western feminists who strive to render Muslim women invisible; furthermore, it is criticized and misunderstood by scholars by being an oxymoron, a new ideology, and limited to feminist discourse (Sirri, 2021). According to Western feminists, there are two ways to stem from patriarchal oppression: resistance and oppression; Sirri (2021) states that Islamic feminism is a synthesis denying the two choices. Women do not have to choose between abandoning their faith or accepting the imposition by men (Shaheed, 1995), which neglects the chance of claiming one's right within the accepted religious norms.

Muslim feminists utilize both Islamist and secular arguments to support women's rights; they act as a bridge between conservatives and secular feminists (Arat, 2016). Despite their variations, Islamic feminisms are united in their resistance to the prevailing conservative perspective within the Islamic tradition, which naturalizes and essentializes the manufactured inequalities between men and women (Sirri, 2021). In Iran, women conscious of the inequality between genders but afraid to use Western feminist ideologies have seen the Qur'an as a resource of equality (Ali, 2014). In Malaysia, women, against the passive and obedient role they were given, have shown their objection by uniting under organizations (Ali, 2019; Sirri, 2021). In Egypt, women rejecting the patriarchal theological understanding have started discourse based on equality (Ali, 2014). Beyond the Middle East and Islamic countries, in Europe, too, Islamic feminism is included in the debates. There are organizations that work globally on the rights of women within the frameworks of human rights and Islam, such as Sisters in Islam, WISE, Musawah.

In Turkey, discussions on Islamic feminism started parallel to other countries, with the rise of Islamism towards the end of the 1980s. In the 80s, against the ban on the veil, a movement by Muslim women to wear the headscarf in state institutions and schools has started (Marshall, 2008). Starting with questioning secular ideology, Muslim women advocated a shift away from state-sanctioned feminism toward more pluralist feminisms; later, their voices became critical in challenging an Islamically justified ideology's expanding authoritarianism (Gökarıksel, 2018). The Islamist parties in Turkey supported the veil as a means of visibility of Islam. However, the Islamist party ruling Turkey is against the feminist discourses, and being a woman is defined through being a mother (Mutluer, 2019); therefore, Muslim feminists and Islamist parties in Turkey are strictly separated in terms of their ideals. Women who firstly believed in women's rights work done by the Islamist government started to depart their ideals from the government. Muslim women in Turkey are engaged in women's problems beyond the headscarf. They are interested in increasing educational and career possibilities for women and reducing violence against women (Arat, 2016). Moreover, they aim to prevent the secondary role of women in social life caused by the unequal power dynamics between the genders. Mosques are one of the social spaces that Muslim women resist male domination. It also became visible that the equality of genders in mosque spaces is not going to be given by the authorities but can be earned by the women users themselves.

2.4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE MOSQUE IN MODERN TURKEY

The Turkish Republic was established in 1923, the Khalifate was abolished in 1924, family law was totally secularized in 1926, and the Turkish Republic became a 'secular state' in 1937 by a constitutional amendment; the separation and autonomy of religion from governmental authority was never encouraged by Turkish secularism; on the other hand, religion was under the control of the government in order to align religious vocabulary and instruction with modernist and rationalist values (Göle, 1997). Even though the Turkish constitution does not specify the religion of the country, Sunni Islam serves as a proxy for the state religion.

Turkey, a secular country with a Muslim-majority population, has a different relationship with mosques compared to other Islamic countries. During the

secularization process in the republic's early years, mosques lost their social function; however, they continued having a political character to create the ideal civilization (Parlak, 2020). They played a crucial role in creating the new regime through sermons and religious officials; moreover, as places occupied five times a day, they united religious education, prevented institutional differentiation, and frightened the new regime opposers (Parlak, 2020). Functions that mosques previously served were taken from them, and instead, Western models of institutions and schools were built. Mosques were left with praying purposes. Moreover, since the emphasis was given to other directions in the creation of a modern nation, mosques did not get enough attention. During the early republican years, mosque architecture was not a part of the cultural manifestations of nation-building (Batuman, 2018b). There was not only the absence of mosque construction, but also many mosques were shut down and either demolished or used for other purposes (Moustafa, 2013; Parlak, 2020). *Diyanet*, an organization under the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, was established in 1924 aiming to provide religious service, handling morality and worship related topics and the management, and leadership of mosques (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2013a). It should be noted that *Diyanet* does not play a role in mosque construction, mosques are constructed by private benefactors and foundations, it is a civil area. *Diyanet* is only responsible for taking over the mosque after its completion. Communities that wanted mosques had to build them with their own means. Ottoman mosque architecture was used as a reference for the continuation of mosque tradition due to the lack of discussions on mosque images until the 1950s Democrat Party's aim of reconciling with Islamic identity (Batuman, 2018b).

A few attempts to create a new form of modern architecture for mosques in the 1950s (Divleli, 2013) were interrupted by the construction of the Kocatepe Mosque in the 60s (Figure 2.1). Initially designed to be a negotiation between secular modernism and Islamic identity, Kocatepe Mosque was going to be a big modernist mosque located in a modern area of the capital as a symbol. After the technical difficulties in achieving the modern shell structure and the coup in Turkey, the modernist design of the mosque was changed to a traditional one, and the foundation of neo-Ottoman, mimicry of classical Ottoman mosque architecture style was started (Batuman,

2018b; Arkitera, 2009). Moreover, to help the community that wants to build mosques, the General Directorate of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*) since the 1970s, and the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs (*Türk Diyanet Vakfı*) since the 1980s provided blueprints (*tip proje*) which were in traditional styles.



Figure 2.1. Kocatepe Mosque (source: https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dosya:Kocatepe_Camii_Ankara.JPG)

Since the 1980s, Muslim-majority countries, including Turkey, have witnessed the rise of Islamisms¹ (Çınar, 2008), which have redefined Islamic identity in their respective contexts. After the 1980s, Islamic revivalism became apparent either in the forms of Islamic revolutions, Islamic republics, or reflection into secular states in the Muslim World (Esposito, 1985). Islamic revivalism means the regeneration of Islam in Muslim personal and public life; it is observed with an increase in religious activities such as mosque attendance, Islamic dress, calls for the implementation of Islamic laws, religious publications, Islamist organizations and activists (Esposito, 1985).

¹ Batuman uses the terminology plural as there are various political manifestations of religious power to shape the social realm. See Batuman, B. (2021). Introduction: Islamisms and the built environment: Notes for a research agenda. In B. Batuman (Ed.) *Cities and Islamisms on the politics and production of the built environment*. (pp. 1-12), UK & New York: Routledge.

As an echo of Islamism, in Turkey, Islamist parties started to gain power; in the late 1980s, an Islamist movement appeared around the Refah Party (Welfare Party) began to generate a counter-discourse against official modernism (Çınar, 2008). Since July 1996, with the power of the Refah Party, a member of the coalition government, the Islamization of public discourse and its relationship to gender issues became more apparent in Turkish politics (Göle, 1997). Religion started to be visible in the public sphere again. Mosques as public places became an important item on the agenda of the Islamist government. In 2002, AKP (Justice and Development Party) an Islam-based political party obtained the victory in elections, and its leader known for his religious identity became the Prime Minister for the first time (Çınar, 2008). Similar to Kocatepe Mosque's case, even though there were negotiations between modern and traditional mosque architecture at the beginning of the Islamist government² that is still in power today, it resulted in the preference for the neo-ottoman style. At the beginning of AKP's ruling, there was a search for new a new form of Islamism, which is possible to see in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque (Batuman, 2018b) which I will analyze in detail in the following chapters. During their time, mosque architecture outside of mimicry of Ottoman-style started to be more apparent. However, after the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, the AKP government returned back to the neo-Ottoman mosque style as part of the representation of the Turkish Islamic identity. An eclectic approach using modern technology and mimicry of the Ottoman mosque style is preferred as a means of nostalgia, submission to Islam, and a new representation of the nation (Batuman, 2018a, b). Mosques do not solely serve as praying places, and they are symbols of power; political powers have been using building mosques in prestigious places of the city as a way to show power (Ökten, 2013). In Turkey, the biggest debate on mosques has been about their style; however, beyond their aesthetical concerns and physical qualities, mosques serve as part of creating a new ideology.

² There have been debates on whether the last twenty years dominant political party AKP is Islamist or not. In her book review, Çınar states that Hale and Özbudun do not define AKP as Islamist but describe it as a conservative-democratic secular party, Atasoy calls AKP pro-Islamic, Banu and Eligür define AKP as an Islamist party while claiming it is opposed to democracy. See Çınar, A. (2011). The justice and development party: Turkey's experience with Islam, democracy, liberalism, and secularism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43, 529-541.

The emergence of Islamist movements also has raised interest in the link between religion and politics, as well as the role of the state in expressing and enforcing it; moreover, the dress, movement, and general position of women were the most direct and apparent targets in Islamization efforts (Kandiyoti, 1991). In Turkey, women were never separated from political ideologies, but they were always employed as representatives. Islamism and nationalism appear similar in their conservative treatment of gender, as both ideologies cast women as repositories of tradition and culture, with their bodies serving as powerful symbols of collective identity (Mahmood, 2003). In the early republican years, they were agents of the secular nation-state (Alyanak, 2019), women's bodies became the symbol of the nation (Mutluer, 2019). The headscarf was banned in 1986 when the Higher Education Council issued a directive requiring students to wear modern apparel in schools and applied in public institutions under the secularist ideals of the state (Çınar, 2008). Moreover, university students wearing the Islamic headscarf in public spaces gave Islam a new kind of visibility in the public domain, opposite to the state's secularist principles (Çınar, 2008). The ban continued even after AKP's victory in elections in 2002 and could not be removed until 2008 under the Islamist party, which shows the preparation for the necessary grounds and negotiations. Unlike the prediction, Islamist parties in Turkey supported the relationship of women with mosques as a way of making religion visible in public spaces. As part of the social transformation of mosques, women's involvement both in terms of their numbers and having a say in the mosque has increased (Batuman, 2018b). However, the reason that strengthened the support for the appearance of women in mosques was detaching women from non-governmental congregations and instead, uniting women under the same religious interpretation by the *Diyanet*, thus increasing the state's control over Islamic practices and their politicization (Yılmaz, 2015). As in the government's agenda, *Diyanet* also encouraged women to come to the mosque. It made announcements and speeches to support women to go to mosques (Meriç, 2012). In 2017, *Diyanet* established the Department of Family and Religious Guidance (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2020a) targeting women. Moreover, women's spaces in mosques started to be questioned.

2.5. WOMEN AND MOSQUE SPACE: CONTEXTUALIZING THE TURKISH CASE GLOBALLY

With the rise of feminism and call for gender equality, Muslim women worldwide try to define women's place in Islam rather than accepting norms imposed by local patriarchy and Western discourse. While they reinterpret Islam, they also claim their places in mosques where they were initially neglected or had a secondary role.

Women's resistance against male domination in mosques can be interpreted by the geography and culture they are in. Around the world, against the male-dominant mosques, there are implementations of 'women-only', 'gender-mixed', and 'women-focused/women-led' mosques in which men and women can pray side by side and a female imam can lead the prayer (Nyhagen, 2019). In Turkey, women's discussion on Islam differs; instead of whether a female imam can lead the prayers, it focuses on whether women can enter the main prayer hall and pray together with men. Therefore, the debate is about the equality of genders, usage of space concerning gender, and power relations based on space (Yılmaz, 2015).

Muslim women around the world face various challenges in mosques and answer to these challenges differently. One of the earliest examples of a women-only and women-led mosque was in a community in China. Women of China's Hui Muslim communities had an important role in spreading and preserving Islamic knowledge against the assimilation danger. Because of the sex segregation caused by both their religion and culture, women had to obtain the role of an educator during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Jaschok, 2012). They obtained religious spaces to themselves. With the growth of the institutionalized female religious education, their authority also increased. Women could become an imam; however, although their responsibilities and duties were the same as those of an imam, they used a different title not to cause dissonance (Jaschok, 2012). The women's mosques were autonomous; the administration would also be managed by a respected, elected old woman (Jaschok, 2012). The mosques did not come to being with feminist ideals; the aim was to gain knowledge when they get to have free time after house chores and to provide a shelter for women outside of the public and male gaze. However, in this historical case, the segregated religious space helped them be agents.

Today, many Muslim migrants are living in the West. Similar to Muslims in China, immigrants living in Western countries also hold onto their values tighter in order not to be assimilated and to protect their culture. In her thesis, Öz (2021) discusses how the first generation of Turkish immigrants in Germany reproduce boundaries within the mosque. Women are seen as subordinate, and they, too, accept the secondary role in the mosques. On the other hand, a community is not monolithic, younger generation women dislocate the older generation's conservative attitudes (Öz, 2021). They turn mosques into more inclusive spaces integrating socializing and educational advancement while bringing the culture closer to that of the German society and integrating women more. When the migrant community loosens its ties with its home country's traditions, they appropriate the 'Eastern' typology in a 'Western' way. Moreover, the community seeks the betterment of space and demands equal rights accordingly.

However, although the new generation of Muslim women in Germany is not afraid to voice the patriarchal challenges they experience and are more involved in Islamic activities, they are still less visible in the Islamic public sphere than men (Kuppinger, 2012). According to Kuppinger's (2012) case study in Stuttgart, women move into public cultural centers instead of mosques with the thought of mosques as limiting, male dominant, closely supervised, and not suitable places. Therefore, the Muslim female community in Germany celebrates their Islamic identity in alternative spaces outside of the given Islamic structure and feels freer rather than claiming space in mosques. While doing so, they do not limit themselves to private spaces but interact with public spaces.

Regardless of gender, attending the mosque for public worship is accepted as merit (Kahera et al., 2009). Therefore, it is possible to see physical, spatial, and administrative improvements in mosques for women in western countries; on the other hand, some mosques in the West tend to follow the tradition of Islamic countries. In the US, imported from and supported by the Muslim World, it is possible to see implementations and conditions that hinder women's existence in mosques. According to Nomani & Nomani (2003), in the United States, women are given a separate but unequal space to pray in; they are expected to enter the mosque

space through back doors and pray in isolated spaces, behind a barrier, curtain, or wall in roughly two out of every three mosques, away from the main sanctuary where males pray; moreover, they are not given a leadership role in mosque boards (Nomani & Nomani, 2003). Furthermore, Nomani and Nomani (2003) narrate their experience in one specific example as to take an activity within the mosque, women have to communicate with the men on the mosque board in a way that prevents their direct relationship with men; they have to give a written note carried by the children to the men. Their separation from the activities held in the mosque makes them feel like they are alienated and not wanted. They not only stay away from the joy of communal praying but also decision-making processes and access to knowledge. While some women accept the faith that renders them secondary, some women try to gain their agency by entering the mosque through the main doors (Nomani & Nomani, 2003). Moreover, as a solution to fix the unjust rules in the implementation in mosques, some Muslim women in Western countries appeal to legal systems rather than fighting within Islamic culture (Nomani & Nomani, 2003).

Against arguments in which women are abstracted from mosques, Jamal (2005), in his study states that Arab women in the US involve in mosque activities more than men; their identity is linked to a broader sense of Islamic community and the Arabic World in the US, whereas men situate themselves based on their economic situation. Women's role in mosques in this example is more prominent compared to men involving political decision-making (Jamal, 2005). It gives women the opportunity to be involved in mosques; however, it does not challenge the roles assigned to both sexes. Immigrant men, in this case, prioritize economic success over having a political saying in the mosque and leave the mosque space to women. Even though women have authority over mosques, it is because men are given up on it since mosques are not perceived as crucial as their jobs anymore. In this example, men deteriorating the mosque's value, opens the door of mosques to women.

In the UK, similar to the US, women are not involved in decision-making processes and do not hold management roles; additionally, even though they want to integrate into mosques more, it is not possible due to the existing conditions and space. Shannahan's (2013) study on how to make mosques better places for women shows

that; there needs to be a separate space, services, and activities for women, women should be included in the decision-making process, and lastly, the imam should be available to women. However, it is essential not to make women feel inferior and locate them in an unwanted environment by creating a separate space. In one of the interviews, a female user complains about the space she is given; how dirty the ablution rooms are, how isolated the praying area is and how small the entrances are; moreover, besides the spatial qualities, she states that she is said not to bring her child (Shannahan, 2013: 6). The space specifically left for women assigns her a secondary role, but also the role she is given by the society, the caregiver, is denying her right in the mosque. It is the cultural gender practices that limit women's rights and police their behaviors.

In places with large Muslim minorities, such as the USA and Europe, Islamist feminist organizations pioneered in generating academic discussions on the reinterpretation of the Qur'an from a women's perspective (Yıldız, 2015). Mirroring China's women-only mosques, some Muslim women in Western countries have founded women-focused or women-led mosques in response to male-dominated mosques (Nyhagen, 2019). The first example was the Women's Mosque of America in the US which was opened in 2015. In the mosque, worships are led by women in an effort to empower women and create a space where women feel welcomed (The Women's Mosque of America, n.d.). Besides this mosque, in the US, there were experiments where a female imam, this time, led both men's and women's prayers. Amina Wadud led the Friday prayer in a mixed-gender congregation in New York in 2005 (Ghafournia, 2020). However, those were not permanent events and also triggered controversy.

As in the US, in the UK also, a new type of mosque is initiated in which women manage and lead; they may be the imam or not (Nyhagen, 2019). In a mosque in Norway, women who felt uncomfortable in the women's section started to occupy male prayer rooms. Nyhagen (2019) mentions that women who wanted to follow what has been said by the imam entered the male's section, and men moved forward to open space for women. When women enter the room, men move forward, which shows the changes in power structures require men's willingness to share and there is

a need for negotiation (Nyghagen, 2019). It does not challenge the alignment of genders, first men and then women; however, it challenges the space advocated for each gender and the mosque's male-centeredness. Women going beyond their confined space in mosques and praying with men in the 'main' prayer hall shift their other and secondary roles parallel to the space they occupy; they become part of the 'main' users within the 'main' hall. However, the power holder in mosques, men, not helping out women and seeing them as equals would continue the quarrel, which in some cases goes to expelling women from mosques. Occupying a traditionally male space depends as much on men's agreement as women's effort. Beyond woman-centered mosques; in Denmark, and several places in the United States and Canada, some of the mosques are queer-inclusive, some of them are trans-friendly; some of them are also concerned about accessibility to the mosque space supporting women's ritual leadership and gender-mixed groups (Ali, 2019).

In non-Islamic countries, mosques have become places to strengthen the identity of Muslim immigrants. They help the Muslim population integrate into the host country and define their own space and position (Kuppinger, 2012). On the other hand, it is possible to see grouping among different cultures; each community has its own mosque, or within a mosque, people from the same ethnicity pray together, which once again shows the cultural domination of Islam (Shannahan, 2013). Therefore, besides gender, ethnicity plays a role in the political dynamics of mosques, and different elements reduce the welcoming feeling of mosques. The differences in gender and ethnicity and assessment of one superior to the other prevent people from attending those mosques and cause them to seek other mosques if available.

In South Africa, where Muslims are the minority but no longer hold the migrant status and have existed for a long time, women's access to the mosque is still limited. Therefore, similar to Turkey's case, women's organizations, as a political act, try to obtain equal access and space to mosques. In South Africa, there are campaigns that aim to provide equal access to women in mosques, which means sharing the same space with men. For instance, the members of the Muslim Youth Movement prayed side by side with men in the main prayer hall with a thin rope in between (Ismail, 2002: 5). Activists distributed pamphlets with hadiths to support women's attendance

to Eid prayer; even the imam urged them to join (Ismail, 2002: 4,5). These endeavors to integrate women into mosques and demand equal access were political acts during the country's liberation fight in which minorities in South Africa were trying to create a space for themselves in the new democracy while taking into account women's rights (Ismail, 2002).

In Islamic countries such as Iran, mosques are part of everyday life in which people can go there even for resting. However, Iranian women, too, do not have an equal share of mosques compared to men (Torab, 2007). Women enter through a side door and are only permitted to use spots on the margins separated from men. After the Islamic Republic, mosque spaces turned into political places with sermons; therefore, women were excluded; however, this vision of mosques as men's spaces by the state is contested by women (Torab, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, women are excluded from the religious spheres and do not pray in the mosques other than the Tarawih prayer, instead advised to pray at home (Le Renard, 2012). According to Le Renard (2012), contesting patriarchal authority and resolving the constraints among Saudi women would be unlikely, and instead, they get a compromising position. Men not keen on sharing their space in the mosque lead women to create their own space outside the mosque. They pray together and educate each other; however, the space is called a prayer space instead of a mosque, and they do not lead the prayer (Le Renard, 2012). If women-only spaces did not exist, Saudi women could be totally excluded from Islamic circles.

In East Java, Indonesia, women's role in mosques is defined through having a part in charitable donations, attending female religious cycles, and planning the logistics of specific Islamic holy days events under the authority of the mosque board's patriarchal dominance (Ch, 2017). Their role is passive, and they accept this subordination not to clash with the cultural norms. Culture overpowers religion. Their lack of control of the mosque board causes a distance in their usage of mosques, too. On the other hand, in Indonesia, women not finding a place in the mosque in a neighborhood caused them to find their own space outside of that mosque and create their own religious spheres. Following the Muhammadiyah organization, an Islamic reform movement of early twentieth century, a women's

mosque was built by a female scholar where women were the imams and preachers (Aryanti, 2013a). However, women of the congregation did not want to withdraw themselves totally but challenged the regular mosques' male area by occupying it with the claim that women should stand behind the men, not in a separate room (Aryanti, 2013a). Moreover, they always encouraged women to learn Islamic knowledge for equal opportunity.

In Malaysia, a progressive effort is underway to shift the mosque's roles and functions from a place of prayer and seclusion to a communal center; moreover, a significant number of Muslim women have expressed their dissatisfaction with the mosque's amenities as they discourage women from attending mosques (Suratkon et al., 2017). According to Suratkon et al.'s (2017) case study in Malaysia to create a better environment for women in mosques, they found out that women feel discouraged from participating in mosques due to the bad conditions their spaces are in; they demand circulation areas that are closed to the public in which men cannot see women going from ablution rooms to praying spaces; they want children's areas and better integration of the waiting room to the ongoing activities in the hall. If women's demands are achieved, the mosques will be more inclusive, and women's claims on mosques can contest the existing hegemonic gender norms and structures (Nyghagen, 2019).

In Egypt, as part of Islamic revivalism in the late 1970s, a women's mosque movement emerged that aimed to infuse Islam into everyday lives; moreover, women played a role in teaching and studying these practices (Lewis, 2005). Even though they were part of a Muslim women's organization and supported women's relationship with mosque spaces and Islamic knowledge, they were not feminists. They changed the male-centered character of mosques (Mahmood, 2009); however, their motivation did not stem from feminist ideals but piety. What clashes with feminism is that despite their female identity being celebrated within mosque spaces, their participation is structured by and upholds the views of subordination to male authority. However, as Mahmood (2009) discusses, the agency is more than a synonym for opposition to dominance but is defined as a capacity for action to enable and create what used to be subordination. While submitting to patriarchal

authority, their bodily existence in a traditionally ‘male space’ demonstrates the room for negotiation.

In a blog, a devout Turkish writer Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, narrates her experience with mosques in Turkey. In Karaköy Yeraltı Mosque, where she also wanted to visit companions of prophet Muhammad’s turbeh, she was warned by the male congregation three different times with the objections of blocking the way, even though there was no one occupying the men’s section, and it was not prayer time (Ramazanoğlu, 2011). In Turkey, turbehs are places where people visit, pray and make sincere wishes. They even attract more attention from women rather than men (Öksüz, 2019). However, in Ramazanoğlu’s case, her access to turbeh was denied because it was in a mosque in which the women’s section did not hold the privilege of seeing the turbeh. She then compares her experience in Turkey with Al-Aqsa Mosque. “There are no partitions and curtains between men’s and women’s sections; Palestinian women are praying behind men; in one corner, a male hodja is giving lectures; on the other, a female teacher is making a speech” (Ramazanoğlu, 2011). She describes this environment as a sacred atmosphere where voices, praying, and brotherhood-sisterhood feelings are intermingling. In Turkey, women’s praying space tends to be in undesirable conditions. Ramazanoğlu (2011) thinks that the reason for it is the encounter with the West that led to assimilation fear and protection instincts; to protect the values, women must be invisible, similar to Muslim immigrants in the West.

2.6. CONCLUSION REMARKS ON WOMEN AND MOSQUE IN TURKEY

Even though radical examples such as a female imam leading the Friday prayer in a mixed-gender congregation became visible, these trials do not include all the Muslim communities. Some women do not want to challenge the existing political dynamics in mosques but also seek better places for themselves. It is seen that Muslim women around the world have similar problems with attending mosques. Women worldwide are given secondary roles, rendered invisible in mosques. Although their taking part in mosques differs based on their culture, they are never equal compared to men. If they get to have a nice space, they do not have authority in the mosque board; if they have authority, their role is underrated or the name is changed to something else not

to challenge the patriarchal norms. Interestingly, while they are unwanted in places of worship, women have been perceived as the vital characters in raising children with Islamic values and have given great responsibility.

Muslim women around the world try to reach equal access to religious knowledge and obtain spatial equality in places of worship. Women try to highlight the difference between religion and culture and do not want to be excluded from the religious circles. There are two main approaches for women to negotiate their space within the religious sphere. Firstly, they create their own separate space instead of transgressing the so-called men's spaces in order not to clash with patriarchal authority and still access Islamic knowledge. Sometimes they prefer to be outside of the mosque to be free from the control and the limits it brings. Secondly, there is resistance by women who demand betterment and want to pray in the same conditions as men. In either case, women have a crucial role in contesting male domination in religious spaces. Moreover, their creation of space and resistance in mosques are also reflected in the architecture field; female designers became part of the claim in mosque spaces. It is not possible to think Turkish Muslim women's community as monolithic; however, devout women fighting for their 'right to the mosque' became more visible in the media, and women architects started to take part in mosque architecture; therefore, the latter is a bigger force in Turkey.

The issue of gender segregation in religious places has been a major topic among academics in various social contexts, including Turkey. Unlike the academic study of the gender difference in mosques, there has been a little public conversation in Turkey about how gender inequality is perpetuated in sacred places (Nas, 2021). With the penetration of feminist discourses into Islamic topics, women started to demand their rights and not solely accept what was given to them by men. Some Muslim women and men claim that the unjust situation is not 'real Islam', and Islam belongs to both genders. Muslim women argue that their role in mosque architecture is enormous since they play a significant role in collecting donations, but their efforts are neglected (Kocaman, 2021). Women who are against being positioned subordinate in mosques created communities where they talk about their experiences and share women-friendly mosques with each other as better choices to pray in. They

do not want to pray in a space in which the logic is being invisible to men; pray and leave; they want to feel the atmosphere in the mosque with visual access to the mihrab.

The idea of the mosque as a male space threatens women's existence in mosques in Turkey. Women are not given priority in mosques and have to pray in undesirable conditions. Sometimes, women who want to pray in the mosque are forced to leave by the congregations. Women in Turkey are against this position and trying to obtain their own space within the mosque. However, pioneer initiations of Islamic feminism around the world did not reflect itself on mosques in Turkey, and Turkey had a more conservative attitude. Female imam and gender-mixed praying were out of the debate. They aimed to have equal spatial opportunities with men, they sometimes transgressed into the men's section.

Noticing the unwanted situations women face in mosques, authorities in Turkey, also, started to give opportunities to women to act as mosque speakers, instructors, and issuers of state-sanctioned fatwas where women are included in mosque authorities and state bureaucracy (Kalmbach, 2012). Female religious leaders in Turkey saw the lacking in the women's part of the congregation; therefore, they initiated projects for the improvement of the female sections. Women were given a chance to pray under the dome and share the spiritual atmosphere of the mosque with men.

In order to overcome the patriarchal character of mosques, women users need to claim the space with their attendance. However, their attendance at mosques is directly related to the condition of their spaces in mosques. Moreover, the male domination in mosques is not limited to the user perspective; male architects have been governing mosque architecture. Very recently, women architects started to be involved in places of worship. The two positions of women as users and designers will be the focus of the following chapters, and they will look at women's usage and production of mosque spaces.



CHAPTER 3

WOMEN MOSQUE USERS

Today, women can work and study together with men, but they are still not welcome in mosques as much as men. However, thanks to the rising awareness of gender equality, women's involvement in places of worship has been supported, and providing equal access to everyone has become the agenda of Islamic societies (Aryanti, 2013b). Even though religious officials have started to work on women's participation in mosques; it is the women users, agents, that make the difference. Women demand better places in mosques and take agency; they claim their space within the existing dynamics through transgressing and resisting.

This chapter will examine the relationship between mosques and women as their users. I will begin with a brief discussion on how the spatial segregation in mosques works through architectural and physical elements. I will look into the Turkish authorities' approach to female mosque users to increase women's participation in mosques. Then I will examine women's claim for the agency via occupation of space in the mosque and investigate how women situate themselves and what they want to change and achieve. After examining the female mosque user's formation of a campaign, I will look into patriarchy's responses to female users' appropriation of mosque spaces. Lastly, I will examine five case studies in detail to understand women's space within the mosques.

3.1. SEPARATION OF MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SECTIONS IN MOSQUES

Architectural elements such as walls, doors, windows, stairs, columns, screens have the power of directing our perspective of movement and sight, allowing or denying access; these spatial arrangements create a hierarchy (Aryanti, 2013b). Moreover, in Muslim societies, gender plays a huge role in spatial differences. Schick (2020) claims that spatial differences bring power differences, and there has been an asymmetrical power production and continuation in genders. According to Sibley (1992), place means power; it provides governance and has control over exclusion. Place plays a role in the excluded ones in two ways; it designates them into marginal and leftover spaces and confirms them with otherness, and it supports the division while rendering the excluded ones invisible (Sibley, 1992). According to Dialmy (as cited in Schick, 2020), women's subordination comes from the nature of the space assigned to them; in a similar way, men's dominance is a result of the acceptance of the superiority of the masculine space.

In contrast to Western societies, Islamic culture expresses its visions of women in a unique way. Women might be the subjects of orientalism in the West; yet, the female body remains unseen in Islamic civilizations in the public realm, either modestly clothed or missing (Aryanti, 2013b). In Islam, the gaze should be lowered because it has sexual power; but instead of controlling the eye, the cause of temptation, which is the female body, is removed (Aryanti, 2013b). Due to the concern of female sexuality distracting male congregations, women have been excluded in mosques. The distinctive spatial arrangement of mosques can lead to two opposite outcomes for women. Separated spaces specific to women can be an opportunity to provide equality between genders; therefore, mosques would be no longer male-dominated places; on the other hand, acceptance of the segregated spaces that privilege men can reinforce inequality (Nyhagen, 2019). Therefore, the spaces given to both gender should have the same quality, or the spaces can be shared instead of being divided.

Schick (2020: 167) compares women's spatial existence with the 'archipelago'. The islands are sub places for women in the everlasting ocean, which is men's place. The islands are women's section in mosques, limited, and the movements are strictly

controlled, whereas the ocean is the main area of mosques not limited compared to women's (Kıpçak, 2016). Even though the borders between men's and women's spaces are permeable and not rigid, the spaces are not equally designed, and they are asymmetrical (Schick, 2020). Women are expected to enter the mosque through back doors and pray in isolated spaces; mosques provide separate but unequal accommodations for them (Nomani & Nomani, 2003). The main prayer hall's prominence confirms the inferiority of the other spaces. The presence of male figures in the minbar (a platform consisting of steps where the imam gives sermons), mihrab, and pulpit underlines the acceptance of males' superior positions in mosque spaces (Aryanti, 2013b). On the other hand, the separation of genders in mosques is imaginary as much as it is physical; it shows how to be a Muslim girl and a boy through the spatial organization (Schick, 2020). Gender coding is reproduced through space and continues through space (Schick, 2020). In addition, as Spain (1992b) explains, separation causes an unequal distribution of knowledge. Therefore, women who do not know how to pray as a congregation will never learn how to do it as long as they are not welcome to pray in mosques, in which the lack of knowledge only enhances their absence and continues the situation.

Men's and women's sections in mosques are representations of culture in patriarchal societies. Gender segregation, which is still prevalent in most mosques today, restricts women's full access, obstructs their involvement, and may prevent them from participating at all (Reda, 2004). Women are not visible or audible even though they may attend mosques. Women usually worship separately from men, with the exception of Mecca, where they pray together. Women may be confined to a separate section to the right, left, or behind the men's area, or to the upper floor, mezzanine, or lower level, or may be prohibited from entering the mosque entirely; additionally, a curtain, a wall, a screen, floor level separation, or just a distance can be used as segregating devices (Aryanti, 2013b; Reda, 2004). Segregation, like space, is a social product that is inseparable from time and context. During the era of the prophet Muhammad, there was no separation in mosques between men's and women's sections; after his death, new approaches have appeared: pro-segregation, anti-segregation, and against women's attendance in mosques altogether (Reda, 2004). The situation of women in mosques has been cultural rather than religious.

Separation in mosque spaces based on gender has not been rigid and changed through time and geography. In the early years of the republic, there was an attempt to create modern Turkish women; however, they have not interrupted and actually reinforced the separation in mosques' places of worship. Kıpçak (2016) argues that women who went to mosques never obtained the right to be visible in the public sphere. Later, Muslim women rendered religion visible in the public sphere with their veils; however, the separation of spaces of genders in mosques still existed with various methods. The women's section in mosques is an enigma that illustrates that women were exempted from the mosque in the past; however, with the changing time, another exemption, the screen was added; right now, gender discrimination, improvement efforts, and resistance against discrimination occur in the same place (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). Therefore, through and within mosque spaces, gender relations are shaped, preserved, negotiated, and challenged (Aryanti, 2013a).

In the sacred space, the screen is a significant instrument of power that is spatially exerted against women; the screens act as a major symbol for reproducing and legitimizing women's isolation in mosques; they reflect the ideological operations of patriarchal power relations (Nas, 2021). Screens are physical elements that show the cluster and outside of the cluster (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). Even in the newest and modern mosque projects, praying spaces are divided with screens that show women that they are not the main users (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). The screens are more than only creating spatial separation. While some mosques have perforated screens, some are solid and do not allow vision. A perforated, short screen would be enough if the aim were only spatial division, whereas most mosques prefer to hide women from the men's gaze. Interestingly, women's gaze is not perceived as dangerous during the prayer, and the screens came into the frame not to limit women's vision that stands behind men but to limit men's vision of possibly seeing women. Seeing and being seen are not parallel in mosques, the gender that is allowed to see cannot be seen, and the gender that can be seen cannot see. Not surprisingly, limitations are always applied to women. Instead of preventing the men's gaze, women were hidden.

In some examples, the order of separation is softened, and the application is left to the choice of women; women can go behind or in front of the screen when they want to perform worship (Kıpçak, 2016). Kıpçak (2016) claims that giving a choice in mosques increases women's movement, whereas a space separation either by screen or balcony limits women's spatial movement. Today, the need for equal space in mosques is not limited to praying; women have been praying and doing religious meetings in their homes; however, they still feel the need to take part in public life (Çamur, 2013). According to research on women's mosque participation, most women prefer to have a separate entrance to mosques in Turkey, and half of them think women should be able to see the mihrab and minbar (Çamur, 2013). A significant portion of the women accepts the usual order as normal and feel uneasiness in the mosques that allow women in the main space (Çamur, 2013). Even though women tend to follow the traditional spatial structure of mosques, after experiencing alternative spatial configurations, they can take the initiative to challenge the patriarchal ideology exerted.

3.2. TOP-DOWN APPROACHES OF *DIYANET* TOWARDS FEMALE MOSQUE USERS

It is possible to see examples of women-only, LGBTQ-friendly, female-led, gender-mixed types of mosques worldwide. In Turkey, mosques are under the control of the *Diyanet*. Therefore, although one can establish their own mosque abroad, in Turkey, he or she needs to hand over the mosque to the directorate even though that person builds the mosque. In the previous chapter, I have discussed the government's aim to promote women's participation in mosques as a means to increase the visibility of religion in the public sphere; this strategy is practically pursued by *Diyanet*. *Diyanet*, established in 1924, had a narrow mandate until the 60s, focused on creed, worship works, and arrangement of religious places of worship. After 1965, three main duties were assigned to *Diyanet* which were "to carry out works related to the beliefs, worship and moral principles of the religion of Islam", "to enlighten the society about religion", and "to manage places of worship"; for the first time an institution was assigned moral related duty (Aydın, 2019: 893). Since the 1960s, *Diyanet* became part of 'representation' debates which was neglected before; the institution that carried out the principles of creed and worship that constitute the common

religious values of ‘all Muslims’ was understood that it did not actually represent ‘all Muslims’ (Aydın, 2019). The discussions and divisions on the representation issue of *Diyanet* continued around meta-symbolic narratives such as equal citizenship, equality, and impartiality in benefiting from public service, indivisibility, and secularism (Aydın, 2019). However, women came into the discussion only after the 2000s.

After 2000, parallel to the feminist activism in Turkey and the government’s works on equality of genders, *Diyanet* started a more positive attitude towards women mosque users which resulted in hiring female religious officials and answering Muslim women’s demands (Kıpçak, 2016). Even though there were female religious officials before, they were playing a role in the teaching of the Qur’an to girls but were not trusted in mosques with speeches; later, with the change in the politics and legal system, women could become a deputy of mufti (Kıpçak, 2016). While following the politics of the government, *Diyanet* acts as a bridge between government and the public using tools such as khutbas, fatwas, preachers, radio and television channels, publishing, seminars, conferences, and mosques as mediums to reach people (Kıpçak, 2016).

During the presidency of Ali Bardakoğlu (2003-2010), women’s roles within *Diyanet* changed, and religion gained access to public space (Maritato, 2017). During his term, the number of female personnel working in *Diyanet* increased tremendously; it rose from 2,696 in 2004 to 11,041 by 2010 (Maritato, 2017). The progressive director of the time, Bardakoğlu, collaborated with women’s organizations to increase awareness regarding women’s problems such as domestic violence (Radikal, 2010). In particular, *Diyanet*’s new gender policy entailed an expansion in female religious education (Maritato, 2017). The number of women both as students and teachers increased, and more activities targeting women started. Women’s employment in a historically male-dominated organization implied a reinterpretation of female involvement in the religious public sphere. With the increase in the number of female religious officers, hadiths shared in mosques started to include women; *Diyanet* invited women to mosques and gave khutbas towards women prayers (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2013b); however, the audience of these sermons

were not all women but specific ones; namely homemakers and mothers. Therefore, the women could obtain space not as women but as mothers.

Bardakoğlu's studies on women's problems continued under Mehmet Görmez (2010-2017), who emphasized the equality of genders and women's attendance at mosques. A reform in the *Diyanet*'s structure took place in 2010; under the presidency of Görmez, the Department of Family and Religious Guidance was formed. The department focuses on the problems of family, establishment of family and its protection, and it provides religious services to families (Presidency of Religious Affairs 2020b). It is the most female-focused department, and it is not a surprise considering that women are always linked to family; moreover, it is the only department with a female administrator. The female applicants consisting mostly of housewives, are almost six times more than males (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2019). Both the seekers and providers of the council are women, which shows that in a patriarchal society, family problems are women's problems; additionally, women's politics are disguised within family politics (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). Their works mainly focus on condemnation of domestic violence, and they set 'mosque-women-family' themed meetings (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2019).

In 2011, Görmez attended a TV program as a guest and apologized to all women for the condition of women's sections in mosques. He mentioned that they started to visit mosques and assess the problems in the women's sections and argued that the reason behind women's exclusion from mosques was cultural and not religious (NTV, 2011). In 2013, for Mosques and Religious Officers week, Görmez (2013a) chose the theme of 'mosque, women and family' to change the misunderstandings on women's relationship with mosque and talked about women's right to use mosque spaces, how women are neglected as prayers, how this idea is reflected in architectural design and how designs exclude women. Following the theme, he promoted female involvement in mosques through posters with Qur'anic verses about women and families displayed outside neighborhood mosques (Kıpçak, 2016). Görmez, in his speeches, also mentioned that the modern way of living did not find its place in mosques yet; women are still obligated to be separated from their families in mosques starting from the entrance and then meeting after leaving the mosque. He

emphasized that even though there were physical changes in mosques, they were not sufficient, and they were temporary; there was a need for mental change (Görmez, 2013a).

The current *Diyanet* president Ali Erbaş (2017-now), has been quieter on topics regarding women. Erbaş, in one of his speeches, stated that “No profession or aim cannot be more important than being a mother and family. No responsibility is greater than the responsibility of being a father.” (Yeniçağ, 2020). Therefore, Erbaş attributed to all women maternity duty and defined them within those terms. In terms of women’s mosque usage, the latest circular entered in force into 2020 under his presidency mostly follows the 2007 circular, which had the most distinct changes (Kıpçak, 2016). In the 2020 circular, the articles state that “In order for women to perform the time, Friday, tarawih, Eid and funeral prayers spacious, bright and clean places will be determined in the prayer areas of mosques; disposable headscarves, skirts, clothing materials will be available; effective and efficient execution of sermons and guidance activities for women in mosques will be done” (Presidency of Religious Affairs 2020a: 10) as necessary measures to ensure women’s benefit. Moreover, narthex in mosques are decided to be arranged in a way to serve women, and spaces belonging to women are thought to be wide, bright, and decent without leaving any negativity in this regard. From the 2007 to 2020 circular, most of the articles continued in a similar way; however, it is questionable how well they are applied in real life. It looks like there is a study going on for the integration of women into mosques. On the other hand, these articles to create a better environment for women are also the acceptance of the exclusion of women so far. To ensure that enough care is given to mosques, inspectors visit and keep a report which includes women’s section and ablution rooms (Table 3.1). Every year a report is published on their webpage; in 2019’s report, they stated their aim to increase female preachers to attract more women to mosques and continue their work on the women’s space as a mission to turn mosques into the center of everyday lives since 2007 (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2019). They analyze the spaces in terms of size and suitability for praying during different times (Table 3.2).

C. Cami İçi ve Müstemilatıyla İlgili Denetlenecek Hususlar			EVET	HAYIR
1. Cami İbadete Açılış Beratı caminin uygun bir yerine asılmış mıdır?			☐	☐
2. Cami içi düzenli ve temiz midir?			☐	☐
3. Cami dış temizliği ve çevre düzenlemesi iyi midir?			☐	☐
4. Cami içerisinde ibadet edenlerin huzur ve hışunu bozacak (telefon, çalar saat, reklam vb.) hususlarla ilgili gerekli tedbirler alınmış mıdır?			☐	☐
5. Kadınlara mahsus ibadet mekânı;	var mıdır?		☐	☐
	kullanıma uygun mudur?		☐	☐
6. Kadınlara mahsus tuvalet ve abdest alma yerleri;	var mıdır?		☐	☐
	kullanıma uygun mudur?		☐	☐
7. Cami engelli erişimine uygun mudur?			☐	☐
8. Camide engellilerin kullanımına uygun tuvalet ve lavabo var mıdır?			☐	☐
9. Camide dini danışmanlık bürosu/cami görevli odası veya bu amaçla kullanılabilecek uygun bir mekân bulunmakta mıdır?			☐	☐

Table 3.1. Survey form in the circular supplement, Matters to be inspected regarding the interior and outbuildings of the mosque, Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2020a (source: <https://hukukmusavirligi.diyaret.gov.tr/kategoriler/başkanlık-mevzuatı/genelgeler>)

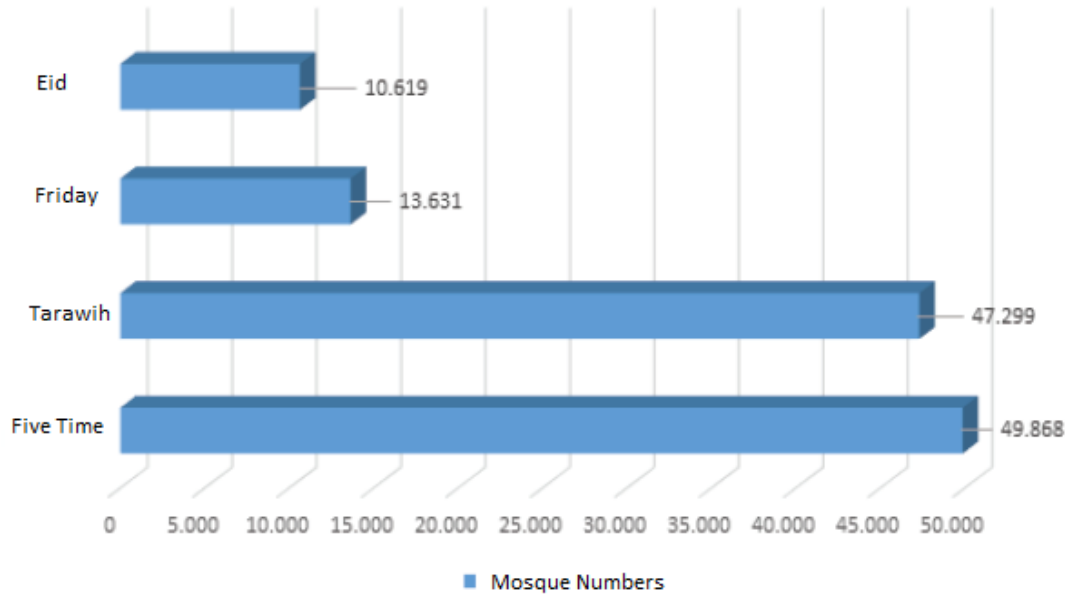


Table 3.2. The number of mosques available to women during different prayer times, Presidency of Religious Affairs 2019 Report (source: <https://dinhizmetleri.diyaret.gov.tr/sayfa/384>)

The works on women's participation in mosques are highly political; even *Diyanet*'s works are not free from these dynamics. In 2018, Prime Minister Erdoğan gave a speech at the opening of the Cologne Central Mosque with Erbaş's participation in Germany. One of the biggest examples in Europe, the mosque is highly political and

controversial; moreover, it received various protests from different parties³. His speech in the opening on women also directed authorities' attitude toward women's existence in mosques. Erdoğan stated that in mosques, there must not be discrimination, women should be able to attend Friday and Eid prayers, and there is a need to provide opportunities for women's usage in mosques; mosques would be stronger with the attendance of women (Sabah, 2018). With the effect of his speech, the *Diyanet* gave more attention to preparing reports about the inspection and condition of mosques in terms of women's usage (Karaca, 2020).

3.2.1. A Project for the Beautification of Women's Sections in Mosques

The idea of rearranging women's spaces of worship in mosques was announced on March 8, 2011, International Women's Day; after receiving complaints from women regularly, officers wanted to carry out work for women (Erdemli, 2013). According to the surveys, the ratio of mosques that had women's ablution rooms and praying spaces were only 10% in 2011 in Turkey (Çamur, 2013). Therefore, a project called 'Beautifying the Women's Section of Mosques in Istanbul Project 3T (Detection, Supply, Follow-up)' was launched under the supervision of Istanbul Provincial Deputy Mufti Kadriye Avcı Erdemli under Görmez's term. The main target of the project was to improve the conditions of women's prayer places, ablution rooms, and toilets; to make ablution and prayer rooms if there is no space for women; to create spaces in which women can see mihrab and the minbar in more than 3000 mosques in Istanbul (Erdemli, 2013).

Prior to the spatial improvements in mosques for women's usage, Erdemli, in her article in a journal of *Diyanet*, started talking about the project by explaining the early years of Islam and women's attendance in mosques and how it went backward for women through time. She stated that there was no physical separation between men and women in praying spaces; however, there was still an order (Erdemli,

³ According to Öz and Staub (2018), the mosque received opposition due to its design, big dome, and minarets that might hinder the cathedral near it; the project was perceived as the Islamisation of Germany by right-wing groups, it did not address the concerns of the public, and the construction was only funded by DITIB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, an 'arm' of *Diyanet*, is an establishment working on meeting the religious, social, and cultural needs of Muslim Turks living in Germany and managing places of worship) which brought suspicions. See Öz, İ. & Staub, A. (2018). The tale of two mosques: Marxloher Merkez Mosque vs. Cologne Central Mosque. *ARCC Conference Repository*.

2013). Spaces for women are mostly unconsidered in mosque architecture; they are often located in unfavorable places that are detached from the main hall, and sometimes there is no space for women, or they lack female ablution rooms. However, limitations on women's attendance at the mosque are not only caused by physical challenges but also mental restrictions. Women are made to assume they should be behind curtains or screens and not see the mihrab, and if a man saw them, their prayers would not be accepted. On the contrary, if women are located in another space and cannot follow the imam, then it may create problems. Therefore, even though the project was about the spatial organization of mosques, the religious institution was aware of the more significant issues.

In the investigation phase of the project, mosques were visited by thirty groups, one male and one female preacher, to inspect and report the situation of women's sections (Erdemli, 2013). The intention was to make sure that each mosque had spaces for women that were clean, modern, aesthetic, accessible, functional, and preferably part of the main hall. In the mosques visited, they detected that women's sections were separated by curtains (47.5%), walls (31.2%), screens (21.3%); 54.7% of mosques did not have signboards indicating women's sections; 43.3% of mosques did not have ablution rooms; in 37.9% of mosques, there was no bathroom for women (Erdemli, 2013). Based on these findings, the Istanbul Office of Mufti and *Diyanet* worked on these problems' improvements. In the last phase, the groups of preachers visited the mosques after the modifications and checked if they fulfilled their initial aims. They also involved users in filling out a form if there were unfavorable situations.

Besides these spatial interventions, Erdemli became a known female religious authority who worked for the benefit of women. She stated that after a female deputy mufti, women found themselves an interlocutor and started to talk about their problems more freely (Erdemli, 2013). Even though the government supported the increasing numbers of female preachers and religious leaders for the benefit of expanding the religion of women from the private sphere to the public sphere (Maritato, 2017), it helped women have religious authority and be the voice of the Muslim women. Female leaders may develop alternative structures for spaces

compared to already existing ones (Kalmbach, 2012); apart from her project for women mosque users, Erdemli's case is an example of the effects of having a female religious leader in the eyes of women.

3.3. BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES OF FEMALE MOSQUE USERS

Especially in the last ten years, neither the consideration for women done by the male religious officials in the *Diyanet* nor the male congregation's handling of women's problems in mosques is regarded sufficient; in line with the active participation and demands of devout women, women want to express their own ideas and receive religious services directly for their own gender (Kıpçak, 2016). Women regard segregation in mosques as a source of discomfort, oppression, and bias since they cannot fully engage in the congregation; they see it as a violation of the Qur'anic commandment claiming men and women are equal (Öz, 2021). Against these unfavorable conditions, women started to gather with the same purpose of changing women's secondary role in mosques and started to establish communities and campaigns.

Based on Foucault's definition of subjectivation, Ingrey (2012) argues that a free subject is capable of resisting even though constrained by power. Individuals are constantly in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exerting power; each figure is partly accountable for not just its own gendered imprisonment but also for the gendered confinement of others (Ingrey, 2012). Women around the world resist the lesser conditions of women's status in religion and secondary spaces in mosques. Moreover, women both resist convention and perpetuate gender surveillance; therefore, the subjects, women, are both actors and acted upon (Ingrey, 2012). The subject is shaped by and dependent on discursive and material constraints, but it also has the capacity to resist them, which Ingrey (2012: 802) defines as 'conditional agency'. Alyanak (2019) affirms women's agency in making use of mosque spaces; however, he points out that it is limited to patriarchal norms that rule the space. Women's desire for a better mosque environment meets an obstacle due to men. In specific mosques, the male congregation rejects the proposal of enlarging women's ablution rooms; in another example, the implementation of an underfloor heating

system in the women's section in the courtyard gets rejected again by men (Karaca, 2020).

There are also women who accept their unfavorable position in mosques. Aryanti (2013b) suggests that one does not have to resist to be an agent. The yearning for freedom is culturally and historically created; it is not natural or universal; therefore, the idea of agency in feminist movements does not have to be defined in terms of subversion and resistance to the dominant group and structure. Zubair and Zubair (2017) claim that women can reconstruct submission to patriarchal ideology and norms as a type of agency; yet women's lack of access to Islamic knowledge and space can affect them badly since it is not an active choice. Therefore, the agency can be achieved through increased participation and teaching of Islam and may break the male centrality of mosques; however, it does not mean passively waiting for improvements or accepting restricted knowledge.

Mosques are typically accepted as men's spaces and render women as the other. Considering that men's and women's mosque space separation was less apparent in the different times and different geographies, the acceptance of women as the other through time only intensified their role as others and strengthened their spatial segregation. However, spatial segregation is reproduced when spaces of otherness stop being only the collection of others and others start to become part of the production of otherness (Schick, 2020). Therefore, when women accept their 'otherness' in mosques, then segregation is empowered. On the other hand, women's existence in mosques turns into resistance.

Even though some women I met throughout my research were enthusiastic about my topic and supported women's attendance in mosques, they were conservative regarding visibility; they wanted better spaces for women but preferred that space to be separate from the men's sections and asked for separate entrances. The women I met do not challenge the mosque space and instead accept their marginalization and follow the norms and what is provided to them. For the vast majority of women, this behavior is deeply ingrained in their daily routine; they rarely challenge it because they see no other option. However, accepting the segregated mosque space may

enhance marginalization and perpetuate gender stratification (Öz, 2021). In addition, the devout women I met do not necessarily want to be visible to the male congregation; yet, this does not automatically render them passive actors. Their regular attendance at the mosque is a way of claiming their agency. Even though they may not be in clash with authorities for their demands, they do not give up on the space given to them and reclaim it every time they go there and pray. Therefore, their understanding of negotiation and appropriation is different and is risen from the conditions they are in, but they still exist.

3.3.1. Transgressing Boundaries: ‘Women in Mosques’ Campaign

‘Women in Mosques’ campaign started in 2017 in Istanbul by Muslim women who sought the betterment of women’s place in mosques, and it is still active today (Sunay, 2018). Having mostly student women in the establishment, they talk about the difficulties women face in mosques, raise a voice on the dire conditions of women’s sections and ablution rooms, and work on the improvement of the situation (Sunay, 2018). They meet in mosques regularly to discuss the problems and how to solve them; they aim to increase women’s attendance and pressure authorities in charge of mosques through their demands (Kadınlar Camilerde, n.d.). Their works can be divided into three; firstly, they want a physical rehabilitation of the women’s sections, a clean and accessible space in which they can be part of the congregation. Secondly, they want to solve the social problems within the mosque; they reject restrictions caused by the male congregation or the authorities; they believe mosques belong to women as much as men. Lastly, they aim to change the mosque culture; the platform allows mosque users to share their experiences within mosques and creates an environment of solidarity.

Their work since their establishment can be summarized as attending Friday prayers, having meetings in mosques, resisting the exclusion of women, transforming women’s role in mosques, meeting with muftis, collaborating with other organizations, and architecturally redesigning the mosque (Kadınlar Camilerde, 2019). In the end, they hope to turn mosques into more accessible places for everyone. They collaborate with organizations in other countries and hold seminars to learn from each other. However, having a female imam or praying next to a man is

out of topic. Instead, they focus on space; they want to be able to pray under the dome without being separated from the rest of the congregation while having enough space. It is important to emphasize that there is no architect or designer in the campaign; however, women started to work on diagrams on the spatial issue of mosques and how unjust the gender-space distribution is. They also ask architects to remember their architectural education while designing a mosque instead of replicating forms; to calculate how many women would use the mosque (Sunay, 2018). If the architectural analysis is done correctly, they believe women will not have to squeeze into small and undesirable spaces. Moreover, in their mosque visits, they examine how the mosque spaces, designed by the designers for aesthetic purposes, can be changed with the demands of the community. They know that the mosques are not completed neither on paper nor at the end of construction, and things can change when women join the mosques for their own accord.

Besides praying as a community, they hold activities both outside of mosque spaces and especially within the main prayer halls generally devoted to men. Women coming together both online and physically, increasing their visibility, and transgressing men's sections are the actualization of their agency. They do not want to be stuck in academia but instead be in practice, in everyday life of regular women. They call it a campaign because they focus on one subject and its solution instead of getting attention to its volunteers; they do not want to hinder the main problem (Sunay, 2018). They meet every Friday at 18.30 in Üsküdar Mihrimah Sultan Mosque (Kadınlar camilerde neyi hedefliyor, n.d.). Physically, they are only active in Istanbul; however, their online platform is inclusive. They actively use social media tools and provide a platform where women share their experiences that also work as an archive. They give special importance to Friday prayers and hold a heading for women's Friday experiences on their website. They do not aim for a revolution in religion or offer a reinterpretation; they want to demolish the culture that is causing the exclusion of women from mosques (Sunay, 2018).

In Fatih Mosque, in 2018, two women, after they finished their prayer in the women's section, wanted to feel the spiritual atmosphere of the mosque and entered the main hall. Even though they were at the very back, they were warned by the

security and asked to leave due to the complaints of the male congregation. While Arife Gümüş, one of the women that were removed, stated that it was not the male's praying area and they were not praying, the imam yelled at them, "What are you trying to prove?" (Gümüş, 2018). Gümüş's aim was not a transgressive act, as she stated, "We know our place.". They did not disrupt anyone or have an ideological motivation behind their actions; they just wanted to experience the mosque atmosphere. However, women's visibility in places of worship is perceived as transgressive (Alyanak, 2019).

After Gümüş shared the incident she experienced and wrote to the Women in Mosques platform, women made a call for two days later to pray together in the mosque where Gümüş had been removed (Kadınlar Camilerde, 2018). Almost forty women, including known Muslim feminists, attended this event to respond to the incident; they prayed outside of the screen that divided men's and women's sections (Figure 3.1). At the end of the prayer, they mentioned how badly they are treated in mosques, they cannot find praying spaces, and when they get to have a space, it is in bad conditions (Cebeci, 2018). This time they were not removed or scolded but instead got an apology from another imam.



Figure 3.1. Women praying in front of the screen (source:

https://www.mimarizm.com/haberler/soylesi/kadinlar-camilerde-kampanyasi-unculeriyle-soylesi_129351)

Women in Mosques members have been working on challenging the unjust, gendered usage of mosque spaces and demanding spatial equality. They know that mosques are political places (Sunay, 2018). They explain their aim as having not political but practical concerns; however, it is political because the practical is political (Alyanak, 2019). If the place has a political character, occupying the space and having a fight over its right is also political. Even though currently an Islamist party is ruling Turkey, the campaign's discourse highly differs from the government's. Members of the Women in Mosques challenge Turkey's patriarchal religious institutions, as well as the male establishment that maintains the patriarchal narratives (Alyanak, 2019).

In social media, the Women in Mosques Campaign forms a key approach to revealing religion's spatial ideology and shows women's agency through mapping religious space. By using a series of visual and digital acts that reveal the spatial usage of mosques, they interrogate religious space from a gender perspective and reclaim the space. Women reveal the power dynamics that are male dominant and demonstrate the unequal spaces in mosques through taking photographs, drawing maps, and abstracting the space (Nas, 2021). Nas (2021) detects two different strategies in the Women in Mosques Campaign's social media works: photographs taken by women as a representation of the unjust situation and drawings that abstract and demonstrate the unequal gender usage of space.

Both Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 are shared on the Instagram page of the Women in Mosques Campaign. In Figure 3.2, mosque authorities see the need to specify the direction of Kiblah because there is no visual access to the mihrab. They think using perforated screens would not be enough for separation, so they cover them with sheets to prevent any gaze from outside to inside and inside to outside. Figure 3.3 shows how after a new organization of the mosque, the women's section was moved outside; what used to be the narthex, the arcaded side of the mosque is enclosed with frosted glass. Moreover, when women ask why their section is moved outside of the mosque, they get the answer that authorities did it for the comfort of women. Not only do they get limited but also excluded from the mosque space. Even though there

were examples of improvements in the women's sections in mosques, they are not permanent. Women's sections and their rights to the space are the first to be given up in any circumstances. They significantly represent how women are limited, marginalized, and alienated from the mosque space. The photographs show the spatiality of mosques from women's perspective and let the viewers see from women's eyes, be identified as the subordinated object (Nas, 2021). In these examples, women are being positioned only as objects; there is no problem with women seeing the mihrab and men, but in the case of men seeing women, they prefer to limit women's sight and visibility. The man is the dominant gender in the mosque, and women are treated as a threat; therefore, precautions are applied considering and for the sake of men.



Figure 3.2. Women's section in Şehzadebaşı Mosque photographed in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members (source: https://www.instagram.com/p/B6dM1l_JWZe/)



Figure 3.3. Women's section in Üsküdar Kuşkonmaz Mosque photographed in 2020 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members (source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B9ZTH8rJplV/>)

Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 demonstrate women's efforts to show how the gendered spaces work within places of worship through mapping and their struggle to stop these inequalities by making them visible. In Figure 3.4, women make a discovery within a historical mosque and mark the assignment of genders to the spaces based on today's usage. They specify that the ratio of female area to male area is less than 5% of the floor area. In Figure 3.5, a change in the old mosque's organization is seen, which is a shrink in the area of women. The upper floor, which used to belong to women, is given to men; the women's ground floor area is decreased in size and covered with screens and curtains. The women who cannot fit into the designated area are shown space in the courtyard or another building. Similar to previous cases, women are the first to be excluded from the mosque. In Figure 3.6, only one of the cells is left for women's usage during Friday prayer. The upper floor is closed other than tarawih and Eid praying and assigned to men in those events. Men seizing women's space is considered normal due to the belief that men have to go to the mosque, whereas women do not. Therefore, women do not have a stable place; if they have a space, it is not permanently theirs. Although they are constrained, women resist the spatial implementation of the mosque and try to destroy it.

Mapping the mosques gives them a clear understanding of how patriarchy works, allows them to build resistance to the current gender hierarchy; also provides them to collect visual capital by learning about the space's visual arrangements, challenge Islam's prevailing ways of perceiving women and provide an alternative visual regime that values women's active agency and critical viewpoint (Nas, 2021).



Figure 3.4. Süleymaniye Mosque diagram showing the unequal distribution of spaces made in 2018 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members (source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Blm0zTvAj95/>)



Figure 3.5. Hüseyin Ağa Mosque diagram showing the old and new space distribution made in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members (source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BvO_0qBpOmT/)

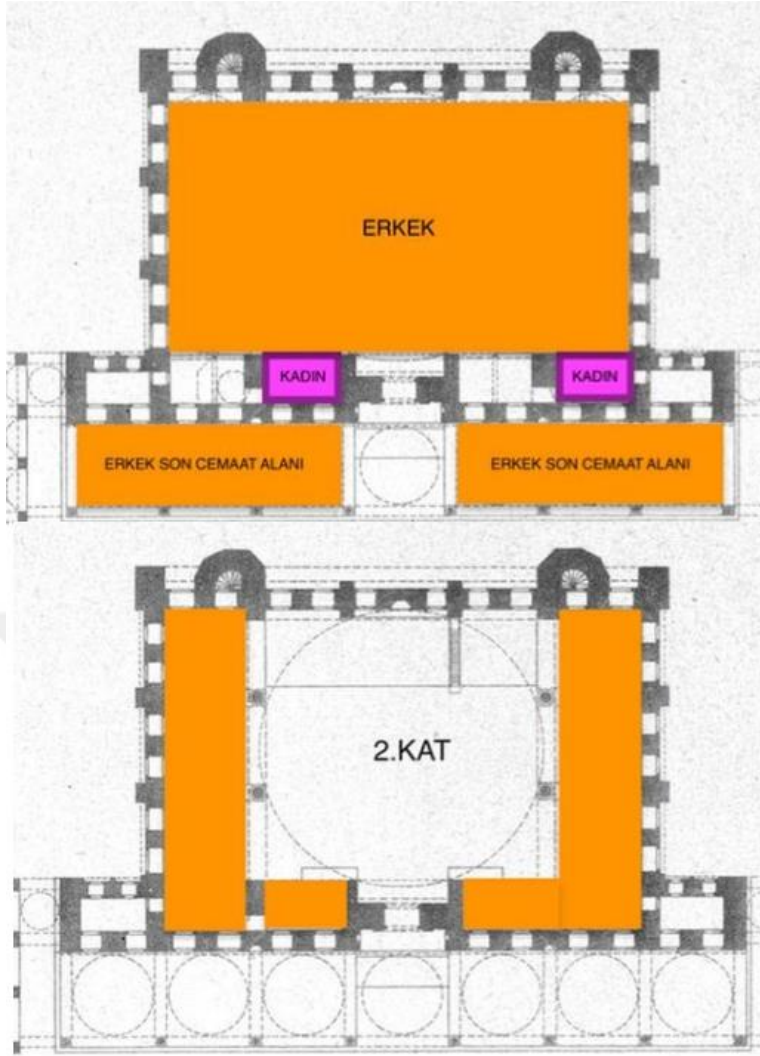


Figure 3.6. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque diagram first and second floor showing the unequal distribution of spaces made in 2019 by Women in Mosque Campaign Members (source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bw9r4QJpj6O/>)

3.4. PATRIARCHY’S RESPONSE TO FEMALE MOSQUE USERS

In 2021, a video demonstrated one more time how bad women are treated in mosques and denied place in the congregation. A woman who wanted to pray in Üsküdar Mosque, which is in the center of Istanbul, was stopped and denied access by a man basing his statement on a hadith. The woman was a graduate of religious studies and was reacting against the usage of religion as a means of subordination of women according to men’s wishes. During the debate, the man said, “If you want, finish thousand five hundred religious studies; in my eyes, you are air.”. The woman was reacting by saying, “Women cannot enter a mosque, women cannot do this, women cannot do that. Who are you to limit women? Women are supposed to pray within

their homes(!) Why can we not pray in the mosque?” (En Son Haber, 2021) while another woman was trying to pull her to leave the mosque to escape from the debate. This is a great example of how religion is interpreted based on culture favoring men, whereas women who are defending their rights are seen as a nuisance, and they are forced to fit into the norms.

Another news article from 2020 illustrates the gender politics of media coverage by reporters. Aynur Eken worked in the foundation of a mosque and was the head of it for five years. The women’s section, which is also the Qur’an course space, was locked down due to the pandemic; therefore, she wanted to get a space in the main hall which she covered by screens to pray behind. The congregation and the authorities tried to convince her to pray in the imam’s room outside of the mosque and excluded her; moreover, she got battered by the congregation and then locked inside the mosque after her resistance (Sönmez, 2020). The investigation was done not based on her complaints but on the congregation’s complaints about her. Her case was represented in the media as “The woman who caused unrest in the mosque in Eskişehir, sickens the congregation” and “The woman who says ‘this mosque is mine’ sickens the congregation” (En Son Haber, 2020; Sözcü, 2020). The male congregation repines against her by stating that she meddles with the mosque’s business. They claim that she says it is her mosque, tries to create a space to herself with curtains within the main hall, walks in the main hall while men are listening to the Friday sermon; in addition, they question her mental health (En Son Haber, 2020; Sözcü, 2020). There are two sides to the story; however, a woman is being blamed for claiming to have a big role in the mosque construction and trying to create a space for herself in the mosque. Moreover, the media only focuses on the men’s side, representing her as a troubled woman and showing her as a target. She is shown as a woman who ‘does not know her place’, which reminds the statement of women who were removed from Fatih Mosque: ‘We know our place’.

The limitations on women’s attendance at the mosque are caused by the mental restrictions from the male congregation as much as the physical restrictions of the space. Mosques have been perceived as the men’s spaces for years, and the challenge of it by women is not well responded by the male congregation. Women are

perceived as a nuisance and overstepping when they ask for equal treatment. Men oppose these demands of women, basing their reasons on a ‘cultured’ religion. Accepting a change that is not in favor of them but supports the opposite sex, causes men unease. They do not want to share the power with women they used to hold in mosques. According to Kıpçak (2016), with the claim that Friday prayer is not obligatory to women, women’s sections have been given to the male congregation for years; the male congregation will not let women in during Friday prayers and share the space with women; moreover, men’s intolerance of women in mosques is not limited to praying times, and even in activities such as the Qur’an reading, men are not pleased to have women in mosques. Men’s congregation despises women mosque users, and *Diyanet* cannot overcome the culture that diminishes men’s and women’s equality (Karaca, 2020).

Even though *Diyanet* carried out works for a better environment for women and tried to attract them to mosques, they tried to control the female body at the cost of preventing their visual access to the mihrab and minbar (Kıpçak, 2016). Moreover, *Diyanet* emphasizes the importance of segregation and not praying together of the two genders; in doing so, it states that biological sex differences naturally require segregation and that segregation is not a religious issue (Kıpçak, 2016). Especially after 2017, the *Diyanet* started to locate women in the group with disabled, children, young, and old in its workshop speeches; which means they turned into a more conservative language (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). *Diyanet* is not free from the political structure and is shaped by the government (Kıpçak, 2016). For instance, despite their support of women’s right to wear the veil in public institutions, in a meeting called Religious Publications on Women held by the president of *Diyanet*, Mehmet Görmez, said that feminism is a modern ideological discourse that cannot be compatible with Islam and Islamic values (Yıldız, 2015). Moreover, on the official website of the *Diyanet*, a statement under the women’s rights chapter appeared that said feminism is immoral (Hürriyet, 2008). Its definition of women does not exceed their role in family and motherhood. According to Sunay and Türkdoğan (2019), *Diyanet* does not have a women’s policy because it is inconsistent and changes rapidly based on the complaints. Furthermore, *Diyanet* still perceives men as its main respondent.

Although the project of Beautification of Women's Section was one of the most effective projects of the *Diyanet*, targeting women's spaces in mosques, the arrangements did not overcome the harem-selam duality or remove the screens in general (Kıpçak, 2016). After the effects of these projects faded, screens that separated men's and women's sections came back (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). Erdemli's aim of changing the mindset of people was not successful, which led to the continuation of the old spatial and physical organization after a while. The congregation members' collective memory overcame the improvements done in the empowerment of women in mosques (Özaloğlu & Gürel, 2011). Even though the screen might be removed, it would come back with the first complaint; furthermore, a sheet would be put to cover the screen if a user wants (Sunay & Türkdoğan, 2019). The religious directorate did want to create better opportunities for women and increase their participation parallel to the Islamist government's works on women's rights. However, through time, improvements to women's spaces in mosques were not given as importance in later stages, and the backlash of *Diyanet* occurred parallel to the government's women policies and the congregation's customs⁴.

3.5. WOMEN'S SPATIAL PRACTICE INSIDE MOSQUES

Women in Turkey generally do not go to the mosque because of the reaction of the male congregation. Even if they pray in the mosque during the day, they do this as a brief visit; after the congregation disperses, they enter the mosque and leave quickly (Kıpçak, 2016). In today's Turkey, the Islamist circles claim that Islam gives equal rights to men and women; therefore, women can participate in the mosque, but there are two conditions for this participation: firstly, the woman has to be done with the housework, after that she can go to the mosque if she has time; secondly, when she

⁴ AKP, in the last two decades, has worked on gender equality in legal structures. These reforms mainly were part of the attempts at joining the EU; however, with the pressure coming from the feminist movements in Turkey, the investment of the government towards gender equality increased. However, after the failed coup attempt in 2016, AKP switched to a more authoritarian rule, and the empowerment provided to women in the 2000s was diminished (Sarioğlu, 2021). Moreover, Coşar and Yeğenoğlu (2011) define AKP's gender policies as a new and updated version of religious conservatism within modernity. See Sarioğlu, E. (2021). Gender inequality and emotions: Hostility against women in contemporary Turkey. In U. Weber (Ed.) *Fundamental Questions Gender Dimensions in Max Planck Research Projects* (pp. 171-181). Nomos. Also, Coşar S. & Yeğenoğlu, M. (2011). New grounds for patriarchy in Turkey? Gender policy in the age of AKP. *South European Society and Politics*, 16(4), 555-573.

goes to the mosque, she must go behind the screen and then pray if she can find a place (Kıpçak, 2016). Her works at the home come first, and the authorities, while encouraging her existence in mosques, they also impose duties based on her gender roles. Therefore, her attendance in the mosque becomes difficult, as her gender roles restrict her at home. The mindset on women's relationships with mosques has been reflected in the architecture and the space assigned to women, which further solidifies women's secondary role in mosques.

This section analyzes five different case studies of mosques based on space usage and circulation to get a general idea of women's roles as users. These case studies are chosen based on the various involvement of female designers in different phases of the mosque building. Located in three different cities in Turkey, the difference in the architectural style and the identity of the designers creates a better approach for a general understanding. The 'Women in Mosques' campaign had a mapping approach to the demonstration of how patriarchy and hierarchy work within the mosque space. Gotten inspired by them and to support their efforts, by doing space analyses, I am hoping to reveal the condition of female mosque users by looking from their eyes.

3.5.1. Ramazanoğlu Mosque

Ramazanoğlu Mosque is located in Adana, in a middle-class neighborhood dominated by high-rise residentials in Çukurova District (Figure 3.7). There used to be a masjīd in today's mosque location, under the ground floor of an apartment. Due to that, in the records, the mosque is written as opened in 2005, while the construction of the actual mosque started in 2006. The mosque opened to the public in 2012; however, since the cost of it was covered by small donations and it took time, minor constructions continued even after its opening. It was designed with a neo-Ottoman style, following the example of a vertical Islamic-Ottoman social complex; the ground floor is left for praying space and courtyard, lower floors are on the same level as the ground on the southern side due to the elevation difference, hold ablution rooms, underground car parking, market, the Qur'an classrooms, district mufti, conference hall, and health center. It has two minarets and a capacity of holding 3000 people, 10000 including the courtyard space (Arkitera, 2011). According to the architect that drew the project, the project is an imitation of the 16th

century Selimiye Mosque; on the other hand, in Dalgıntekin's interview, the mosque is said to be inspired by the Süleymaniye Mosque, while one is in Edirne and the other is a major mosque dominating the skyline of Istanbul. However, the four semidome structure makes the mosque resemble the Şehzade Mosque. Even though there is no consensus on the similarity of the mosque, it is drawn in the traditional Ottoman Mosque style.

Ramazanoğlu Mosque was designed by four women architects. Two of the architects were working in *Diyanet* in Ankara; Esen Saraç Ümit was a freelance architect in Adana, and Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin was working under Adana Governorship Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization who was also Adana *Diyanet* Foundation Provincial Board Member. The project was drawn first by the architects in *Diyanet*; then, the other two were more apparent in the implementation phase. Dalgıntekin states that the mosque is an example of positive discrimination for women with its lactation room, playground, market, separate entrances and that it will become an example for future designs; therefore, the mosque was advertised as its 'women-friendliness' in the media (Arkitera, 2011). 'Women-friendliness' of the mosque is debatable by one's perception. However, her 'women-friendliness' aligns with the state's ideology, and she defines women through their mother role and responsibilities coming from their gender. Although the design takes into account women's existence in the mosque, her stance on considerations for women users can be challenged by feminists and other women. Moreover, another architect of the mosque who wants to stay anonymous states that there is nothing 'woman-friendly' about the mosque, and women were not taken into consideration during the design process.



Figure 3.7. Location of Ramazanoğlu Mosque (source: Google Earth)

In recent mosques, generally, the mezzanine floor is designed for women as a way to save them from the basement. Ramazanoğlu Mosque has a U shape mezzanine that is reached by two symmetrical staircases on the sides of the main prayer area and allows women to experience praying under the semidome. The mezzanine floor has visual access to the mihrab, and the circulation of the mosque, such as staircases, is visible, and women were not tried to be hidden in any way. Moreover, the staircases are not close to the entrance but in the middle, which makes the prayers going to the upper floor visible. Traditionally, the staircases are places at the entrance for women to climb to their section while not intermingling with the main space; women are perceived as a nuisance in men's religious space and separated strictly. However, the placement of these fundamental tools for women's circulation enforces women to be visible while legitimizing their existence in men's space. In their initial design, there was not a separation of women and men sections in the mosque but two different spaces, the main hall and the mezzanine. The mezzanine was planned mostly for women, but depending on the ratio of the prayers, it could be used by both genders (E. S. Ümit, personal communication, March 08, 2021). While it erases the strict separation of the spaces allocated to each gender, during Friday prayers, the mezzanine could be occupied by men in addition to the main hall, and women could be easily excluded (Figure 3.8).

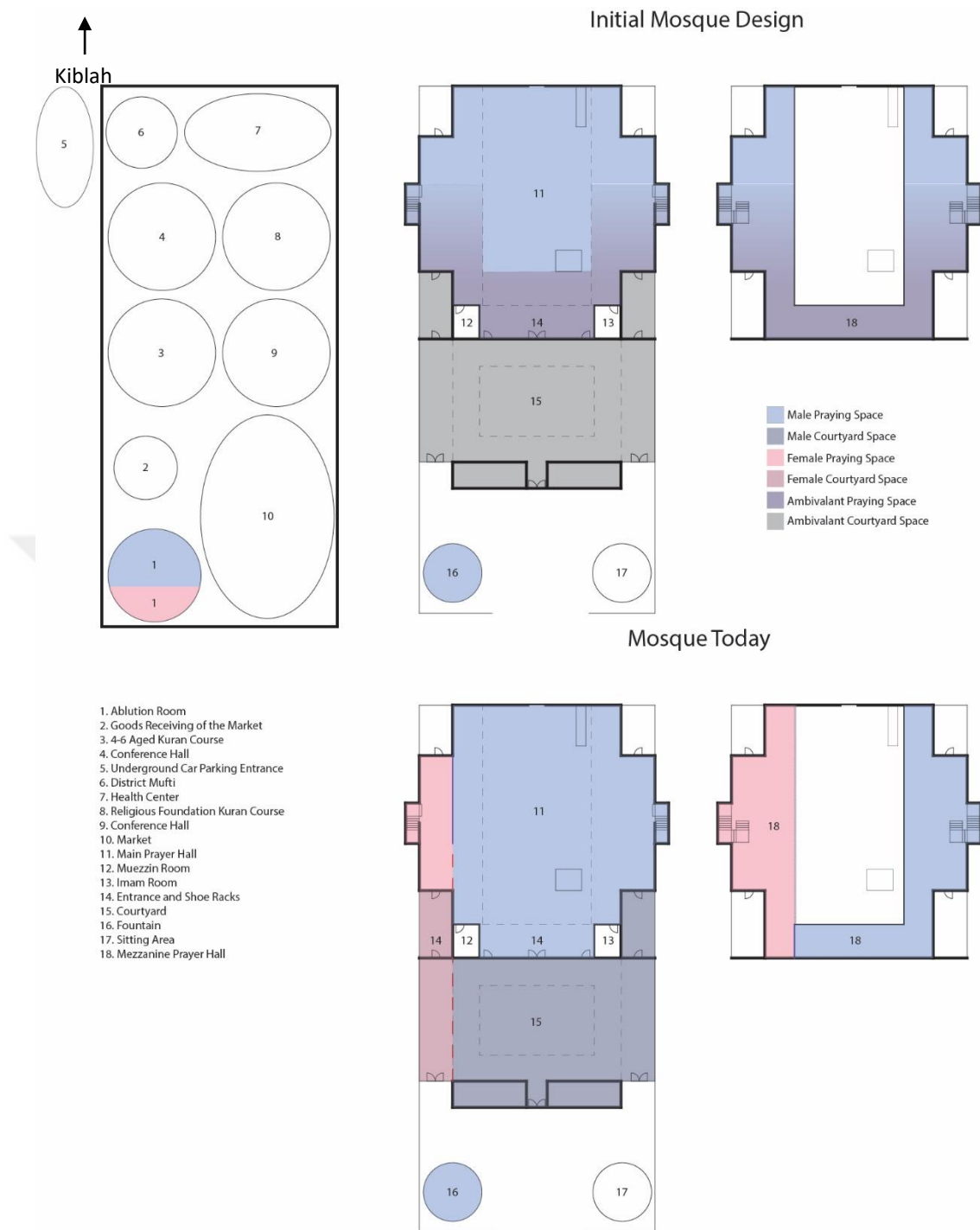


Figure 3.8. The change in space usage based on gender (source: author)

A lot of additions that seem not part of the original design are visible today. Currently, the mezzanine floor is divided by blinds. One-third of the mezzanine is allocated for women; moreover, the women's section is covered by high perforated screens. While it interferes with the view of the mihrab, it prevents the gaze from outside and only allows the silhouette to be visible (Figure 3.9). What is striking is that, the east wing belonged to men has no screens or separators while its

symmetrical west wing belonged to women has such cautions applied for men not to see women. While women's invisibility could be achieved by blocking the view of either wing, the solution always relays on the restriction of women. Since the staircases to the mezzanine floor are in the middle of the main hall, to avoid the inter-sex encounters, blinds are put downstairs as well, which do not allow access from the main hall to one of the staircases. A separate secondary entrance is indicated as the female entrance to access it. In case women miss the separate entrance and try to enter the women's section from the main hall, a guidance barrier is placed to the extension of the blinds, which allows passing but indicates it was not an entrance. The blinds on the ground floor create a small space for access to the upstairs and praying space for women having difficulty climbing the stairs; however, it does not have any visual connection with the rest of the mosque. It is abstracted from the rest of the mosque space. The entrance to the women's section is a semi-closed space that is closed on top but open from one side. There is space that is symmetrical to the entrance that is not used for anything, which strengthens the idea that that space initially was not designed as an entrance either. The gender division starts from the entrance of the courtyard. To separate the way to the women's section, warning strips are placed in the courtyard, which does not prevent any visual connection and still allows access but gives the idea that they are separate (Figure 3.10). The underground ablution room does not have access to the praying area inside the building. To go from the ablution space to the praying area, one must climb the stairs and walk along the street. Therefore, the separation in the ablution room continues with both genders coming together in the street and separating again in the courtyard.

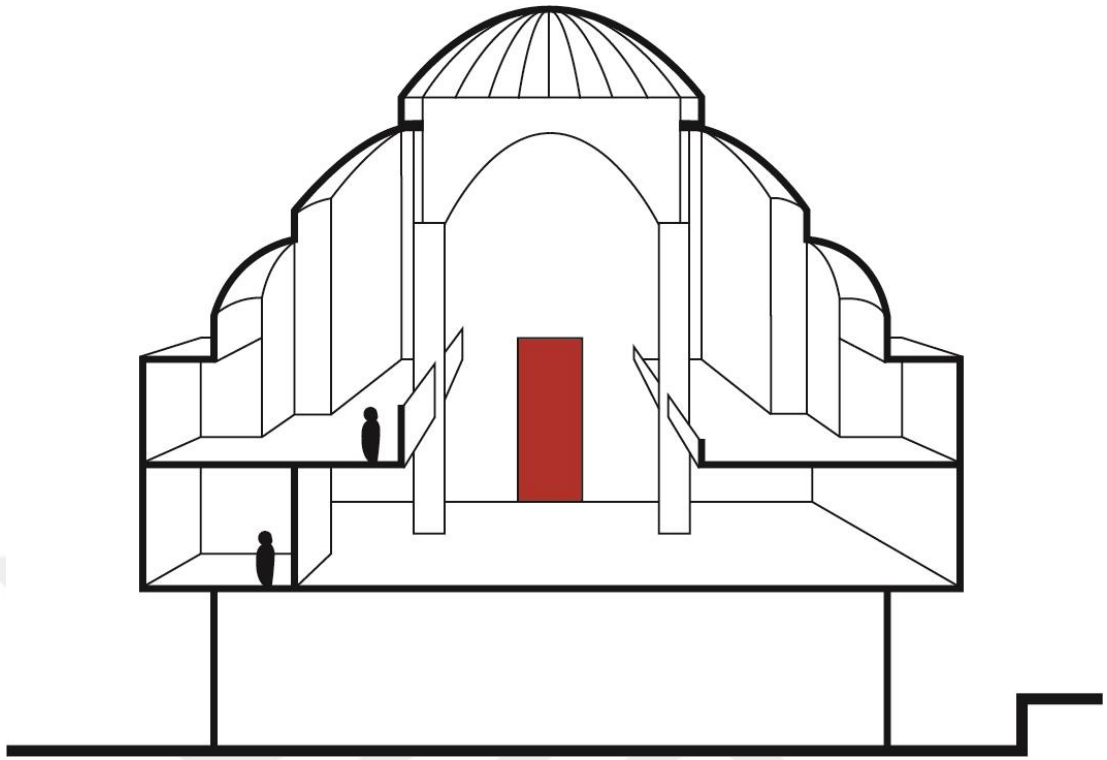
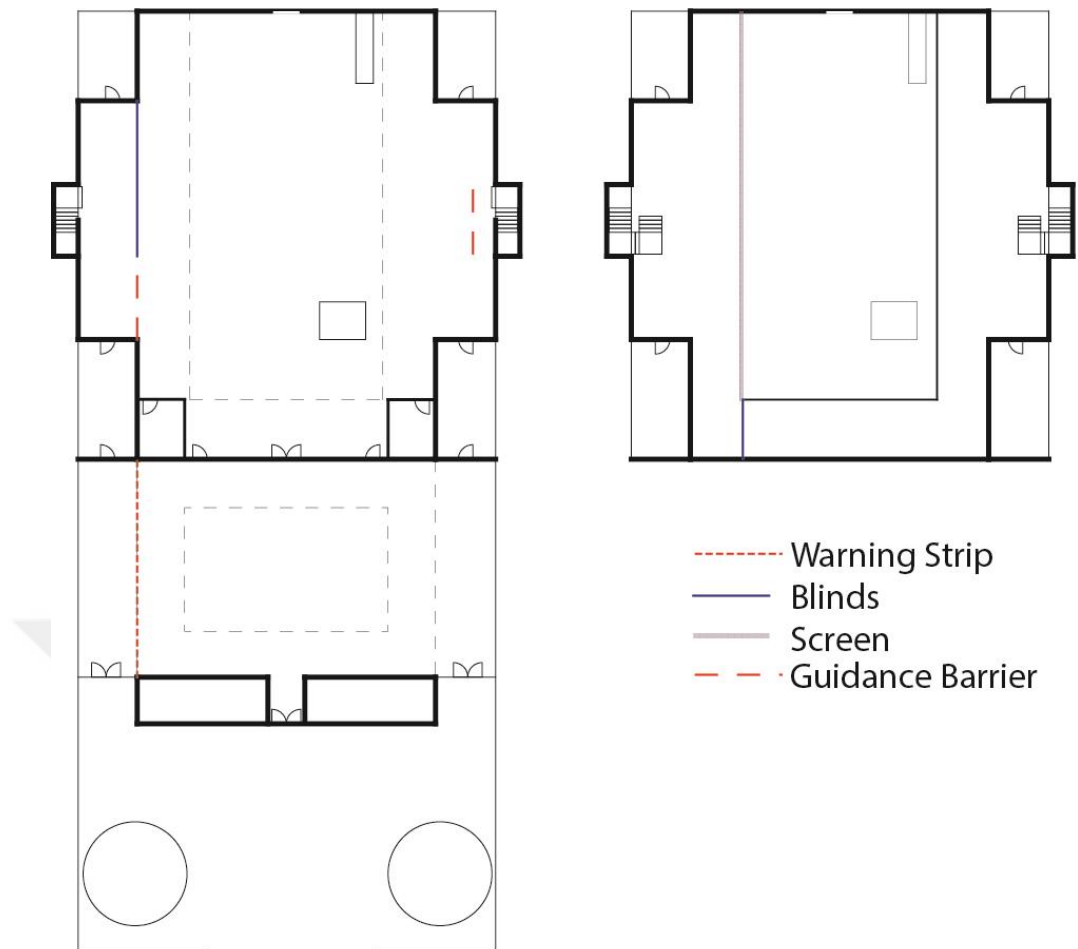
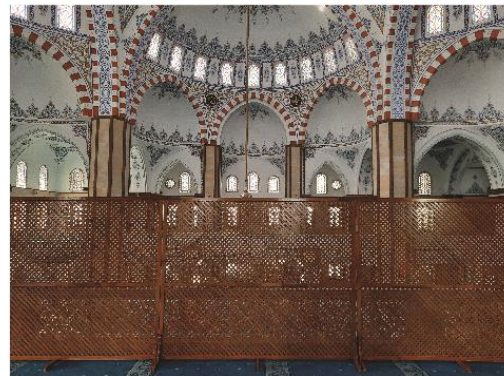


Figure 3.9. Women's section in Ramazanoğlu Mosque (source: author)



Guidance Barrier



Screen



Warning Strip



Blinds

Figure 3.10. Measures for gender segregation (source: author)

In the initial design, men and women were not separated by any means other than the ablution and toilets; later, a separation that starts prior to the praying area occurred (Figure 3.11). Moreover, it is visible that there is a big shrinkage in the women's praying area. However, there was no specific women's section before; the borders were not fixed. The change in women's space in the mosque can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, even though women were not designated strictly in an area and women could take their agency, women's space in the mosque could be erased easily when there is a crowd of the male congregation. In crowd praying, such as Friday sermons, men are always given priority. Therefore, in such a plan, women could never have an option to attend the mosque because their space is a leftover space from men. Secondly, the separation of the areas and entrances, usage of blinds and screens, decrease in the area of women's praying space can be commented as the wish to render women invisible and support their subordination with the secondary spaces. On the other hand, the separation of an area for women and designation of it for them specifically means acceptance of women in mosques.

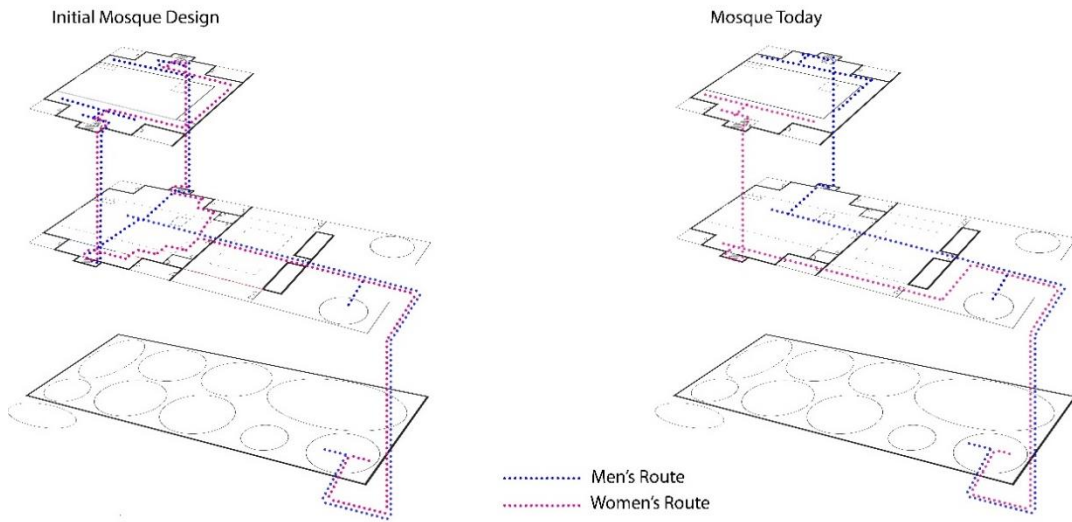


Figure 3.11. Circulation paths based on genders (source: author)

3.5.2. Çamlıca Mosque

The Association for Building and Maintaining the Istanbul Mosque and Education-Cultural Service Units was established with the leadership of Ergin Külünk to

actualize a mosque project, that is monumental in its size as well as its location on a hilltop. After the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that a mosque would be built on Çamlıca Hill, among the largest in the world, which would be seen from all over Istanbul (Radikal, 2012), an architectural competition was announced on 23 July 2012 (Yazman, 2012a). The participants of the competition were asked to design a ‘mosque project that is appropriate for the silhouette and urban texture of Istanbul, which reflects the Ottoman Turkish architectural style, extends from tradition to the future, and would be one of the symbols of Istanbul; they were given 40 days for the delivery of the project (ahaber, 2012). The competition was highly criticized as it was poorly managed, the webpage and specifications were not announced initially, and jury members were not determined; moreover, the plan of building a mosque on the hill of Çamlıca was perceived as unnecessary by some, stating that there is no congregation that would use that big of a mosque (Yılmaz, 2012). In addition, the competition faced boycotts from the Chamber of Architects, and scholars resigned from the jury (Yılmaz, 2012). After the result of the competition was announced, there was no first place but instead two second places. One of them was a modern-looking mosque designed by a group of four, while the other was a neo-Ottoman style mosque designed by two female architects; the latter was chosen to be built (Batuman, 2018).



Figure 3.12. Location of Çamlıca Mosque (source: Google Earth)

The mosque's name is derived from its location; it is on Çamlıca Hill, which is located in the Üsküdar district in the Anatolian side of Istanbul (Figure 3.12). On March 7, 2019, the mosque was inaugurated with the participation of approximately 50 thousand people in the morning prayer of laylat al-raghaib (*Regaip Kandili*, the night of prophet Muhammed's conception) (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). It is designed with the ideals of *külliy*e, which is an Islamic-Ottoman social complex consisting of various functions centered on a mosque. The Çamlıca Mosque complex has a conference room, library, exhibition space, museum, car parking area, and the mosque, which can hold 25.000 people praying at the same time. It is the biggest mosque in Turkey. The mosque has a main hall and two mezzanine floors which are designed for the usage of women. For the women's section, the miniature craft is used, and warm materials are preferred to make it more feminine (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). Additionally, calligraphic writing is also derived from the function of the space. In the women's section, the name of the mother of the Prophet, Amine, and his daughter Fatima are chosen to be written (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). The mezzanine floors, similar to Ramazanoğlu Mosque, have a U shape. However, unlike Ramazanoğlu, all the mezzanines are left for women, and the ratio of female area to

male area is much bigger. However, while designing, it is important to consider the user profile, who and how many people would come. Çamlıca Mosque is away from the city center. Attendance to the mosque is not based on regular prayers going there five times a day. As the Prime Minister announced, the initial aim to make the mosque is creating a symbol. Most visitors of the mosque are tourists, either local or foreign. In the car parking area, it is more common to see cars from a different city or country plates than Istanbul's. Its touristic character also affects the gender relations inside of the mosque.

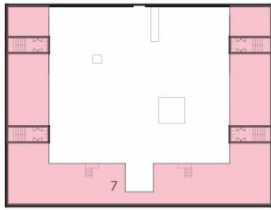
In Figure 3.13, it is shown that women have significant areas that they can use. Moreover, according to the president of Istanbul Mosque and Education-Cultural Service Units Construction and Sustainability Association, during the Friday praying, women's attendance is given importance, and rather than directly invading women's space, the leftover space from women is occupied by men (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). However, having touristic purposes, the mosque does not only fulfill praying functions but welcomes curious people who want to wander around. It is possible to see women in the main area, sitting, taking photographs, chatting with their friends, and just walking around. Similarly, many men on the mezzanine floors walk around and appreciate the mosque's view from the mezzanine floors. Therefore, even though the mezzanine floors are designed for women, the relationship is much more fluid, and the separation is not rigid, preventing people from entering each other's areas. The women's section on the ground floor has a staircase to access the mezzanine floors. The main hall also has staircases reaching to the mezzanine floor symmetrical to the women's section. Moreover, there is no signage stating that the upper floors are for women. Considering that supposed women's and supposed men's areas both have access to the upper floors without any warning creates this confusion. However, it might be a deliberate confusion serving touristic purposes. The mezzanine is not visually separated from the main praying area; however, it is not part of the main hall either (Figure 3.14). In Figure 3.15, it is seen that women's praying spaces actually enclose the main space and the semidomes, and they are not under them.

As stated, the touristic purpose of the mosque softens the gender segregation and the sacred identity attributed to mosques in Turkey. Since mosques lost their social function and were left with solely praying purposes, space and gender allocation have been rigid. With tourists, the mosque gained another dimension free from the praying practice. It is possible to see the social usage of mosques and various activities within them around the world. In Turkey, still very sacred and religious, the mosques becoming a religious touristic spot approaches them to its abroad examples and turn them into more porous spaces in terms of gender segregation.

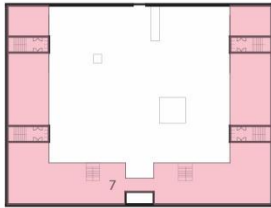
The multifunctional *külliy*e welcomes both genders in its different services; the museum, library, exhibition, lounges, and the courtyard are mixed-used places. Two spaces have clear separations; the first one is the ablution rooms. However, after ablution, both men and women walk side by side again through the lounge, which is uncommon to witness in traditional mosque spaces and rather a modern space, and from there, they take the elevators together (Figure 3.16). The second separation is the designated praying areas for both men and women (Figure 3.17). Even though gender segregation is not as strict, the female body is still perceived as a threat. Each entrance to the courtyard is guarded by security who do not let women in without their heads covered or with revealing clothes, even though the courtyard itself is not a religious space. If women do not have headscarves, they are provided with the appropriate clothing. There are also guards within the mosque that work as surveillance to monitor the behavior of people and to control touristic fluidity.

Initial Mosque Design

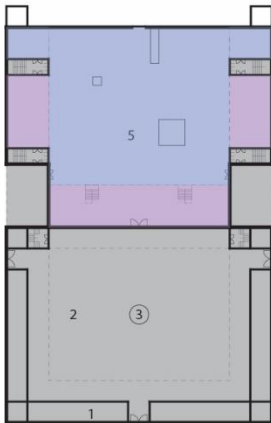
Second Floor



First Floor

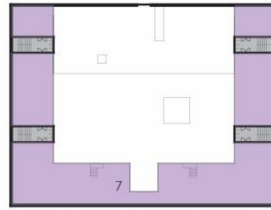


Ground Floor

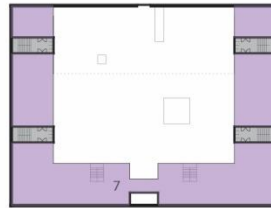


Mosque Today

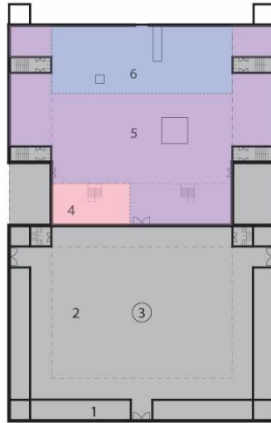
Second Floor



First Floor



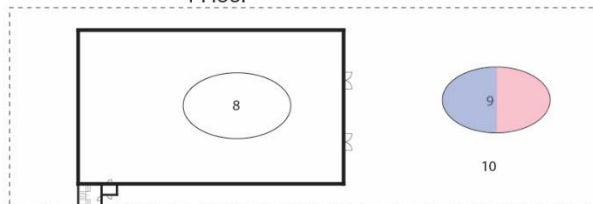
Ground Floor



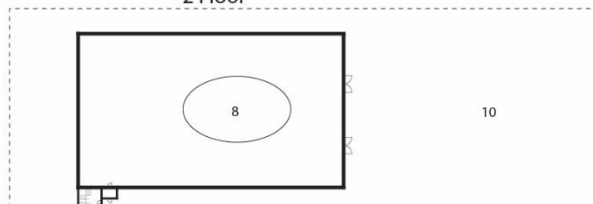
1. Art Studios
2. Courtyard
3. Fountain
4. Women's Section
5. Main Prayer Hall
6. Secluded Prayer Area
7. Mezzanine Prayer Hall
8. Lounge
9. Ablution Room
10. Car Parking
11. Kids Playground Area
12. Museum, Art Gallery, Library

- Male Space
- Female Space
- Intermixed Praying Space
- Common Circulation Spaces

-1 Floor



-2 Floor



-3 Floor

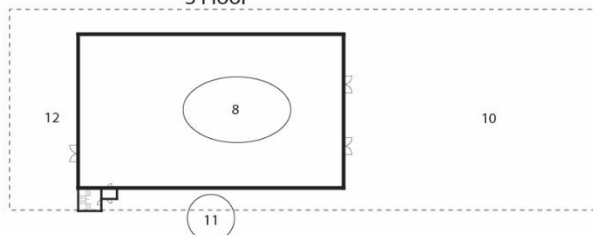


Figure 3.13. The functions and space usage based on gender (source: author)



Figure 3.14. The relationship of the women's section with the main hall and the mihrab view (source: author)

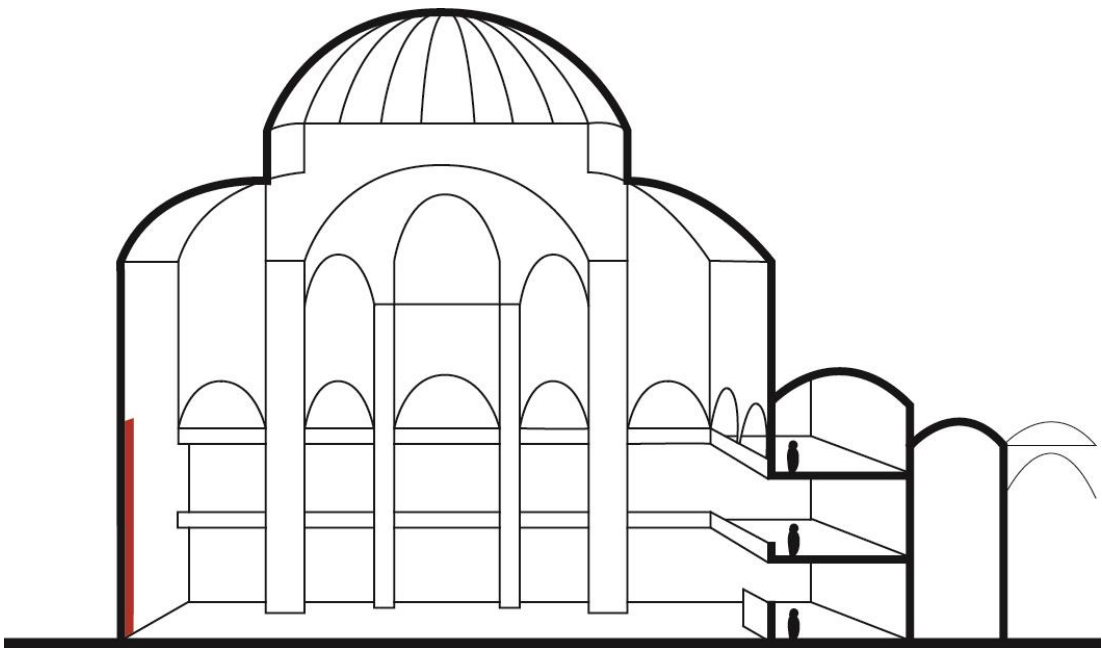


Figure 3.15. Women's section in Çamlıca Mosque (source: author)



Figure 3.16. Lounge on every basement floor (source: author)

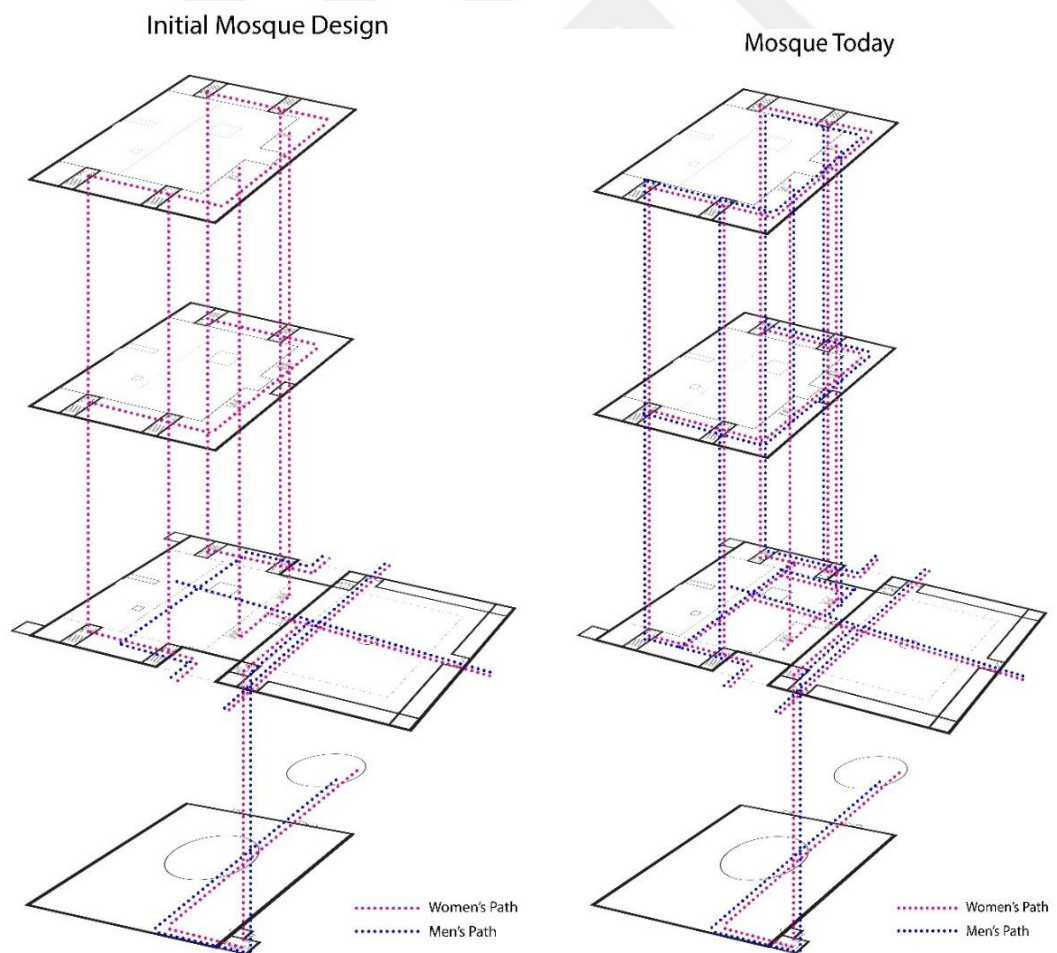


Figure 3.17. Circulation paths based on genders (source: author)

On the ground floor, right after the main entrance, there is a small covered section on the left part for women to pray, which clearly states that men cannot enter that area. Closer to the mihrab, there is a separate area for men to pray also states that women cannot enter that area (Figure 3.18). A specification of the men's praying area is proof of the non-gendered nature of the main hall. The tradition of separation, giving the main hall to men, and leaving space for women in the basement or mezzanine floor is broken within Çamlıca Mosque. Everyone, regardless of gender, is free within the mosque based on the observation of the users, except for two small divided praying spaces. However, the initial design was not like this. The president of the association talks about the partitions (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021):

After opening our mosque for worship, the only thing we did was to add a partition. It is a mosque that attracts a lot of foreign tourists, they want to go everywhere, of course, but worship is also done in our mosque. In order for worship to be performed in awe, one must have a little cut off from the outside. If someone passes in front of you while you are praying, you will be distracted. To prevent this, we built a screen a few meters in front of the pulpit. We aimed that the visitors would not get in front of those screens while the prayer was being performed.

Although it is possible to see women walking around in the main hall, which softens gender separation, women do not pray in the main hall. When they want to pray, they mostly prefer the space covered with partitions specifically allocated to women. Some go to the mezzanine floor and want to pray while having a grasp of the atmosphere of the mosque if they do not find people, both men and women walking around as a distraction. Therefore, in Çamlıca Mosque, even though it is a religious place of worship, the separation does not occur due to gender but gendered bodies' act of prayer. While the mosque's religious character is softened by the third subject, tourists, which reduces gender separation, the religious act is still very much gendered and not challenged by the users/visitors. They continue to follow the tradition of not intermingling, seeing, or being visible with each other during the prayer.



Figure 3.18. Clearly separated men's and women's areas (source: author)

The definition of separate space in mosques is generally used for women's praying areas. However, due to the touristic character of the mosque, there was a need to define men's places as well. The main area in the mosque is not the men's space but the tourists' space. Therefore, men's space is also marginalized. However, this marginalization cannot be compared with women's subordination in mosque spaces. The designated space for men is considered to be the most preferred area to pray because of its proximity to the mihrab. Women's places in mosques are always at the further end of the mosque due to religious conventions. The difference between men's and women's spaces in Çamlıca Mosque is not limited to their location but also the selected partitions. In Figures 3.19 and 3.20, it can be seen that the screens used to determine men's space are waist length while women's partitions are height length. It makes sense not to cover the mihrab area with partitions to make it visible for all prayers, but even though Islam does not obligate women to pray behind walls or screens, the mosque association preferred high perforated screens that do not allow clear sight as part of the design (Figure 3.15). The screens in the men's section act as a signifier, while the aim in the women's section is a visual block. Besides women's sexual bodies, prayer women are also accepted as something to be avoided and not looked at, which results in women praying behind high screens. Their possibility of being seen by men while praying obligates women to hide behind partitions and obstructs their view of mihrab in the act of worship. Parallel to Ramazanoğlu Mosque, the visibility of praying women is decreased after its initial design, and the women's section is covered with high screens. However, while the

most dominant agent in Ramazanoğlu was the men, in Çamlıca Mosque, it is the tourists.



Figure 3.19. The screen used in the female's section (source: author)



Figure 3.20. The screen used in the male's section (source: author)

3.5.3. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque

Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque is located in Ankara, where two main streets meet, Bilkent Boulevard and Eskişehir Road. Next to busy traffic routes, the mosque is not near residential areas but next to the *Diyanet*, who requested the mosque. There are an educational institution and the city hospital, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, which is designed by the same architect, and lastly, a big shopping mall and office towers complex near the mosque (Figure 3.21). In addition, it is close to Bilkent subway station and bus stops which help people commute to the mosque. It is a major mosque that is not centrally located, it has symbolic power similar to Çamlıca Mosque. In April 2006, the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque design competition was launched based on the wish of *Diyanet*, and eight firms were asked to submit design proposals for the mosque (Özaloğlu, 2017). The instructions for the competition were not strict; only the capacity of the car parking area and people were specified (S. Alp, Personal Communication, February 19, 2020). The jury of the *Diyanet* chose one of the proposals, which was a modern

mosque belonging to Salim Alp; even though the style of the mosque was not suggested in the competition and it was the architect's free will to design it such. On the other hand, *Diyanet* was in a state favoring contemporary mosque design and not imitation of Ottoman style at that time, which supported the choice of a modern mosque design.



Figure 3.21. Location of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque and its surroundings (source: Google Earth)

The construction started in 2008, and after more than four years, it was opened on 19 April 2013 by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Prime Minister of the time (Hürriyet, 2020). The mosque got its name from the third Director of Religious Affairs, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki (1887-1951), and it is the biggest mosque in Ankara. The mosque has car parking, ablution rooms, exhibition space, shops, diyanet radio, and praying spaces that allow 6000 people to pray at the same time (Figure 3.22). The architect, Alp, that won the competition, was removed from the project afterward. Instead, a female project coordinator, Merih Aykaç, and interior designer, Sonay İlbay, came into the frame. Different changes were made during the construction process, but they were rather architectural, technical, or decorative than spatial⁵. They were made against the will of the architect, Salim Alp. The mosque gets attention for being an eclectic example of modern style on the outside designed by the architect Alp while having historical references in the interior designed by the interior designer İlbay and the coordinator Aykaç. While preferring the usage of traditional symbols and elements associated with Turkish history in the decoration, the mosque is far from a

⁵ To learn more about the changes made during the construction, and further knowledge, see Özaloğlu, S. (2017). An attempt to transform popular religious images into contemporary mosque architecture: Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 34(2), 114-132.

classical Ottoman replica; utilizing technological construction advancements, transparent elements have been used even in the dome. The structure is made out of a skeleton system with traditional reinforced concrete, with four pillars supporting an upper structure of two superimposed domes, the central and the peripheral (Özaloğlu, 2017). Gold colors were preferred throughout the design, while ten armed Seljuk star was used in the decoration as a geometric pattern. One of the most common elements in mosques, the chandelier is not used not to divide the mosque space. The ventilated shoe racks that are illuminated based on their vacancy are the first examples in the world.





Figure 3.22. The functions and space usage based on gender (source: author)

The architect talks about designing the women's section as follows (S. Alp, Personal Communication, February 19, 2020):

In the past, there was no separation between men and women in the mosque, so that they could be in the same area. Then the idea of isolating women and providing praying spaces for only men began. I wanted to change this thinking. There is a mezzanine floor in terms of privacy. Even in Friday prayers, there is a separate area

for women. Circulation, parking lot, elevator, male and female are together. I let the common spaces be used together; no one is preventing anyone. During circumambulation in the Kaaba, men and women are together. In the replicas of Ottoman mosques, they put women in the basement, but women should experience the atmosphere of the mosque. The balcony is a great solution.

There is no visual obstacle from the mezzanine floor to see the mihrab (Figure 3.23). The mezzanine floor railings are sequentially made of marble star motifs and transparent glass. Those who want to see the mihrab façade clearly can sit behind the glass or may prefer to see through the star motif's gaps indirectly (Figure 3.24). Thus, an alternative is provided to women. Moreover, with the common decision of the *Diyanet*, names of female companions of the prophet are written in the women's section; Ottoman garden motifs, tulips, roses, and hyacinths are used as tile motifs in the women's places (Figure 3.25). Having the names of the female companions on the top, the tile painting on the bottom symbolizes that heaven is under the feet of mothers, a statement attributed to the prophet; geometric shapes are used throughout the mosque; however, the use of floral tiles in the women's section is a reference to femininity. (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020).

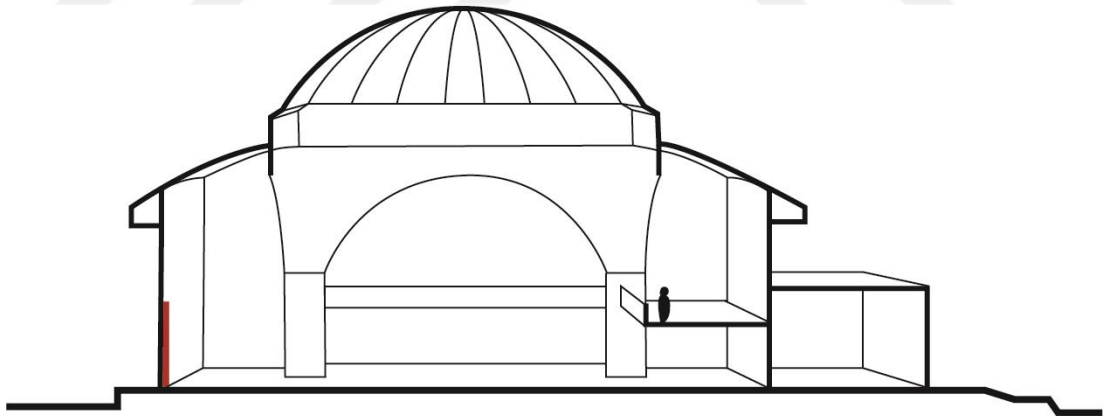


Figure 3.23. Women's section in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque (source: author)



Figure 3.24. Railings in the women's section and the mihrab view (source: author)

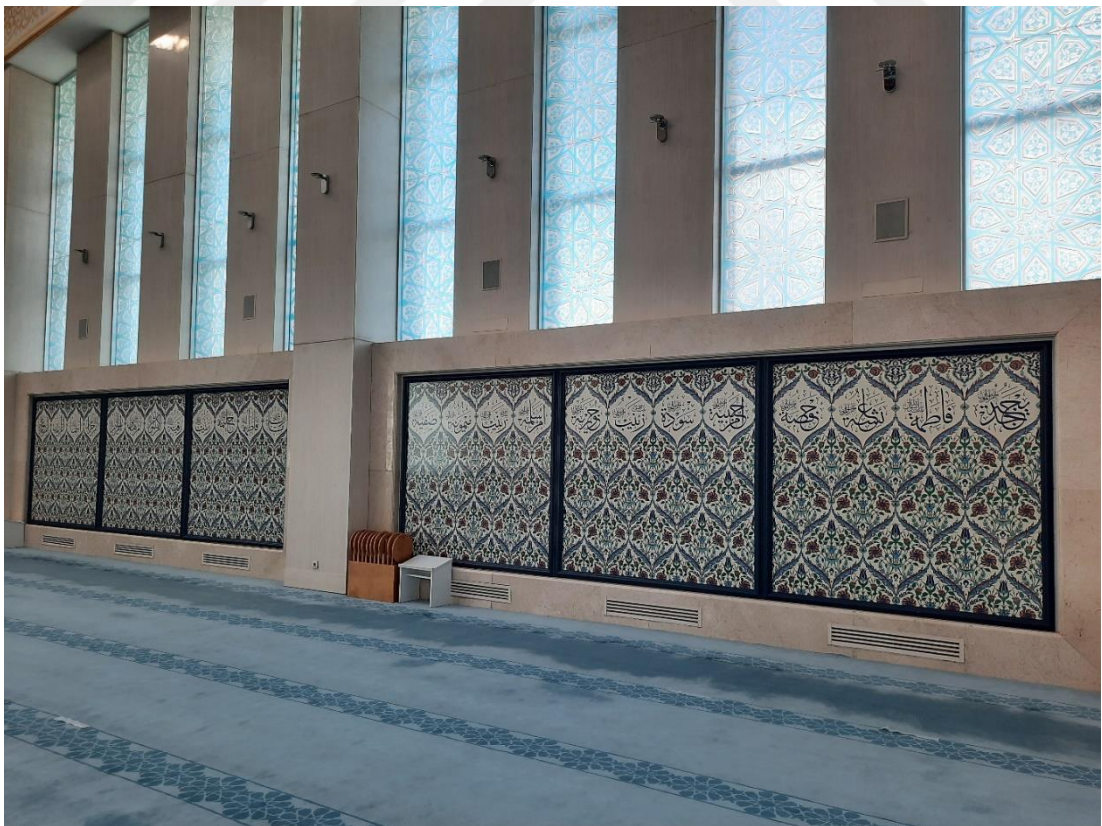


Figure 3.25. The tile motifs in the women's section (source: author)

Similar to previous case studies, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque has a U-shaped mezzanine floor. However, the mezzanine floor consists of three different sections, the east wing, the west wing, and the north wing. This separation is emphasized through the circulation areas. In the previous mosque examples analyzed, the staircases were part of the mezzanine floor so as the female's section. In Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, staircases are cut off from the praying space; moreover, the obligation to wear shoes in the staircase area reinforces the separation between parts of the mezzanine. In order to go from the east wing to the north wing, one has to wear their shoes and take them out again. Owing to this, the separation and abstraction of the staircases from the praying space on the mezzanine floor help it be understood as a common circulation area rather than a transgression into the female's area (Figure 3.22). Unlike previous mosque examples, there is no additional separation placed after the mosque was built, and the east and west wing were decided to be given to men during Friday sermons from the beginning thanks to the achieved division of the mezzanine floor in the design (Figure 3.26). Therefore, keeping the mezzanine floor circulation area genderless and creating a separation between the wings is a great solution. Giving men two wings during Friday praying is the acceptance of the priority addressed to men; on the other hand, there is still a kept space for women to pray. Even though there may be more men, they cannot appropriate women's space more than what is decided. Considering that much more men attend Friday sermons than women, still providing a non-renounceable space for women is derived from their wish to welcome more women during Fridays. Not equal to men's space, still a great step for Turkey in the acceptance of women in mosques. The *Diyanet* aimed to increase women's attendance to Friday praying; moreover, women forming groups and coming to the mosque for Friday praying from far places is the actualization of the aim (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020).



Figure 3.26. The signboard reads “Women’s Section (Belongs to Men During Friday Prayers)” (source: author)

Like Çamlıca Mosque, there are two main separated spaces based on gender, ablution rooms and praying areas; other facilities are common. Ablution rooms were designed to prioritize privacy so that women’s entrances and exits do not intersect with men’s (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020). However, the way to go to the praying areas is still shared with the opposite gender (Figure 3.27). There are five different entrances to the mosque, two from each side and one main entrance from the north. However, none of these entrances are specifically designated for women. Women may choose to enter from the sides and directly go upstairs or use the main entrance and walk from the sides of the main hall until the vertical circulation area. As well as the idea of making a modern mosque, the ideology of women’s existence in the mosque was also celebrated in the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque example. The separation of men’s and women’s praying spaces within the mosque is clear, with no room for negotiation; however, the place given to women is not subordinate. Women are not hidden or placed in secondary positions. Women do not get to pray in the main hall; however, the place provided to them, the north wing,

is right in front of the mihrab and has a clear view, and it always belongs to women. It also provides sufficient privacy due to its location at the back. Additionally, there are no screens, partitions, or high separators that alienate women from the mosque environment they are in. Therefore, the mosque is a great example of consideration of women as mosque users while providing enough privacy without putting them into secondary positions.

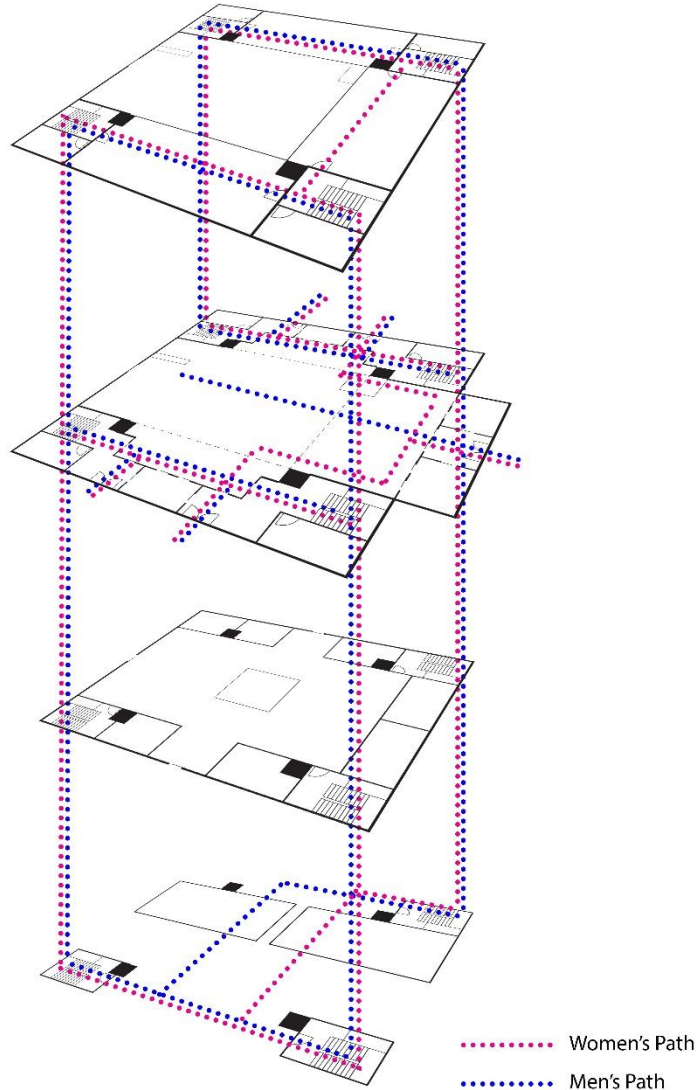


Figure 3.27. Circulation paths based on genders (source: author)

3.5.4. Şakirin Mosque

Şakirin Mosque is located in Üsküdar, at the edge of the Karacaahmet graveyard, which is a historical, at the same time, the largest cemetery in Turkey (Figure 3.28).

The children of Semiha and İbrahim Şakir wanted to build a mosque in memory of their parents. The name of the mosque comes from ‘Şakir’, the surname of the benefactors, which also means thankful. Both the architect Hüsrev Tayla and interior designer Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu were chosen by the benefactor. Hüsrev Tayla was a known name in mosque architecture who also designed Kocatepe Mosque. He was a consultant in an architectural firm owned by the Şakirin family (Küçükerman, 2011). However, after the rough work, he was removed, and Fadıllıoğlu was brought to the design; therefore, they never worked together. Semiha Şakir was also the aunt of Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu’s mother. Being a relative of the benefactor and having a big budget, Fadıllıoğlu, the interior designer, had freedom. However, Fadıllıoğlu emphasizes that she was not chosen due to kinship; she had worked with the benefactors on different projects before (Ünyay, 2009). The benefactors of the mosque had specific wishes regarding the mosque design. They wanted a water feature that displays the inscription of Allah writing in Arabic at the entrance of the mosque and to illuminate the dome with a blue light when it gets dark; moreover, they also requested the names of the masters who contributed to the construction of the mosque to be engraved on a wall (Ünyay, 2009). The Mufti of Istanbul also asked for a projection screen to be placed inside the mosque. Additionally, the offices of the cemetery directorate that existed before the mosque had to be relocated during construction. Besides these requirements, there was no limitation to the aesthetic of the design.

The mosque was opened on the 7th of May in 2009 after four years of the construction process with the attendance of the wife of the Prime Minister. Generally, it is the Prime Minister himself that attends the mosque openings. In a modern mosque that witnessed high involvement of women, such as the interior designer, mosque association president, and the benefactor, it was not incompatible for the wife of the Prime Minister doing the speech rather than himself. She expressed her ideas on the mosque (Yılmaz, 2016):

It was not pompous; it was not exaggerated. From Islamic aesthetics to Seljuk art, from Ottoman culture to Republic and contemporary arts, every motif and every decor is embroidered with fine intelligence. I truly congratulate everyone who contributed to this magnificent work that amazes those who see it, gives inner peace and integrates our spiritual world with the outside world.

It was designed by a known male mosque architect and a female interior designer who later became known as ‘the first female mosque designer’ (Çimen, 2020).

Şakirin Mosque gained attention with its modern design and is even called a ‘high society mosque’ by the media due to the Şakirin family who built the mosque and the architect who is famous for extravagant bars and restaurants design (Demirer, 2017).



Figure 3.28. Location of Şakirin Mosque and its surroundings (source: Google Earth)

Compared to previous examples, the mosque is small in terms of size and narrow in functions. Other than praying spaces and ablution rooms, it has a courtyard with a statue-like fountain designed by a British artist. In addition, it has a religious consultation office (Figure 3.29). The mosque was built with a shell structure. It is translucent and illuminated with glasses around three sides of the ground floor and four sides on the upper floor. The metal plates in front of the glass do not fully cover them but interrupt the visual connection with the outside. The mihrab, minbar, and pulpit each are designed as individual artistic elements like statues that differentiate the mosque from others. According to Demirer (2017), the mosque is an example of Islamists reclaiming modern elite status and their creation of a new identity.



Figure 3.29. The functions and space usage based on gender (source: author)

Women are located on the mezzanine floor. Traditionally neo-Ottoman style architecture consists of the dome and semi domes, and the mezzanine is located under the semi domes. Owing to the shell structure design, the mosque allows women to be under the same structure as men; it not only creates a visual connection with the main hall but spatially takes part in it. On the contrary, the mezzanine floor limits men's perception of the structure while bringing women closer to the shell (Figure 3.30). The women's praying section on the mezzanine floor is given importance; it has a good amount of size compared to the main hall and an unobstructed view of the overall hall and mihrab. The railings for the mezzanine floor are perforated, which provides sight to mihrab even while sitting (Figure 3.31). Bookshelves and closets with women's clothing are provided for women's usage. The closet is the acceptance of welcoming any kind of woman; if a woman does not wear a headscarf, she can utilize the ones in the mosque. However, it also reflects the negotiation; once you are in the praying space, you need to wear appropriate clothing.

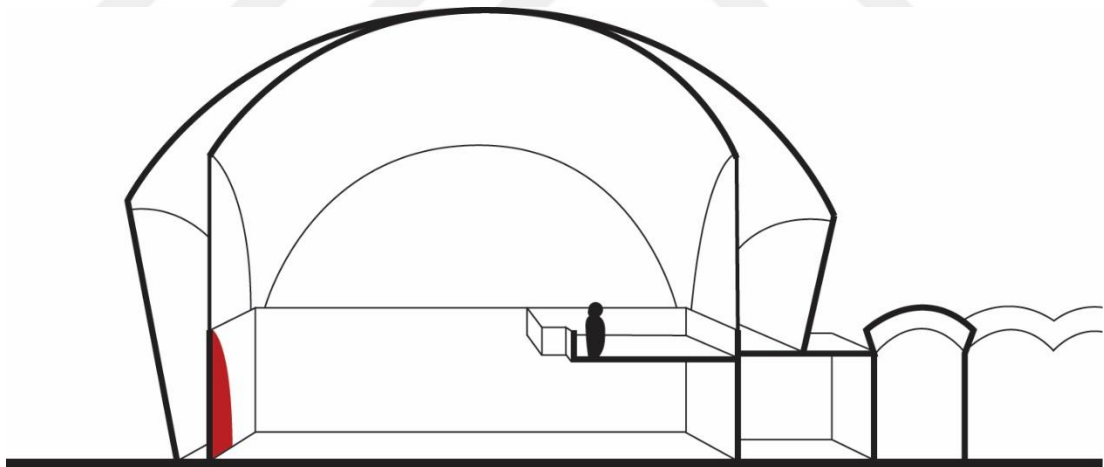


Figure 3.30. Women's section in Şakirin Mosque (source: author)

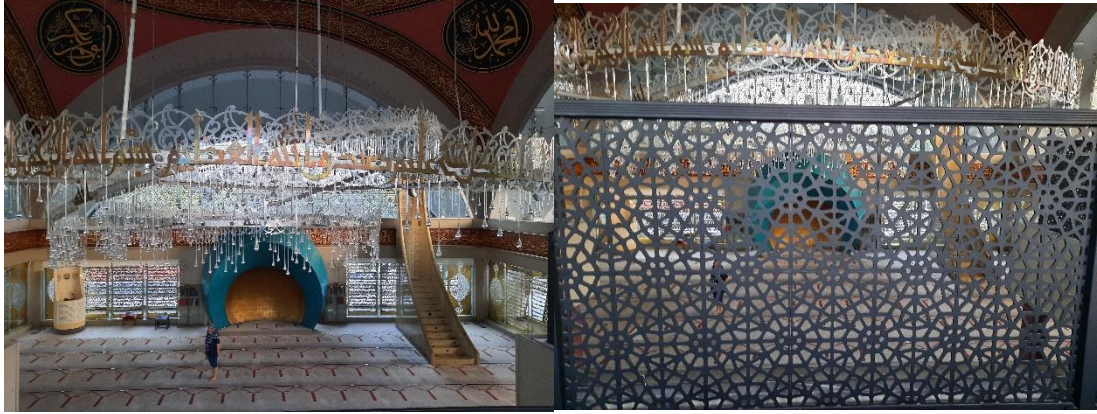


Figure 3.31. View from the women's section while standing and sitting (source: author)

In Şakirin Mosque, men are allocated the main hall, whereas women pray on the mezzanine floor. The ablution spaces of women's and men's are next to each other. After the ablution, men and women get together while going to the mosque. However, the interesting part is that women's access to the courtyard space is denied. Before the entrance to the courtyard, signage directs women to women's praying space (Figure 3.32). However, the entrance hall of the mosque is common for both genders. Therefore, even though both men and women will meet at the same space again, which is the entrance, women are separated from the path that goes through the courtyard (Figure 3.33). Looking at the initial photographs of the mosque, the signage is placed at a later stage, which is unknown (Figure 3.34). Guidance for women that was not perceived as necessary in the beginning, became a need for the congregation later.



Figure 3.32. Courtyard and signage directing women (source: author)

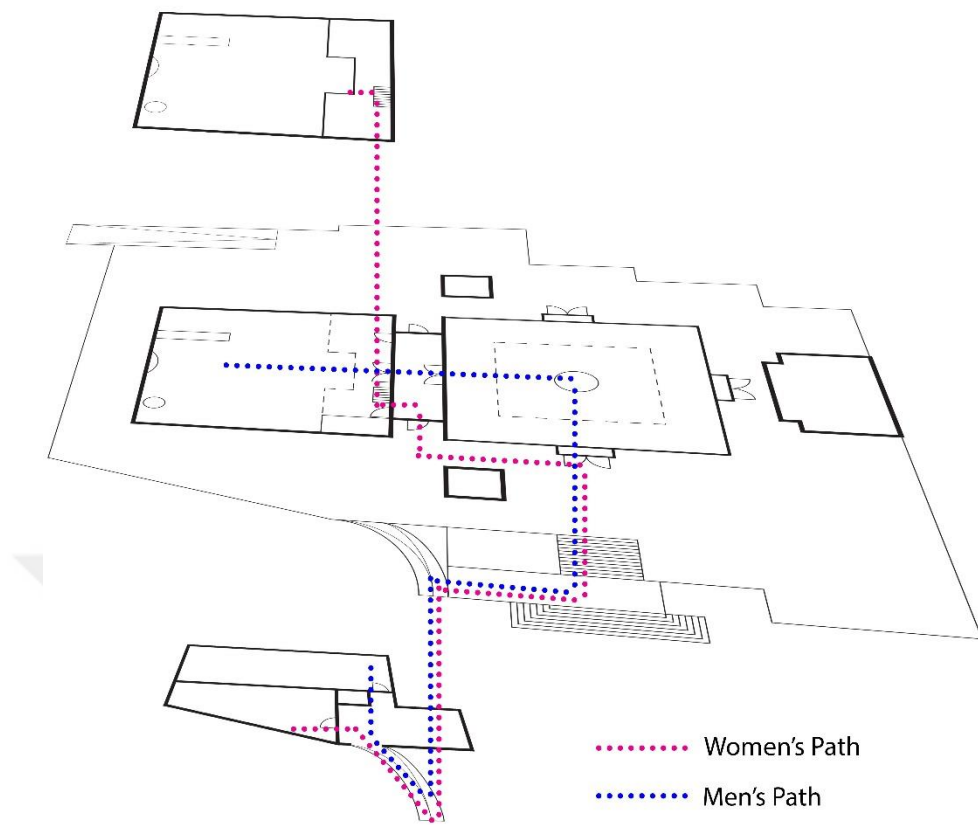


Figure 3.33. Circulation paths based on genders (source: author)



Figure 3.34. Entrance to the courtyard when the mosque was first built (source: Küçükerman, 2011)

3.5.5. Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque

Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque is located in Alacaatlı, Ankara, a developing suburban district. The area mostly consists of clusters of building complexes and commercial spaces. Empty lots are dominant; additionally, the area has a high school, a mosque, and parks (Figure 3.35). It was designed by a female architect, Esra Moza, who is the granddaughter of the benefactor. It is a modern mosque while having traditional elements such as a dome and minaret. It is a small-scale neighborhood mosque. The mosque is located in an inclined area; therefore, there are elevation differences, and it has an irregular shape due to the topography. Three geometrical shapes are emphasized in the design: square, the mosque building, triangle, the ablution space, and circle, which is the dome (Figure, 3.36) (arkiv, n.d.).



Figure 3.35. Location of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque and its surroundings (source: Google Earth)

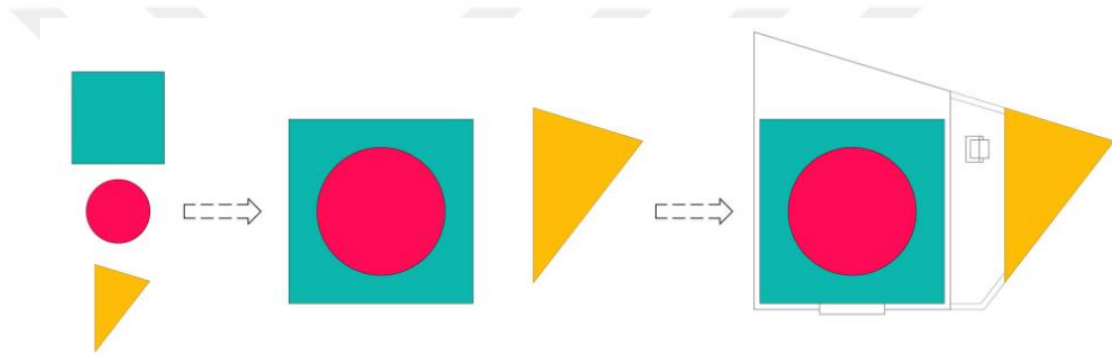


Figure 3.36. Geometrical shapes creating the mosque (source: <http://www.arkiv.com.tr/galeri/detay/240808/14/Proje/6173>)

Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque has a car parking area in the basement, the Qur'an course rooms, a kitchen, an imam room, masjids, and ablution rooms are located on the ground floor. Moreover, a courtyard space was achieved between the space of the praying area and ablution rooms on this level. The first floor serves as the men's praying space, and the mezzanine floor was designed for the usage of women (Figure 3.37). In front of the first floor, there is a shadirvan and sitting spaces both for the usage of men and women, and there is no gender segregation in the public area. The mosque was designed with the consideration of women and is used by a considerable number of women. The Qur'an course on the ground floor is mostly used by women. Moreover, the kitchen turned into a spot where women do religious talk and have food at the same time. In addition, the architect did not forget about mothers and placed a lactation room in the women's ablution area.

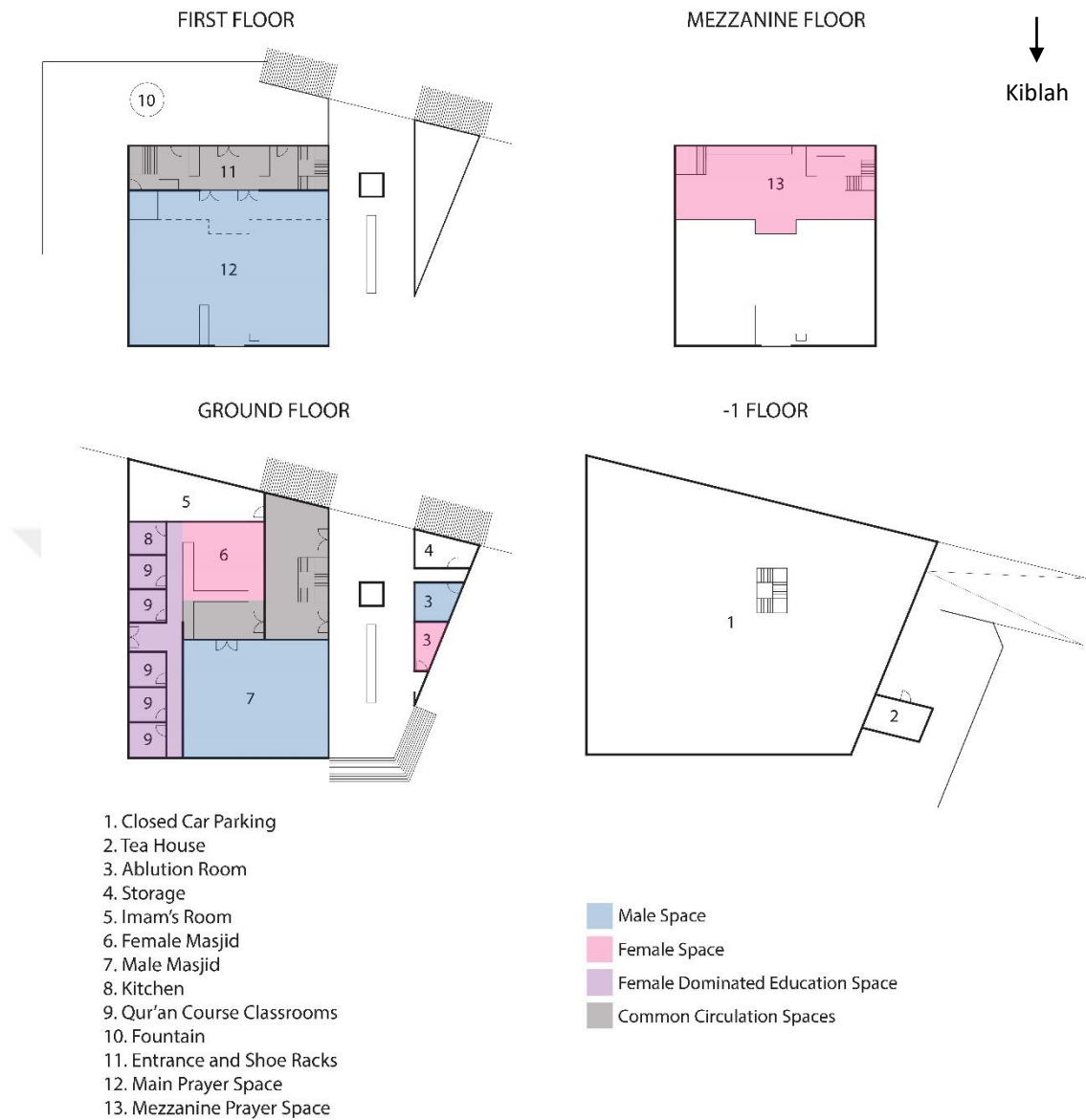


Figure 3.37. The functions and space usage based on gender (source: author)

The women's praying section on the mezzanine floor is similar to the Şakirin Mosque with its perforated railings and its unobstructed view of the main hall and mihrab (Figure 3.38). Moreover, as in Şakirin Mosque, illumination and transparency are prominent. It has partial glasses on the four sides of the mosques with metal plates perforated with a pattern. Women's praying space to men's is not disproportionately small in terms of ratio. Due to the small scale of the mosque, the mezzanine floor was not continued at two sides like a U shape; instead, a small extension in the middle was made. As in the Şakirin Mosque case, women get to experience the mosque atmosphere may be more than men; while the mezzanine

floor has a full view of the Kiblah and the imam, it is located right underneath the dome (Figure 3.39). Since it is hard to heat the main praying space during winter, additional praying spaces, masjids, were designed for daily praying on the ground floor. Thanks to the level difference on the ground floor, the Kiblah wall could be made with glass and naturally illuminated as a continuation of a similar language with the upper floor. However, the women's section is separated from the main area for men and placed behind the shoe racks that do not get natural lighting. While not totally excluding as walls, the usage of shoe racks creates a visual and spatial separation (Figure 3.39).

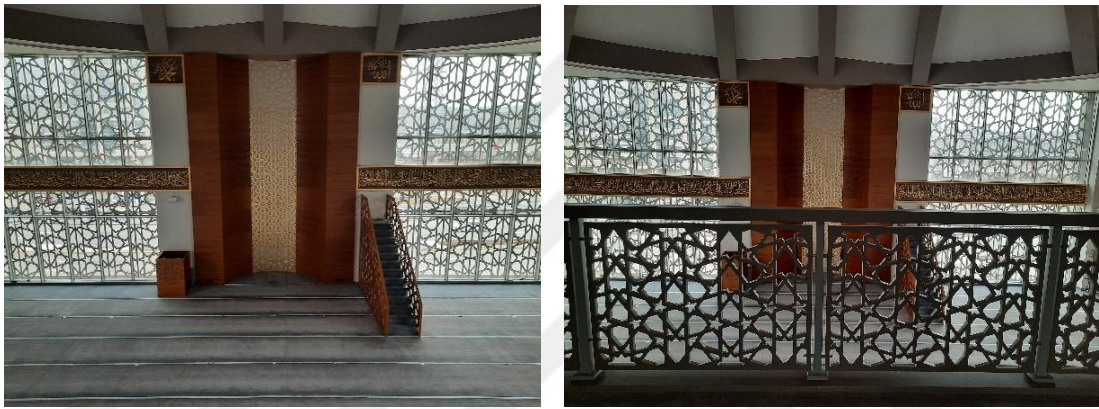


Figure 3.38. View from the women's section while standing and sitting (source: author)

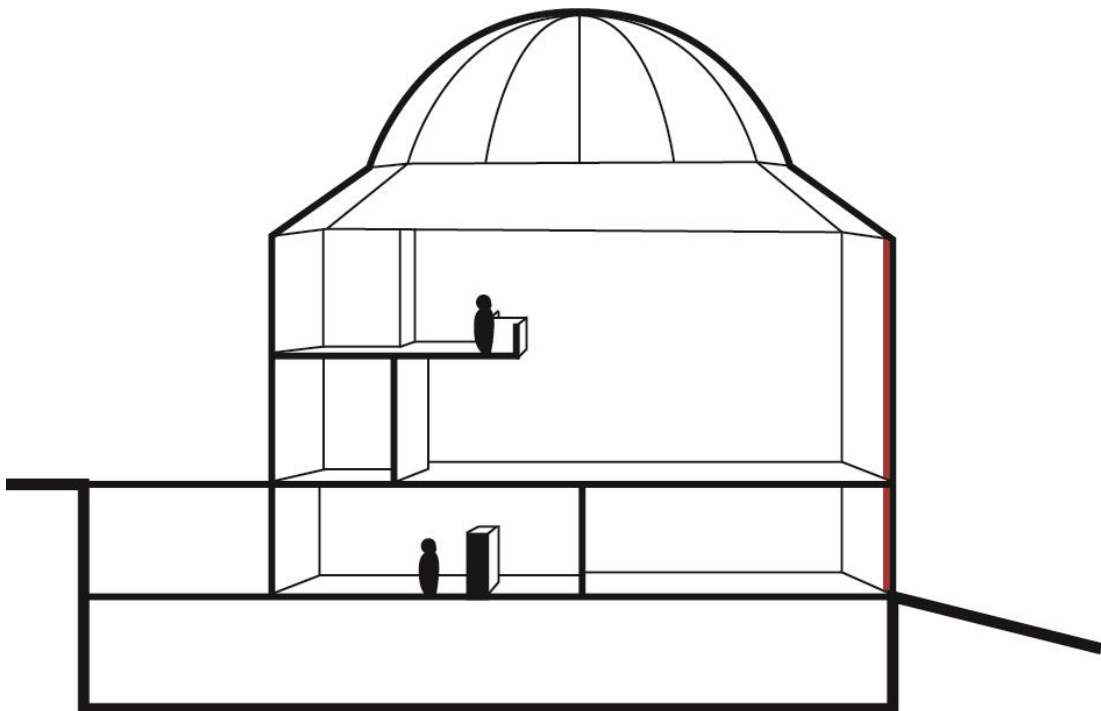


Figure 3.39. Women's section in Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque (source: author)

There was no effort to diminish men's and women's interaction in the mosque design (Figure 3.40). Other than the praying spheres and the ablution rooms, the spaces are common for both genders. The entrances to the ablution rooms are placed on opposite sides to create privacy. However, the entrances to the mosques are shared. Even though the Qur'an course space was not dedicated to any specific gender in the initial design, the area is claimed by women. Moreover, on the ground floor, the only way to go from one side of the mosque complex to the other side is via women's masjid, which supports the relationship between women's masjid and the Qur'an course spaces.



Figure 3.40. Circulation paths based on genders (source: author)

3.5.6. General Comments

The way spaces are gendered, and power is constituted within space change through time. Even though it is mentioned that there were projects for the beautification of women's section and women's equal access to mosques by the officials, after a short time the projects ended, their effects are diminished. In two of these case studies, the

spatial segregation increased through time compared to their initial design, and physical elements such as screens were put to prevent praying women's visibility in mosques. These changes in mosques are not done by the government or officials but rather by the associations and the congregation of the mosque. However, the directorate or officials did not challenge these changes. In order to maintain the improvements on women's benefit in mosques, as much as changing the physical spaces, changing the mindset of people is crucial. Space is a social construction that is not independent of values and meanings. Therefore, for permanent developments in mosques, the perception of the mosque space needs to be changed.

While some of the examples had specific praying spaces dedicated to women, even for the Friday prayer, in some of them, the borders were looser. More flexible spatial arrangements may render women more visible in mosques and create an equal environment; on the other hand, it may exclude women overall with the high attendance of the dominant sex in mosques. Moreover, a separate sphere for women could guarantee their space in mosques and improve their existence as long as it is not limiting.

Although generally, men are accepted as the main users of mosques and women are secondary, Çamlıca Mosque shows a different dimension. As the tourists are the primary users of the mosque, a new negotiation within space occurs. The spheres become more fluid and transgressive. While men's space is defined in a similar manner with women's, tourists become free from gender and space relationships. As the third subject, they can exist within the mosque without any problems; however, when the act of prayer comes to the frame, they earn their genders back and have to follow the rules. Therefore, the touristic side of the Çamlıca Mosque diminishes the separation and visibility issues women face in mosques. However, even as a tourist, there is still a need for modesty, and women are not free from adhering to strict dress codes. On the other hand, the provision of necessary covering clothes for women in mosques is the acceptance of welcoming any kind of woman; if women do not wear a headscarf in their everyday lives, they can utilize from the ones in the mosque.

Some women also believe that they need to be invisible to men during the prayer, so they prefer to pray behind screens. In Iris Marion Young's (2005) and Berger's (1972) statements regarding the female body's interaction with space are mentioned before, women are both objects and subjects. While they have the authority to create and perceive their own space, they are bonded to men's creation of their space. They are always conscious of how they are perceived. Women that are conscious of how the male congregation will perceive them if they are seen may prefer to hide in the mosque space.

In all of the examples, a mezzanine floor is designed for women. Circulations are generally kept in common, and the spatial separations only occur within ablution rooms and praying spaces. Even though the users later changed the design in one of the examples, all of the case studies had common entrances by both genders. While giving women a nice view of the main hall and mihrab, designers tried to differentiate the women's section, either by making it more feminine or integrating hadiths regarding women.

A good opportunity for women is giving them alternatives. In Çamlıca Mosque, women can pray either behind a screen on the ground floor or on the mezzanine floors that is not as secluded. Moreover, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque gives women the alternative to either enter from the main door with men or enter from the side doors. Additionally, on the mezzanine floor designed for women, women choose whether to pray behind a glass railing or a perforated railing. Furthermore, with enough facilities provided for women, it is seen how places of worship are claimed and transformed by women in the Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque example. Women turn the mosque space as part of their socialization.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN ARCHITECTS AND MOSQUES

Even though the term architect sounds like a unified profession, an architect's identity is affected by categories such as biology, color, gender, or class (Burns, 2012). According to Joan Scott (as cited in Burns, 2012), emphasizing the differences, looking into gender as a nonstable identity, and rendering women designers' experiences visible in the field would help them break the disadvantages they face. Moreover, Hayden (1982) and Weisman (1992) claim that a space designed by women would be more 'women-friendly' and consider women's needs. Therefore, the question of if their claims' reflection can be seen in Islamic spaces appears. In the previous section, mosques were examined in terms of their relations to women users. This chapter will look into the designer role of women. It will question the limits of women designers' agency and their consideration for women users; it will try to find out how much women designers were actually part of the design process and how women mosque architects identify themselves. The architects and designers who hold various positions in mosque architecture will be examined through five case studies. For this chapter, interviews and personal communications will be used as a tool to find an answer to these questions. To begin the debate, it will be helpful to understand the role of different actors and their relation to the mosque building process.

4.1. MOSQUE DESIGN AND DESIGNERS IN TURKEY

There are no legal rules that dictate a specific design in mosque architecture in Turkey. In an interview with Özcan Gökçebay, the Head of Investment Real Estate and Technical Services Department at *Diyanet*, he answered my question about whether one can build a mosque in the form of a simple box: “Yes, as long as you get permission from the municipality, you can.” (Ö. Gökçebay, personal communication, April 13, 2021). However, traditions and cultural memory of places of worship highly affect the understanding of mosques. In the First National Mosque Architecture Symposium held by *Diyanet* in 2-5 October 2012 to make mosque projects that can answer to today’s needs (Yazman, 2012b), the question of what makes a mosque a mosque has arisen. Apart from the collective praying practice, what is the specificity of a mosque? Is it the minaret, the dome, or the signboard that says ‘mosque’ shows it is a mosque?

After the Ottoman Empire conquered Istanbul in 1453, the Hagia Sophia Church, built in the 6th century, was turned into a mosque, which later inspired the architect, Mimar Sinan, to build the Muslim equivalent of the originally Christian building in the 16th century (Hakim, 2008). This typology required expertise in the usage of elements such as domes and shells. The new mosque identity created in the 16th century is still kept until today despite the technological and political changes (Hakim, 2008). Moreover, the mosque had been abandoned by the architects for a long time, which created the repetition of the same typology by the Islamic circles. Even though there is no strict mosque typology, elements such as the dome and minaret create a cultural symbol for mosque architecture. The culture has ensured the settlement of some plan types and elements over time, creating an artificial representative value, male-female relations, and some plan typologies resulting from the concept of privacy, ornaments, and embellishments formed repetitive elements in Islamic architecture (Güzer, 2009).

During the early republican era in Turkey, neither the state nor the architects focused on mosque design and construction. Mosque construction decreased, and mosques were built by workmen and masters who were knowledgeable in construction but not architects and did not hold a design sense (Uysal & Tuztaşı, 2013). An architect of

the period, Behçet Ünsal (as cited in Gürsoy, 2013), said, “The aim of today’s architecture is to serve not religion, but to the public”, which explains the ideals of the time. The state’s interest in the subject was not in the form of an organized arrangement; the religious facilities were allocated in the zoning plans of the new settlement areas, but the specifications regarding the mosque were left to the foundations, *Diyanet*, and mosque associations (Akar, 2019). Since there was no rule-maker in this regard, the communities produced various solutions through foundations to meet the need for mosques, which resulted in the occurrence of unqualified structures and unoriginal structures, often failing to respond to the needs (Akar, 2019).

The lack of good quality mosques caused the General Directorate for Foundations, which owns most of the historical mosques, to prepare blueprints, and give mosque associations for free in order to provide a better proportioned classical mosque style demanded by the community in the 1970s (Akar, 2019). The blueprint implementation was followed by the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs in the 1980s to provide free of charge solutions to the problem of benefactors who did not have the opportunity to access architectural and engineering services and who wanted to build mosques (Akar, 2019). The blueprints were neo-Ottoman; they were mimicry of classical Ottoman mosque architecture as part of the conservative ideology of the state (Batuman, 2018b). These mosques were created for different capacities to hold prayers. Some of the blueprints have been drawn by *Diyanet* staff in the past, and there are some that have been drawn by different people or organizations outside. In addition, there are non-copyrighted projects that architects from outside the institution work on and send. They donate the project to *Diyanet*. Blueprints are drawn by considering criteria such as how the general architecture of a mosque should be, building integrity, dome and minaret proportions, general mass harmony of the mosque, and the size of congregations. Projects do not go into much detail, and there are fewer types of projects with social spaces such as libraries, conference halls, and the Qur’an courses. In general, the purpose of these mosque projects is to be an example and a model mosque. Since they are not subject to any project copyright in the application, whoever requests the blueprint, *Diyanet* sends it. These may be civilian persons, mufti offices, foundations, and associations dealing

with the construction of mosques. However, they are sent to be revised in the neighborhood, taking into account the land, ground survey, location of the land, and the Kiblah direction (Ö. Gökçebay, personal communication, April 13, 2021). Almost all the blueprints are designed in classical style, and most of the drawings were made 20-30 years earlier; an update on designs has not been done since (Haseki, 2006). Based on the authorities of the General Directorate of Foundations, the demand of the people is also in the direction of the classical mosque, and people do not request modern mosque types (Haseki, 2006). However, it is an iterative process. Even though the neo-Ottoman style of mosques were preferred due to some reasons, today, the exposure of the traditional mosques makes the congregation believe that this is how mosques should be and create a collective memory.

People demand mosques and raise funds to build mosques, but they are also part of the mosque construction. The elimination of the architect from the mosque design and construction process via given blueprints causes the feeling of more authority on the part of the benefactors. While building, they get to make changes to the design based on their taste. Moreover, since the construction is funded with donations, the mosque depends on the budget the association has at the moment, which in some cases causes different pieces to be produced at various times that do not display coherence. There has been a gap between associations and architects; the architecture of the association's mosques has been looked down, and architects have questioned the political side of the mosque associations (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2013). The blueprints tend to have the aesthetic of neo-Ottoman style and have less involvement of a designer; however, mosques can be built via design competitions or directly contacting an architect. Most modern mosque design examples were implemented through the latter.

Women's distinctive demands and contributions are not adequately valued to prompt greater gender-sensitive architectural critique (Mahfouz & Serageldin, 1990). The statement is true for female mosque designers, as well. The contemporary Muslim woman trying to define her role and contribution in a Muslim society that frequently tries to suppress her is similar to the situation of Muslim societies' trying to define their identities that is 'other' for the West (Mahfouz & Serageldin, 1990). Both

women and Muslim societies are at risk of being suffocated and trampled by a dominant power. Gender-sensitive architectural critique should go beyond just acknowledging that women architects and artists exist and give them appropriate credit because there have been shortages so far (Mahfouz & Serageldin, 1990). Women should not just be added to the same old critique. Rebuilding the topic would benefit women in creating a place for themselves in architecture. While liberating their artistic and skilled contributions as women, they can also manifest feminism and contribute to liberating the changing cultures of Muslim societies through the rethinking of architectural criticism (Mahfouz & Serageldin, 1990). While both being the other towards the West, female mosque designers are also ‘other’ to men, which is discouraging for them in their profession. However, women architects’ involvement in mosque projects may decrease the problems women mosque users face (Aktaş, 2015). Therefore, this ‘otherness’ and identifying oneself in a negative way should be changed with a new position where they can describe themselves in terms of their own accomplishments and fulfillment (Mahfouz & Serageldin, 1990). The chapter will first provide a brief framework on the mosque building in Turkey. Afterward, it will map the expanding role of women architects in mosque building through recent examples that were defined in the previous chapter.

4.1.1. Bureaucratic Framework: Construction Management

In order to understand mosque construction and the role of designers in Turkey, it is crucial to talk about the bureaucracy and the institutions’ role. There are various actors in the construction of mosques; mosque building and survival associations, municipalities, benefactors, Mufti offices, General Directorate for Foundations, the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs, and *Diyanet* (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2013) (Table 4.1 & 4.2). These parties and their roles will be explained in detail.

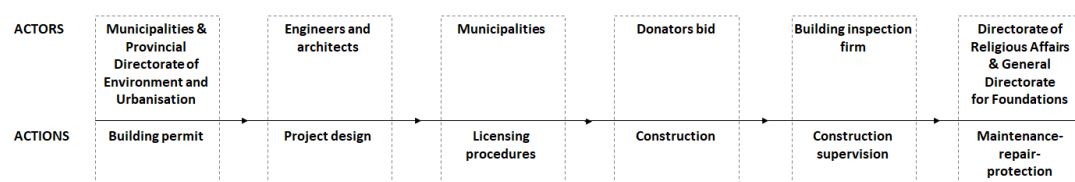


Table 4.1. Actors and actions in mosque building process (source: Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2013)

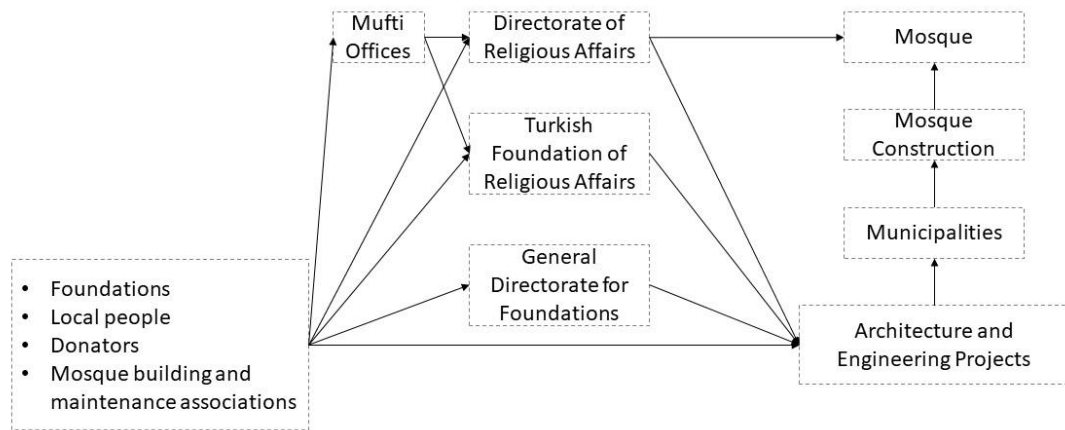


Table 4.2. Actors' relationships in mosque building process (source: author)

A community that wants to build a mosque, firstly, forms an association and foundation which raises donations for the construction. They may let *Diyanet* know about their intention and get suggestions. Then, they meet with the local municipality, which makes zoning plans and allocates spaces for education, parks, and religious facilities based on the needs and conditions of lots. Municipality shows them a lot allocated for religious activities. In some cases, benefactors may donate a plot for mosque construction. After the municipality approves a mosque to be built, it gives the building permit. When the construction documents of the architects and engineers are provided, the municipality handles the licensing procedures so that construction can start (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2013).

In Turkey, the General Directorate for Foundations operates the establishment, dissolution, and inspection of foundations (Directorate General of Foundations, n.d.), which are initially established to fulfill public services. The General Directorate for Foundations is not in charge of mosque construction or inspection; it only restores the old mosques registered as cultural heritage and provides blueprints.

If there is a request for help for a mosque to be built and it is sent to the mufti, the mufti starts a campaign in accordance with the normal fundraising procedures and with the permission of the local authority. He transfers the money collected to the mosque fund in return for a certificate. Moreover, the muftis have a duty to follow the mosque constructions and ensure that the projects are reviewed by the *Diyanet* as much as possible. However, not every project is examined by the mufti or *Diyanet*.

In addition, the muftis of each city and district in Turkey are also the branch heads of the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs in that city or district. These city and district branches are affiliated with the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs' headquarters. In other words, muftis are both public officials under *Diyanet* and the heads of the branches of the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs. Therefore, muftis are part of the foundation's activities in that province and district (Ö. Gökçebay, personal communication, April 13, 2021).

The Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs was established as a non-profit organization with the aim of assisting the work of *Diyanet*, raising a generation that undertakes the spread of Islam and religious services. The Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs is the only foundation that has a direct connection with *Diyanet*, whose founding purpose is to support *Diyanet*. Unlike the General Directorate for Foundations, it is involved in mosque construction. It fills the gap in mosque building; *Diyanet* is not authorized to build mosques, and mosques supported by local benefactors can reach a certain point; therefore, the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs helps to build monumental mosques in big cities such as Adana Sabancı Central Mosque and Ankara Kocatepe Mosque (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2013) which are in neo-Ottoman style. The Foundation also builds mosques abroad where there are big Turkish communities. Moreover, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of Turkic nations in Central Asia, Turkey gave the Foundation more responsibilities to establish connections with these countries (Batuman, 2016). The Foundation became a tool in spreading cultural influence overseas via building mosques abroad with the hope of becoming the head of the 'Turkic world', and mosque construction expanded (Batuman, 2016). Although the Foundation has been building mosques in countries that have significant Turkish migrants, this time, the audience was no longer a dispersion of Turkish individuals but entire 'nations-in-building', conceived as an extension of the Turkish country (Batuman, 2016: 332). Therefore, the Foundation's political role in mosque construction is undeniable.

Management of places of worship has been one of the main duties of *Diyanet*, and the management of all mosques belongs to it. Whoever builds the mosque, after building it, transfers it to the *Diyanet* to ensure both the integrity of the religious life

in Turkey and the integrity of the management of places of worship. Some duties of the Investment Real Estate and Technical Services Department at *Diyanet* are defined as to ensure the technical, functional, and aesthetical control of the mosque, the Qur'an course, mufti, and religious service building; to prepare and control blueprints; to organize activities such as workshops, symposiums, conferences and congresses related to the architecture and functionality of mosques; to ensure the necessary coordination with the relevant units (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018a).

4.1.2. Ideological Tendencies: Framing Design

Diyanet manages mosques but does not have authority on paper in mosque design. However, *Diyanet* sees the fact of municipalities giving building permits and construction permits to mosques without the approval of *Diyanet* or the mufti as the most important weakness in the implementation of the mosque design, and *Diyanet* wants to have authority over it (Ö. Gökçebay, personal communication, April 13, 2021). Moreover, they have been searching for ways on the improvements on mosque architecture, which resulted in them holding the First National Mosque Architecture Symposium.

Between 2-5 October 2012, *Diyanet* and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University together hold the First National Mosque Architecture Symposium, 'Contemporary Design and Technologies in Mosque Architecture from Tradition to Future'. The aim of the symposium was to evaluate the reflections of old mosque architecture to the present, design new mosque projects that can meet today's needs, determine the functions that should be found in contemporary mosques, create original projects, discuss the authoritative contradictions, suggesting the inclusion of religious architecture and contemporary mosque design in university education (Yazman, 2012b). The symposium started with the *Diyanet* President, Mehmet Görmez's speech on how mosque architecture had been neglected for years and could not go beyond imitation; he stated how as an institution, they wanted to take responsibility for questioning the current state of our mosques and turn the mosques into their old monumental characteristics (Görmez, 2013b). Experienced mosque architects and academicians were invited to give lectures on their mosque designs, observations, and research

during the processes, the role and functions of mosques in social life, and mosque history. While Fadıllıoğlu was invited to talk about her Şakirin Mosque design, the project, the ‘Beautification of Women’s Section’ by Erdemli was also presented in this symposium.

At every opportunity, *Diyanet* emphasizes how it feels constrained by its lack of authority in mosque architecture and wants to put more effort into mosque architecture. After the symposium, with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and Climate Change and Gazi University ‘Mosque Planning and Design Project’ started (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2017). The project saw two crucial matters; preparation of a guidebook that showed the minimum criteria to be followed in the mosque projects and making this guidebook become binding (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018b). In the light of the project, *Diyanet* held two workshops in 2017 and 2018; the first workshop was conducted on 22-23 March 2017 in the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque exhibition hall, and *Diyanet* President Mehmet Görmez started the discussion by saying that mosques need to be discussed in terms of their architecture, aesthetic, context, accessibility (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2017). The workshop aimed to build mosques that meet the social and cultural needs of the society, that have the Qur’an course, family and religious guidance office, library, youth center, children’s playground, multipurpose hall, exhibition hall, art workshop, sports field, public soup kitchen, condolence house, and to add ablution rooms and child care spaces for women in mosques, which will be planned in a way that will facilitate access for the disabled, women and the elderly (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2017). Similarly, on 13-15 May 2018, Kayseri, the second workshop of the ‘Mosque Planning and Design Project’ was carried out. After detection and evaluations of the problems regarding mosque architecture, and with the speech of academicians and experienced architects, they aimed to find answers on how to build functional and accessible mosques (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018b).

As actualization first part of their ‘Mosque Planning and Design Project’, to solidify their works and put criterias for mosque design, *Diyanet* has prepared design guidelines in 2021. Their works which were more theoretical, were finalized into a

practical tools book for designers. On the 7th of November 2021, at the ‘Mosques and Religious Officials Week’, the ‘Mosque Planning and Design Guide’ was announced with an introductory meeting (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021a). It was a collaboration work of 5 years led by *Diyanet* with the participation of officials from the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and Climate Change and Gazi University, representatives of official and non-governmental organizations, academics, and architects. The guidelines aimed to be a reference starting from the first planning of mosques, project design, construction, use after opening for worship, maintenance-repair and operation stages, to bring certain measures in this area, to minimize the problems that arise in these matters, to guide the relevant people or organizations and to bring the subject of mosque construction to certain standards in Turkey (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021b). The Mosque Planning and Design Guide right now is only a reference for agents to build mosques; however, there are no legal constraints that enforce these guidelines. Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change is working on the necessary legal arrangements and trying to strengthen the legislative infrastructure accordingly so that the studies and decisions on mosque planning and design will yield effective results (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2021). Therefore, *Diyanet* and the Ministry aim to have more control over the mosque design that is getting built. The legal arrangements may eliminate the low-quality architecture; however, in recent years, *Diyanet* has been in favor of the neo-Ottoman style, which may significantly erase modern interpretation in mosque architecture. Therefore, mosque architecture may be standardized in a way that is away from creative solutions, contrary to their initial aims.

The committee of the project aims to bring mosques into people’s everyday life and place mosques part of the social lifestyle. In the introductory meeting, the Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Murat Kurum, situated their opinion as “We are radically opposed to an urbanization that is disconnected from the mosque. It is imperative that we reposition mosques in the center of the city and life.” (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021a). Moreover, the Minister emphasized Çamlıca Mosque’s importance, saying that it set an example with its architecture and the values it adds to the city; in addition, he said that it had artifact qualities such as the Süleymaniye, Selimiye, and Fatih Mosques that Islam gifted to the history of

humanity (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2021). Considering that Çamlıca Mosque was a controversial mosque, his statement clearly shows the committee's stance on the topic. The introduction meeting's political character continued with the words of Kurum (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2021):

We know very well that our Taksim Mosque, whose minarets we have raised despite numerous objections, is the sign of the birth of a great and powerful Turkey, the hope of all humanity. Our mosques have become a symbol of the resurrection of a nation, with the sound of salah rising from their minarets on the night of 15 July⁶. God Almighty, to build many mosques, which are the symbols of our independence and future, under the leadership of our President; May he grant us the opportunity to revive our civilization.

Despite the endorsement of the neo-Ottoman style of the government, there are not many specifications on aesthetics in the design guide. However, the guide says that a mosque should be designed either with a dome or roofed, depending on the size. It should be noted that their flexible approach in design is not reflected in the spatial order regarding praying performance which will be discussed below. Parallel to the aim of turning mosques into social places, they want the mosques to be accessible by different parts of the society, such as women, children, seniors, the handicapped, and more. While providing optimization in the usage of mosque space, the articles in the guideline are subjective and open for interpretation. In one instance, it says that the walls in the main hall should not cause distraction but what is distracting is not specified. Furthermore, throughout the guideline, the language of 'should', 'can', and 'suggested' is used. Therefore, the guides, as they are, only act as an advisor.

The guidelines have specifications for women's spaces and women's involvement within mosques. It states that the mahfil areas that are reserved for women's usage should be designed in a way to provide a visual connection with the mihrab⁷ (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021b). Regarding the ablution rooms, the guidelines suggest separating male and female entrances as much as possible and using separators for privacy when they cannot be designed independently.

⁶ On the 15th of July 2016, Turkey witnessed a coup attempt; Prime Minister Erdoğan called the nation to take to the streets and stand against the putschists. With the order of the *Diyanet*, salahs were called from the mosques, and the people were invited to go out and stand against the coup plotters.

⁷ K article of 2.3.2 Mahfil Section

Additionally, it suggests placing the baby care unit and breastfeeding rooms inside the female section of the ablutions. When there is a multipurpose hall, it requires to have separate sections for men and women with appropriate entry-exit sections. Similarly, if there are condolence houses inside the mosque complex, it supports allowing women and men to use them separately and, if necessary, to make two separate entrances. The ideology of separating men and women's interaction through circulation continues within the main praying spaces.

The guideline supports the creation of equal opportunities of spaces for women and men⁸. It mentions that the places reserved for women can be at the main prayer area but separated or on the mahfil floor. Moreover, it suggests the standards provided for the main place of worship of the mosque also be met in the section reserved for women in terms of cleanliness, spaciousness, light, easy access, and use. Furthermore, the guide suggests separating both genders as early as possible and providing a different entrance for women other than the main entrance (men's entrance)⁹. (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021b). Therefore, the article follows the approach of *Diyanet* in 2017 in terms of providing different entrances for both genders (BirGün, 2017). When it first hit the headlines, it gathered criticism from various parties. However, the guideline is a demonstration of how *Diyanet* did not change its position in this matter. Moreover, the guide suggests the areas reserved for women be designed to provide a visual connection with the mihrab¹⁰ (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021b). The articles say that women can pray in the main hall in a separate area. Screens are defined as elements that provide privacy and are used to divide spaces indoors¹¹. It is evident that in today's mosque conditions, screens are used to conceal women while creating a separate space for them. It suggests screens be at least 180cm tall from the ground¹². Even though the guide seems to support women's visual access to the mihrab, other than the mahfil solution, women will likely be hidden behind screens as part of the creation of a separate area.

⁸ 2.9 Regulations for Women in Mosques Section

⁹ A article of 2.9 Regulations for Women in Mosques Section

¹⁰ B article of 2.9 Regulations for Women in Mosques Section

¹¹ 2.4.7. Screens Section

¹² D article of 2.4.7. Screens Section

This guide is a production of *Diyanet*'s approach to women users for years. They want women's involvement in mosques; they provide better spatial qualities for women, including visual access to the mihrab. On the other hand, while they state they aim to provide equal standards in men's and women's sections, they see gender segregation as a necessity. Therefore, women and men are provided the 'same' but 'separated' spaces to themselves. Looking at the previous project on the beautification of the women's section, it was seen that the improvements that were made to improve the quality of women's space to the level of men's space's standards were erased easily through time with the congregation's wishes. Maintaining the 'separated' space for women that has the 'same' qualities is difficult; because the spaces do not hold the same power, one can be given up much more easily. Sharing the same space by both genders as a way of maintaining the qualities was never seen as an option by *Diyanet*. The aim of the section was rather than focusing on the design of the women's sections in mosques; it was to demonstrate the new force that will highly affect the design decisions of the architect. What used to be the architect's agency will be bounded to the guideline. Therefore, it is crucial to learn about the guide to understand the role of the architects and their limits in their design and spatial organizations in mosque architecture within the new existing frames.

So far, this chapter has focused on different actors taking part in the mosque construction. Moreover, it looked into how *Diyanet* took part in the process and examined its efforts in mosque architecture. While it produced specifications on women's spaces in mosques, it also produced guidelines for architects in mosque designs. The following sections will focus on the designer as the actor; not putting the gender problem aside, it will focus on the role and agency of women designers in the mosque production process and try to locate female mosque designer's position in a more general sense. The next sections are shaped based on five case studies where mosques were designed or constructed by women holding various positions (Table 4.3).

Mosque Name	Opening Year	Builder	Women Designers	Position of Designers
Ramazanoğlu Mosque	2012	Diyanet	Esen Saraç Ümit Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin	Architects (In Construction)
			Anonymous Anonymous	Architects (Public Servant)
Çamlıca Mosque	2019	Mosque Association (Design Competition)	Bahar Mızrak Hayriye Gül Totu	Architects
Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque	2013	Diyanet	Merih Aykaç	Project Coordinator
			Sonay İlbay	Interior Designer
Şakirin Mosque	2009	Mosque Association	Zeynep Fadilloğlu	Interior Designer
Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque	2016	Mosque Association	Esra Moza	Architect

Table 4.3. Classification of case studies and designers (source: author)¹³

4.2. WOMEN DESIGNER'S POSITIONS IN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

4.2.1. Public Servant

Diyanet holds architects under its institution who help to prepare blueprints for mosques. Different from the designers working in a design office, they are public servants. Instead of answering the needs of a client or an association, they answer to the religious officials working in *Diyanet*. Ramazanoğlu Mosque was designed by two women working under *Diyanet*; later, two designer women based in Adana were involved in the implementation stage of the mosque, Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin, and Esen Saraç Ümit.

Architect Dalgıntekin stated that as women, they knew the problems and needs of women while praying in mosques; therefore, they took these into consideration while preparing the project and made positive discrimination for women.

We have thought of everything for women to worship comfortably and peacefully. We have designed the workplaces to appeal to those who come to the mosque, and we will include sectors that will respond to the demands of citizens and women. We will create separate ablution rooms and lavatories for men and women on the floor where the markets and workplaces are located. There will also be shower areas for both women and men. We did not neglect the nursery room for women. Toilets and ramps for the disabled are included in the project. We also thought of a hall in the mosque for social and cultural activities. Women have difficulty even performing ablution in mosques. Women cannot worship comfortably. There are no nurseries to

¹³ One of the architects that were public servants in *Diyanet* and worked on Ramazanoğlu Mosque was reached for the thesis; however, she wanted to stay anonymous. The other public servant's name is known but could not be reached for an interview. For privacy, both of their identities are not shared and are kept anonymous instead.

deliver their children, not even cupboards where they can put their belongings (Yazman, 2011).

Dalgıntekin emphasized that the mosque is an exemplary work and invites women to the mosque.

Contrary to Dalgıntekin's interview, who came in the later stage, one of the two architects in *Diyanet* that drew the project and did not want to give her name said that she did not want to be associated with this mosque. She continued by saying that there was nothing 'women-friendly' about the mosque; furthermore, women's existence was erased within the mosque. Ramazanoğlu Mosque was specifically asked to be drawn as an imitation of Selimiye Mosque. Later, the architects working in the construction mentioned that they took Süleymaniye Mosque as an example (Figure 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6). With the imposition of a mosque style, the *Diyanet* architect's authority and right to acknowledge her freedom in the design were denied for Ramazanoğlu Mosque. She said that it was her first mosque project, and she only followed the order given to her; if she had been more experienced, she would have resisted and done a better job. Moreover, she did not have enough knowledge of the mosque as she and her partner were removed from the project, and the design was changed compared to her initial drawings.

The two architects working for *Diyanet* that drew the conceptual project were removed from the construction process as they were found inexperienced. Instead, a known name and experienced male mosque designer was brought as the head of the construction process. Necip Dinç, working on the refurbishment projects and implementation, totally took over the project from the female architects. Dinç explained (N. Dinç, personal communication, April 6, 2021):

The women architects did the first project, then I continued. After the completion of the ground floor, they were stuck. She left it unfinished because the project had problems, and the craftsmen objected to it. The authority took her aside; later, they invited me to find a solution. I completely changed the top part. I implemented the project.

He also mentioned that even though the women were the owner of the design, the whole project was left to him during the construction process. However, there were

still two women architects that were responsible for the implementation of the project. Esen Saraç Ümit claimed that she and Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin did the revisions to the project, extended the ablution spaces, added lactation rooms, and adjusted the project to the ground (E. S. Ümit, personal communication, March 08, 2021). The public servants who were forced to draw in a specific style without any consideration of women were removed. However, according to these architects' explanations, the two female designers that were part of the implementation still had some degree of authority over the decision-making process and tried to consider women users within the existing situation.

The design of the architects working under *Diyanet* is limited to the wishes of the institution. They were asked to draw an imitation project; then, they were asked to be removed. The position they hold limits their say in the design and process compared to a designer in an office working for the client. The top-down nature of the governmental institution does not recognize them any agency and does not perceive them as equals. Instead, an experienced male architect from outside was trusted with the construction, and he was followed in the spatial arrangement that was pro-segregation based on gender.



Figure 4.1. Süleymaniye Mosque aerial viewpoint (source: https://dergi.salom.com.tr/haber-242-ayasofyadan_suleymaniye_mimar_sinanin_Istanbulu.html)



Figure 4.2. Süleymaniye Mosque entrance (source: https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/seyahat/bir-devrin-guc-simgesi-suleymaniye-camii-hakkinda-bilmeniz-gerekenler,Ndi8WR3H7U-rlKywE_-fAA/2vF3pTssH0ezBx2OHKWxng)



Figure 4.3. Süleymaniye Mosque inside view (source: <https://www.trthaber.com/ramazan-ozel/foto-galeri/suleymaniye-camiinde-salgin-mahzunlugu/25612.html>)



Figure 4.4. Ramazanoğlu Mosque aerial viewpoint (source: <http://www.cukurova.gov.tr/ramazanoglu-cami>)



Figure 4.5. Ramazanoğlu Mosque entrance (source: author)

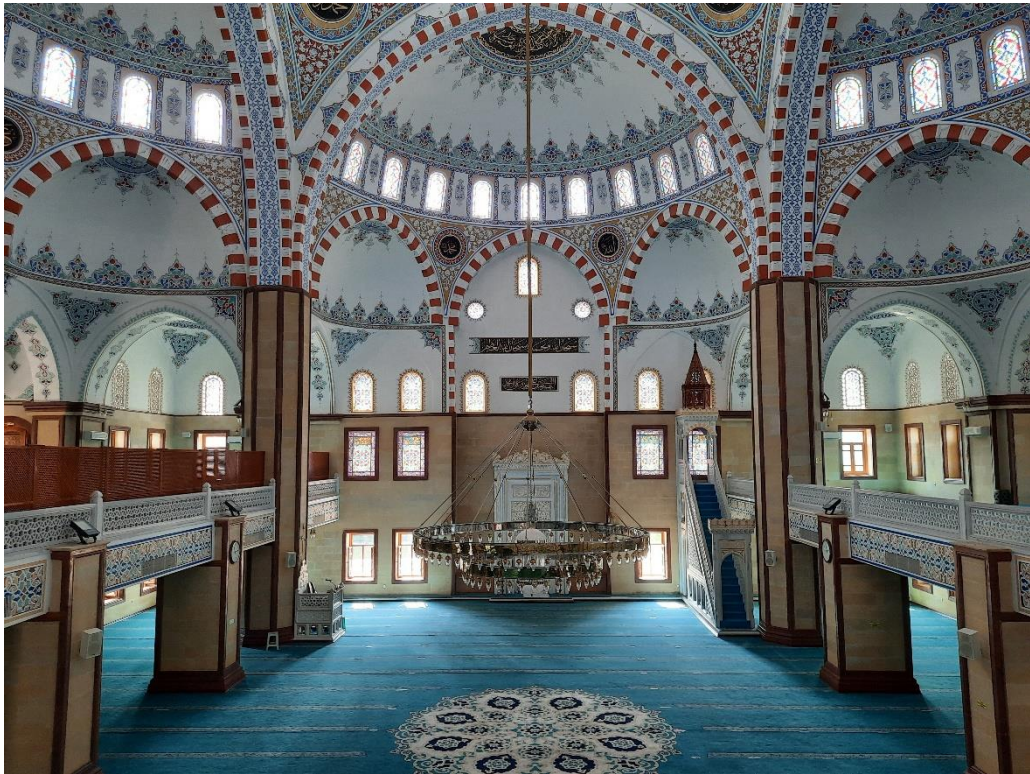


Figure 4.6. Ramazanoğlu Mosque inside view (source: author)

4.2.2. Competition Entrant

For some mosques and especially monumental mosques, an architectural competition is opened to get various options and choose the best one among them. The anonymous nature of the competition overcomes injustices and helps focus on the quality of the project. For Çamlıca Mosque, a design competition was opened in 2012, which resulted in the selection of two women architects', Bahar Mızrak's and Hayriye Gül Totu's neo-Ottoman style mosque to be implemented. However, the position these women held was much more complicated than a regular design competition, and their say in the design was limited compared to their 'ownership' of the design.

According to the news published in *Milliyet* (Akgüneş, 2012), Mehmet Güner's, who was the project coordinator in Çamlıca Mosque, relationship with Çamlıca Mosque started with Erdoğan's visit to Kahramanmaraş; after he saw Abdülhamit Han Mosque (Figure 4.7) and liked its architecture, he promoted Güner, the designer of Abdülhamit Han Mosque, to Istanbul governorship and assigned him the architect of Çamlıca Mosque (Figure 4.8). In a couple of months, a group consisting of him and two other architects whose names were not given produced the project in a private office rented for them; in the interview, Güner said: "We are preparing the project. I am the team head. We got new architect friends. They also help me. The design belongs to me." (Akgüneş, 2012). Moreover, he continued explaining the design: "We will use a larger dome than our ancestors did. Its minarets will be the tallest in the world. We will even pass the Medina-i Münevvere (with a minaret of 105 meters). There will be a minimum of 6 minarets, but there can also be a surprise." (Akgüneş, 2012). The controversy came when the mosque project was turned into an architectural competition, and two women architects that had no prior mosque design won the competition while there was no sign of Mehmet Güner's name in the design.¹⁴ The interview conducted with Güner about the Çamlıca Mosque was published on the 4th of July 2012, and the mosque architecture competition was opened on the 23rd of July 2012 (Akgüneş, 2012; Cengizkan, 2012).

¹⁴ Güner could not be reached for further information and interview for this thesis which creates a constraint in the discussion.



Figure 4.7. Abdülhamit Han Mosque in Kahramanmaraş (source: <https://www.kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/kahramanmaras/gezilecekyer/abdulhamithan-camisi>)



Figure 4.8. Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul (source: <https://www.dha.com.tr/istanbul/7-martta-ibadete-acilacak-camlica-camiinde-son-durum/haber-1628198>)

The result of the competition was announced two months later than it was decided, and instead of a winner, among 62 competitors, there were two second places, and the one to be implemented was chosen by the association (Merdim, 2012b). The association's all-male board consists of close surroundings of Prime Minister Erdoğan. Ergin Külünk, a long-time friend of the Prime Minister, is the chairman of the board of the association assigned by him (Rizeli Ünlüler, n.d.). Hacı Mehmet Güner, the accountant of the association, had an important role in the mosque construction as he was also the project coordinator. He is currently the Istanbul Governorship Environment, Urbanism and Climate Change Provincial Director, who used to be Kahramanmaraş Municipality Zoning Manager and was brought to the Çamlıca Mosque project directly by Prime Minister Erdoğan (Arkitera, n.d.).

The initial interview of Mehmet Güner indicates that he was working on the project with two other architects based on the Prime Minister's directions; however, on the records, his name is only mentioned as the project coordinator of the mosque, and he was not a part of the design competition. Bahar Mızrak and Hayriye Gül Totu are the architects of the mosques, and they have been architectural office owners together between 2009 and 2014 (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021). After the Çamlıca Mosque association opened the competition, they entered and shared second place with a modern design of another group in which there was no first place. The competition was asking for only renders; it was also called silhouette competition, and it did not ask for plans or detailed drawings (Figure 4.9). Therefore, their role as the design owner was questioned by others, and the lack of detail in the competition drawings enabled enough space for change during the construction process by the male association.



Figure 4.9. Çamlıca Mosque competition, second place (source: <http://www.tasarimyarismalari.com/istanbul-camlıca-camii-yarismasi-sonuclandi/>)

The executed design by Bahar Mızrak and Hayriye Gül Totu from Turkuaz Yapı Architecture was highly criticized for its similarity to Sultan Ahmet Mosque (Figure 4.10). Bahar Mızrak explained the project, saying (Merdim, 2012a):

They think that our work is an imitation of Mimar Sinan, but it is not an imitation. It is a style. A mosque project with Turkish-Islamic lines was envisaged in the competition brief, and we designed it that way. For Hayriye Gül Totu, and for me, when it comes to the mosque, the style is classical mosque style. Just as you cannot question a poet, ‘why are you writing heroic poems’, the same is true in our profession. In engineering, two and two equals four, but you cannot say that for architecture. There are no boundaries in art and design. Therefore, some adopt contemporary and modern style; the style we prefer is the Turkish-Islamic style.

Therefore, they had to defend their design after their achievement in the competition. Moreover, changes to the design project were made after the competition ended.



Figure 4.10. Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul (source: <https://sultanahmetcami.org/haberler.php>)

In the women architects' original design, there were original elements such as a clock tower which was located at the top of the ablution area, shadirvan, and reminds Güner's explanation of 'There will be a minimum of 6 minarets, but there can also be a surprise'; moreover, the central dome was unusually high. With the requests of Erdoğan, modifications were made, and the clock tower that looked like another minaret was removed, the dome was flattened, the intended canopies styled like reverse umbrellas surrounding the terrace outside the courtyard were replaced with a conventional Ottoman portico, and the entry to the courtyard was accentuated with a Seljuk-style gateway (Batuman, 2018b). In the end, the mosque visually became even more like a traditional Ottoman mosque; and the design was interrupted by different actors from outside.

Generally, competitions allow a good project to be implemented regardless of the design owner. However, in Çamlıca Mosque, the women architects' role was part of a showcase. Their agency and how much of the design actually belonged to them was questioned; the autonomy of their design was questioned; moreover, after the project was chosen, their involvement in the process was questioned. While their participation was weak, the gender of the architects, which would be a surprise considering that it was a competition, became a tool in overriding the oppositions. Unlike the prediction, the 'design owner' women did not hold much power over the

design, and the project turned into a field of power struggles among men where women were medium.

4.2.3. Designer

Mosques can be designed by architectural offices when mosque associations request them. The Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque was a project funded by the benefactors who handed the project to an architect with kinship relation; however, at the beginning of her carrier, Esra Moza was not the family's first choice and was not trusted initially. She explained the situation (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021):

It was my grandfather who wanted to build a mosque; my father and uncle were the ones who did the work; that is how I got involved. I threw myself in a bit; they wanted to work with a different architect from the outside, Salim Alp, for example. At that time, I did not have an office; I was working as a civil servant. Then when I said I wanted to build this mosque, they said try it. No one had any confidence until its minaret was revealed.

It is visible that there is a tendency to work with male mosque designers, and women are trying to open a new field for themselves in mosque architecture. However, coming from the kinship, her role as the employer should not be overlooked. She was in the position of the employer, and the association, the people who demanded the mosque were her family; therefore, she could actualize her ideas in the mosque without much difficulty. The only requests she got from the family members who dominated the mosque association were to be able to hold maximum people number, have the Qur'an course classrooms, and create spaces that welcome women and children.

She mentioned the difficulty she witnessed when she was designing the mosque; there was no guideline, standard, or technical book written on mosque architecture; therefore, she chose some mosques and measured some details while trying to bring a standard for her design. Esra Moza, while doing research for her first mosque design, noticed that female sections have secondary roles in mosques. Even though being in the back is a requirement in Islam and applied in previous mosques, she stated that in some mosques, the women's section is isolated.

For example, Bilkent Doğramacızade Mosque, I like that mosque very much, but when I saw its attitude towards women, I was a little uncomfortable. You stay behind the wooden panels, and you are as disconnected as possible from the main section below (Figure 4.11, 4.12). I did not want it to happen; I wanted it to be a little more intertwined, women and men; after all, we are already side by side outside. We are not a sharia society, and I believe Islam is not that strict. Of course, it is not right to worship side by side, but I did not see any harm in passing side by side while going somewhere (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021).



Figure 4.11. Doğramacızade Ali Sami Paşa Mosque's screens in the women's section (source: author)



Figure 4.12. Doğramacızade Ali Sami Paşa Mosque, women's section (source: author)

The prayers of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque also told her that she privileged women by giving them the place under the dome where the mosque can be perceived most beautifully. She perceived women as part of the congregation and did not want to keep them apart from the dome. The dome is more dominant in the women's section and can be observed better. Secondly, the railings are low and patterned to be perforated, which enables women to see the lower floor, the mihrab, and the pulpit; in a similar way, the imam can see the women's section when he returns. Thirdly, the elevator that carries everyone from the lowest level to the top floor is common for both men and women. With the common entrances, common elevators could be achieved. Her encounters with different parties did not challenge her idealistic approach either.

There are three different entrances to the mosque now, but the elevations are different. The mufti of that time suggested that men and women enter from separate places. The design of the mosque was not according to that, and the mosque was almost finished, and I thought there was no need for such a thing. It could be done if desired, but it was not necessary, and the presidents of the associations did not demand such a thing. That is why, although there

might be a separate entry solution, we did not try to make it very separate; I did not want it (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021).

Therefore, she kept the entrances common for both genders. This demonstrates her authority in the design; however, her role as the employer also affects the relationship in her work environment.

As stated, her chance of actualizing her ideals is also due to her kinship with the association. Her design for ‘women friendliness’ had to worsen in her future designs. Consideration for women in a mosque does not only depend on the architect’s vision. Eskişehir Organized Industry Mosque, designed by Moza, has almost no women’s section. Only 10% of the workers in that area are women, and considering that only 10% of them come to the mosque, one room reserved for them completely outside the mosque was thought sufficient. It was a mosque made for men, and the situation for women’s space was regressive. Employers’ requests and user statistics shape designs. Similarly, ‘women-friendliness’ of space also depends on the situation, and there is no checklist that can be achieved in every design project.

Moza had the freedom in her design, the association that came to her, even though she was not their first choice, handed the project to an architect that did not have previous mosque experience. She did not have any pressure coming from different parties, and her role as the relative of the association and the employer enabled her to actualize her agency. As she mentioned before, the situation of no one believing her until they saw the raised minaret is a demonstration of how women in the male-dominated field are not trusted. While they need the experience to improve themselves and prove their work, they are not wanted in the project because they do not have the experience. In the case of Moza, her kinship overpowered these difficulties.

Another case of a woman mosque designer is Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu who was the interior designer of Şakirin Mosque. Similar to Moza, Fadıllıoğlu was the relative of the benefactor. However, unlike Moza, Fadıllıoğlu did not see her kinship as the reason for being given the design; instead, she emphasized that it was due to her previous works, even though they were not mosques. The project was initially given

to Hüsrev Tayla, the architect. Tayla was excited to create a protocol mosque on the Anatolian side of Istanbul; however, after seeing the construction sign hung in front of the mosque ‘Architect: Hüsrev Tayla, Interior decoration: Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu’, Tayla said that the inside and outside of a mosque are the work of the architect. Later, he read the contract that he had signed without reading and saw that there were too many commercial articles in the contract, which he believed were not suitable for a job like a mosque, and he quit the job when the rough construction was completed (T24, 2009). Fadıllıoğlu claimed that according to Tayla, the mosque could be successful only if he designed the interior, and the mosque would be the same as his three previous mosque examples (Küçükerman, 2011). However, she interpreted what the Şakirin family wanted in the mosque as uniqueness. Therefore, with the employer giving the responsibility to Fadıllıoğlu, Tayla gave his right on the mosque to the firm. Fadıllıoğlu, as the interior designer, had all the power over the mosque design and had the stage for actualizing her agency.

Hüsrev Tayla’s proposed design was much more traditional; he wanted to divide the facades horizontally to control the transparency of the mosque, while the lower levels would consist of thick walls and window niches (Batuman, 2018a). Fadıllıoğlu, in order to bring the mosque to a modern design, changed the façade to a double-layer system which controlled the natural light and preferred aluminum panels for the concrete dome (Batuman, 2018a). She designed metal sheets that were inspired by the space between the lines of the Qur’an page in the main praying hall at eye level to limit the transparency. Instead of a shadirvan, she preferred a spherical reflective steel fountain in the middle of the courtyard. Similarly, her choice of mihrab and minbar resembled artworks that were far from tradition; they were in unusual forms and freestanding elements. Even the chandelier was a modern interpretation of the traditional ones. Her design is explained in detail in the 3.5.4. section. Here, what is given importance is that the benefactor of the mosque did not limit Fadıllıoğlu in any way, they trusted her with the design, and she could override the architect and his design.

In the Şakirin Mosque, women are located on the mezzanine floor, which has a significant ratio of females to the main area. Fadıllıoğlu, while stating that there were no mosque designs that were women considerate, explained that against these

designs that wanted to ignore women, she gave special interest in the women's section aesthetically, and with low railings that are perforated, women's vision would not be obscured (Akyol, 2006). The mosque got the attention of the Women in Mosques campaign as well; women gathered in the mosque and questioned what modern mosques offer to women. A Muslim intellectual woman who supports the 'Women in Mosques' campaign, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, commented on Şakirin Mosque by saying that the design can be explained as ostentatiousness, but it could also be interpreted as the importance given to the congregation through the eyes of an artist who makes the utmost effort to bring women to the community (Ramazanoğlu, 2015). She believed that the mosque broke the discrimination among genders and located women under the dome while enabling them to see all of the mosque space.

Fadıllıoğlu's previous experiences have helped her to be trusted with the mosque design. She had the freedom to design without having to imitate the tradition. However, her kinship with the benefactors and the freedom she was given by them should not be overlooked as in the case of Moza.

Another woman interior designer that worked on a mosque project is Sonay İlbay, who became part of the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque design. However, unlike the previous examples, she was not related to the builder of the mosque, this time, *Diyanet*. The gender of the designer should not be perceived as the only reason for *Diyanet* to choose her; however, *Diyanet* officials were happy to work with a woman designer with no previous experience; because it was aligned with their aim of promoting women's participation in mosques (Batuman, 2018a). A designer working not under *Diyanet* but working for *Diyanet*, demonstrates an example of an iterative negotiation process. While she was not dictated to design in a specific way, she still had the client that she had to compromise. The negotiation worked both ways, *Diyanet* officials would lead her based on their wishes, and she would persuade the officials for a better design. The mosque was designed by a male architect, Salim Alp, in a modern way; however, the criticism Şakirin Mosque design got due to the modern interpretations of the traditional elements caused the *Diyanet* to reject some elements İlbay drew with the reasoning of them being too modern (Batuman, 2018a).

On the other hand, İlbay managed to persuade the officials to design transparent railings for the women's section.

The designer role of women in mosque architecture has been recently recognized; moreover, they are not fully trusted. However, women have been trying to exist in the male-dominant field. The simplest way for women to prove themselves through their design has been when they have a kinship with the benefactor; even then, they were questioned. However, the designer-client relationship provided high authority to women designers after it was first established, and they had the chance to actualize their design aims with the consideration of the client's needs. Therefore, women were given agency to negotiate their designs.

4.2.4. Supervisor in Construction

Women architects also take part in the construction phase of the mosque building. Merih Aykaç, the project coordinator, was invited to Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque by the construction firm. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque was a competition project won by Salim Alp, who participated via invitation and became the architect of the mosque. He prepared all the details of the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, and when the rough construction was finished, *Diyanet* wanted changes on the project; but disagreements arose with Alp and the administration. After the rough construction, they removed Alp because of the risen conflict; but according to Alp, they played over his details and created a bad outcome (S. Alp, personal communication, February 19, 2020). After his removal, a female project coordinator was brought. The contractor firm asked Merih Aykaç to join the project. Aykaç stated that when she was involved with the project, the mosque was unfinished with a formalist shell cover whose details had not been thought through. Both interior and the exterior were not designed (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020).

Merih Aykaç, as the coordinator, was the authority to decide on the implementation of the design and make revisions to it. She redesigned the façade, planned the basement, and decided on the interior (Özaloğlu, 2017). Even though the contracting firm wanted to undertake the project for the interior of the mosque, the *Diyanet* had already opened another competition but did not like any of the competitors. In order not to face any legal problems, the team continued the competition based on the three

given names, and after meeting with them, Aykaç and the team chose Sonay İlbay, a female interior designer with no prior experience in mosque architecture, who agreed to do what the contracting firm wanted (M. Aykaç, personal communication, February 23, 2020). Moreover, they welcomed a female interior designer, Sonay İlbay, to the project. Aykaç and İlbay worked together to create conceptual designs and alternative drawings. However, during the concept project stage, the contracting firm noticed that they could not work with İlbay anymore as she was found inexperienced, and they continued with their own work. Therefore, the main authority in the mosque design was Aykaç; as the project coordinator, she did not only take part in the implementation of the project but was also involved in the designing; however, as in İlbay's case mentioned in the previous section, she had to negotiate with the builder, *Diyanet*. In the construction of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, there were the Ender Construction Team, consulting firm factor that was also under the control of Ender construction; the architectural and technical team of the *Diyanet*; the administrative team, the president, the heads of departments who with knowledge and interest in this matter attended and expressed their wishes. The agents working in *Diyanet* told their wishes, and the construction team provided alternatives to these requests based on the visual appearance, the price, and the use. What Aykaç did was finding the common ground for everyone.

In the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, the mahfil on the north side, which is the opposite of the mihrab, was especially given to women and reserved even for Friday praying according to the *Diyanet* President's wish. Designed by Alp, Meriç said that the President's ideas on the matter were crucial, and he did not want to locate the women in different places out of sight. Therefore, the design team could offer different alternatives, including how much women should be seen and how much they should not be seen.

If he had told us that women should be behind the curtain, should not be seen much... For example, have you visited the Doğramacızade Mosque? There are wooden directional separators in the mahfil; women cannot be seen at all. Such a thing was done in such a modern mosque, but it was not done here. There is no need because everyone turns to the mihrab, and no one sees the ladies. We were told that women should be able to see the mihrab as easily as men and pray that way (M. Aykaç, personal communication, February 23, 2020).

The railings in the women's section were designed mixture of glass and carved marble in a way that those who do not want to be seen can stand behind the marble, and those who want to see the mihrab can stand behind the glass. The mosque was also designed to prioritize privacy so that women's entrances and exits to the ablution rooms do not intersect with men's. For the circulation of both genders, Aykaç said that the direct arrivals are *Diyanet* officers, both men and women working in the same room; therefore, there was no harm in entering the same door. There are directions in the mosque, but they are not precise and do not create rigid distinctions. (M. Aykaç, personal communication, February 23, 2020). The design demonstrates the negotiations that happened between actors. While searching for the best outcome, both parties affected the decisions on design.

In the case of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, the disagreements occurred with the architect and *Diyanet* let their separation; however, the project coordinator found ways to compromise. The left of the architect gave her even more say on the mosque. In the case of Çamlıca Mosque, it was mentioned that the design owners' role was reduced during the implementation phase; instead, a male project coordinator was in charge of the overall design. In Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, the architect was male and the project coordinator was female; however, they overpowered the designers in both cases. They undertook changes regarding design, as well. Moreover, the gender of the project coordinator in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque was not a concern; moreover, the invitation she got was directly from the construction firm and not *Diyanet*; therefore, their policies of supporting women in mosques did not cause in the choice of Aykaç; however, encouraged by them.

4.3. ISSUES REGARDING WOMEN DESIGNERS IN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

4.3.1. Agency

Women designers' agency in mosque architecture has not increased consistently through time. While women tried to open a space to themselves in this field, their efforts sometimes have been supported, sometimes faced obstacles. In some examples, the mosques' male architects were removed, and women designers were brought instead. In others, the mosques so-called designed by women actually did

not provide the opportunity for women architects to obtain their agencies. Their agency depends on the conditions they are in as much as their efforts. It might be questioned whether the agency that faces limits still can be an agency. However, as Gallagher (2013) states, the sense of agency is complex and ambiguous; it does not only depend on what happens in the mind but has a social dimension. Therefore, this section, accepting the limits to the agency, will examine women as agents that face obstacles but still have authority.

The architects of the Çamlıca Mosque were not recognized agencies. Çamlıca Mosque designers Hayriye Gül Totu and Bahar Mızrak were the winners of the architectural design competition. However, the competition asked for a ‘silhouette project’, and requirements were limited to renders; therefore, there was no detailed drawing and lots of room for change. Moreover, to whom the mosque design actually belongs to has been a controversial topic. Accepting that two women architects drew the project, they were still not very much involved in the actualization process. Totu explains the construction process (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021):

A large working team was established, and of course, there were changes. These were the interventions that matured the design. The professors of the respected universities in our country reviewed the project and asked for some improvements and revisions. We worked as a part of the team during the project design process. It is work that has been brought to life with consultants, associations, contractor companies, and many participants. While we took part in the project as the project owners, we did the licensing, permits, and controls, and Hacı Mehmet Güner directed the project as the general coordinator with his experience in mosques.

Both architects emphasize the big team behind the mosque construction. Moreover, their preference for passive language in the interview regarding the decisions during the construction process is also worth pointing out.

Similarly, the president of the Çamlıca Mosque Association, Ergin Külünk, emphasizes at every opportunity that “it is not an ‘I’ project but a ‘team’ project. More than ten architects took part in the preparation of blueprints; moreover, the association also had both an architectural team consisting of volunteers and an engineering team supporting the architectural team. In addition, the contractor

company had more than 20 engineers (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). While the mosque is attributed to two women architects, it seems like they are not as involved. Due to the monumental size of the mosque, the need for a big team is evident. However, the decision-making role has been shifted to Güner and the male-dominant mosque association after the selection of the mosque. While women architects worked on the legal actions of building the mosque, the design decisions were made by the team, and the initial design that earned them the second place was changed based on the association's decisions.

For the Ramazanoğlu Mosque, the architects working under *Diyanet* had to comply with the wishes of the *Diyanet* officials. The architect was specifically asked to draw an imitation of a mosque; therefore, she had no agency or decision-making power over the design. Rather than a designer, she was a government employee that had to obey, and she was not in a situation to negotiate. Moreover, the female architects' removal from the project in early stage did not give them any control over the last condition of the mosque.

The project changed over time compared to the initial design drawn by women architects; the mezzanine floor was raised, a central heating system was brought under the ceiling, and a third basement floor was added (N. Karaca, personal communication, March 8, 2021). The office of the mufti in Adana requested a car parking area, business offices, and additional offices for the mufti and submitted a document for it to *Diyanet* (M. Barış, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Even the mayor became an actor in the mosque's construction. According to the initial design, the mosque was 2 meters above the street level; later, the height of the mosque from the ground was adjusted after the mayor said that it would make the street look ugly (N. Karaca, personal communication, March 8, 2021). An experienced male mosque architect, Dinç, started working in the mosque construction before the start of the mezzanine floor; as demonstrated in the 3.5.1. section, the division of the mezzanine floor and assignment of one-third of it to women was done during Dinç's supervision. Moreover, he tried to solve a different circulation to provide a different entrance for women and a separate path to the women's section (N. Dinç, personal communication, April 6, 2021).

In the end, the project turned into a mosque that is claimed by no one. Contrary to the interview given to the media by Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin, I found out that the mosque is not claimed by any of these women¹⁵; while *Diyanet* architect refused to be associated with it and did not want to talk about the mosque, the architect, based in Adana suggested me to talk to *Diyanet* architects as she did not see her as the project owner. All the women architects were hesitant to talk about the mosque and directed me to other people for information.

Total opposition to the situation in Ramazanoğlu Mosque is visible in another mosque built by *Diyanet*. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, built by *Diyanet*, welcomed women designers in it. This time, the difference was that they were not working under *Diyanet* but for *Diyanet*. Moreover, *Diyanet* officials saw the women designers as agents who could persuade and lead them.

After the removal of the architect, Salim Alp, from the project, the project coordinator, Merih Aykaç, and the interior designer, Sonay İlbay, were brought into the process. Even though the main authority figure was *Diyanet* officials, Aykaç and İlbay were not restricted instead; there was room for negotiation, and they had the freedom to celebrate their agency. Aykaç explained her experiences with the mosque construction process (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020):

Our team was very nice. The construction site was very harmonious, we worked well, we were like a family; however, I struggled a lot while building this mosque. I had to give a battle against my own contractor company, against *Diyanet*... However, the criticisms that I got from *Diyanet* have contributed a lot. Criticisms guide you in the right direction, but some are critiques that drain your energy. There has been so much interference. When I finished this place, I said that despite everything, that's it. I was put under a lot of pressure to extend the pulpit two months left to the inauguration; someone came and said that the pulpit was small, let's demolish this pulpit and build a bigger pulpit. I said, 'If you are demolishing it, I am leaving.' My colleague told me not to do it, saying that others would own all my efforts. After so much persistence, my colleague convinced me to complete it. So I told the President not to ruin the proportions, instead, asked to make a small addition. That way, the concept was kept, and they got what they asked for. Everyone is happy now.

¹⁵ Due to Dalgıntekin's death in 2019, she could not be reached for further information and interview for this thesis which creates a constraint in the discussion.

This situation is one of the examples of Aykaç's negotiations with authority. She was not afraid to stand up for what she thought was the best for the mosque. She did not blindly follow what she was told; however, not obeying them would be unbeneficial for her; instead, she found a middle ground that everyone involved in the construction could accept; and demonstrated her agency.

Aykaç mentioned that there were various divisions of ideas, and she and her team directed the *Diyanet* officials when needed (M. Aykaç, personal communication, February 23, 2020). In the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Project, Merih Aykaç was in the position of negotiator. She was not demanded a design but instead consulted. While her initial decisions regarding the design might change after talking with the officials, she also changed the approach of the authorities. It shows her agency and power in the design process. On the other hand, the woman interior designer, Sonay İlbay's agency, although not prevented, it was limited from the beginning. Unlike Aykaç, who was invited to be the project coordinator directly by the contractor firm, she was chosen not to face any legal problems due to an already opened competition, and asked to draw what the contracting firm had in mind (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020)¹⁶. However, İlbay also took part in the negotiation and persuaded the *Diyanet* officials to accept transparent railings in the women's section on the mezzanine floor (Batuman, 2018a). They both worked in the process of interior design; however, İlbay was removed from the construction later by the contracting company. Even though maybe not from the beginning until the end, the mosque became an example where women designers hold the power of authority and the position of negotiator in the mosque design and construction. In Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, it was not the women designers whose agency was denied but the architect who lost his power over the mosque.

A similar situation of the male architect losing his authority on mosque architecture happened in Şakirin Mosque. After the removal of the male architect, an interior designer was brought. Fadilloğlu is related to the benefactors of the mosque;

¹⁶ It must be mentioned that both Aykaç and İlbay attribute some parts of the design to themselves. While the question here is not figuring out who had a bigger role, it can be used as an indication of them having freedom over design which they are pleased to share.

however, she does not accept getting the mosque job due to her kinship; in contrast, Moza, the architect of the Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque, specifically notified that she could build the mosque because of her kinship with the mosque association. Both of these architects were involved in the process until the mosque got opened. Their authority in the process was not challenged by anyone, and they had full power in the design. Their negotiation in the design did not occur due to their need to convince authorities, they were the authorities; however, they had to design a mosque that was appropriate to be a place of worship. Moza explains her negotiation (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021):

My employer was my family; I did not have any problems with being a woman, but in the process, I had problems due to not praying or using the mosque. There were cases where people directed me, saying, ‘you may not know this’, because I do not go to the mosque very often. For example, I built a reflection pool in the courtyard where the minaret is located. That pool was right in the middle of the mosque entrance with ablutions. They told me that that pool would make people have to walk around it, it made sense to me. I said we should make fountains coming out of the ground instead of a pool because I wanted a sound of water, and we all agreed.

Similar to Moza, Fadıllıoğlu said in an interview that no one said ‘this cannot be done’ for the project but gave suggestions to provide a better Islamic environment (Ünyay, 2009). If the mosque was done for *Diyanet*, she would have different constraints. Moreover, from Tayla’s explanations: “Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu did not even call once and say let’s talk. She did not ask what do you think there is something like this over there. I would have helped her a lot if she had asked.” (Arkitera, 2009), it is understood that the architect was not consulted for the mosque after his leave, and Fadıllıoğlu had the whole control over the design. While Fadıllıoğlu was the head of the design team, different religious actors provided consultancy to the design team throughout the design to ensure that it was suitable for a mosque.

Even though Fadıllıoğlu’s agency was not challenged by different authorities, her agency has not been appreciated by all circles. When Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu had the self-proclaimed title of the ‘first female mosque designer’ with her modern mosque design, she also received strong criticisms from her colleagues. Whether it was based on her design or her designer identity, some male architects were bothered by the change she brought into the field.

A known architectural journal in Turkey, YAPI, opened a discussion on modern mosque architecture based on Şakirin Mosque in August 2009. ‘Masters’ in their jobs, Doğan Kuban, Cengiz Bektaş, Doğan Tekeli ve Behruz Çinici, four male architects were given place in the discussion (İğrek, 2009). While the focus was on the interior designer, Fadıllıoğlu, they asked the question of how much the mosque is successful (İğrek, 2009). Doğan Tekeli commented on the mosque, saying that the mosque resembles an open, spacious, and very noisy casino at first glance when one enters; he thinks it gives the idea of a ‘high society mosque’ that opens with cocktails (İğrek, 2009). Another architect, Doğan Kuban, compared the mosque to an ‘aquarium’ or a ‘coffeehouse’ that do not hold the devoutness of a mosque; while criticizing the transparency of the mosque, he stated that glasses on the four side turn the mosque into a ‘garden pavilion’ (İğrek, 2009). Behruz Çinici commented on the mosque, saying that it consists of ‘fetishistic elements’ and it would be a sin to call it a mosque (Batuman, 2018a). Moreover, some architects said that writing Arabic letters in, would not convey a religious place idea; some said that a committee ought to be established, and this mosque should be treated; some said that the mosque was too concerned about being contemporary and now it could not even be called a mosque (İğrek, 2009). The architects were not afraid to share their thoughts on the mosque regardless of their harsh comparisons. Moreover, most of these criticisms were towards Fadıllıoğlu rather than the architect Tayla.

Hüsrev Tayla, the architect of the Şakirin Mosque, never visited the mosque after his leave, and from the images he saw, he stated that there was chaos dominating the mosque and there was no peacefulness (T24, 2009). He expressed his thoughts on the final project “They damaged my architecture” (İğrek, 2009). It would not be wrong to assume his discontent due to his leave; the project was given in the middle to someone else. The project that turned into something else from his imagination made him find the mosque distasteful.

Interestingly, the mosque got positively evaluated by the public; it turned into a touristic spot where people go and take photos. The architecture and the interior design of the mosque got positive feedbacks from people (Batuman, 2018a).

Fadıllıoğlu did not only get criticism from other architects because she was a woman

that designed a mosque, but it was more complex. Batuman (2018a) interprets the criticisms of architects to Fadıllıoğlu as issues regarding modernism and traditionalism of the design, and the professional competence, class, and gender of the designer. Fadıllıoğlu was not a formally educated designer, she had networks with the pious bourgeoisie, and she was a non-practicing Muslim who dared to have her photo taken inside the mosque without a headscarf. Her overall identity was a big reason for these criticisms.

Looking at other examples, women architects were not as harshly criticized, which shows there is a negotiation. Women architects were given credit by men as in Çamlıca Mosque, or their authorship was not questioned by men as in Ramazanoğlu Mosque. The gender of Çamlıca Mosque designers had a role in justifying the mosque construction by the Islamist government; therefore, the given credit actually benefitted the men. In the Ramazanoğlu Mosque case, women architects were appreciated even though there were claim issues by the architects. The architects were pious, and their mosque design was a replica of Ottoman architecture. In that situation, female appropriation in the field could be accepted because the design of the mosque and the architects' identities were not a threat. Moreover, even though they have been designing mosques for a long time, the first time they got publicity was via Ramazanoğlu Mosque. They were rendered invisible in the field before. When the secular architect of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque wanted to gain publicity, she was denied, and her mosque and identity were not found newsworthy. Another difference between these mosque designers from Fadıllıoğlu is they did not get as much attention as Fadıllıoğlu; therefore, there was no need for harsh criticisms from men either regarding their design or identity.

Looking at these examples, women take part in different phases of the mosque design and construction. Sometimes they have full control over their design, and their agencies are not up to question as in Fadıllıoğlu, Moza, and Aykaç's cases. Moreover, both Fadıllıoğlu and Aykaç were given the role with the removal of male architects, and they were trusted in the process. Sometimes women designers take full control thanks to their kinship with the builder in the case of Fadıllıoğlu and Moza. Sometimes women are given roles, but their role is passive and does not give them as much agency in the situation of Ümit, Dalgıntekin, Mızrak, and Totu. While

men do the decision-making, they are compliant. However, these women's gaining their agency were not up to them; they were obligated to follow authority. Although women designers are trying to obtain a space for themselves within the male-dominant field, their agencies are often facing a limit by men, and the level of agency is decided by them. Even when women have the power over the mosque design and the construction process, the male architects can question their design decisions, as in the case of Fadıllıoğlu.

4.3.2. Authorship

Women's authorship in mosque design, similar to their spaces in mosques as users, is not absolute and depends on the cultural and political situation they are in; moreover, still limited to men's decisions. In some instances, women are the designer and the agent in mosque architecture; however, they are not recognized or given credit. In some examples, mosques are advertised as designed by women; however, there is very limited involvement of women in the process. The authorship and their agency are not correlated as they would be expected.

Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu is frequently cited as 'the first female mosque designer in the world'. She mentioned that she noticed the situation with an interview question about being the first female mosque designer (Yüksel, 2015); later, she continued claiming the title in the TV programs and interviews while promoting the mosque and herself (Batuman, 2018a). The mosque that made her name visible as the first female mosque designer is no other than Şakirin Mosque, which is analyzed in chapter 3.5.4. Şakirin Mosque opened in 2009, has a mediatic character, and even got attention from foreign news outlets. Even though she was the interior designer of the mosque and not the architect, she overshadowed the architect Hüsrev Tayla. Her name started to be associated with Şakirin Mosque, and the whole design was attributed to her. Moreover, her being a non-practicing, secular woman who was previously known for her bar and entertainment designs increased the debates.

In contrast to Fadıllıoğlu's claim, Aktaş (2015) pointed out Makbule Yalkılday (1914-2018) as the first female mosque designer. Yalkılday was one of the first Turkish female architects and the first one to earn a master's degree. In Aktaş's interview, she stated that she had renovated more mosques than she could count

(Aktaş, 2015). Even though the mosque is not identified, she claimed to build a mosque around Fatih, Istanbul that has two minarets. She was known as ‘A lady that draws mosques’ (Aktaş, 2015). Not only she fought against the patriarchal ideology of religion and designing places of worship, but she had challenges while studying architecture and being an architect as there were not many women in the field. However, she stated that she did not have much trouble because of her gender during her projects and construction phases of the mosque building (Aktaş, 2015). She was also a practicing Muslim whose relatives defined her as someone who never missed her prayers and sometimes prayed behind the cloakroom due to the politics that perceived prayers as reactionary during the early republican years (Aktaş, 2015).

Moreover, in an interview that I conducted with Esen Saraç Ümit, one of the designers of Ramazanoğlu Mosque, she mentioned that her first mosque project was in 1992 for the Adana bus terminal. Similar to Ramazanoğlu Mosque, Adana Otogar Mosque is also designed in neo-Ottoman style (Figure 4.13). In addition, Ümit emphasized that she got the mosque project thanks to Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin, with whom she had worked on the Ramazanoğlu Mosque project and who had been working on mosques even before her (E. S. Ümit, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin was a woman that wore a head scarf and had been the Adana *Diyanet* Foundation Provincial Board Member. She did not have an archive to enlighten her past projects.



Figure 4.13. Adana Otogar Mosque (source: Google Earth)

Thus, although it is hard to exactly point out the first mosque that was designed by a woman in Turkey, it is clear that Fadılhoğlu's claim is not accurate. However, the question is why those conservative women with their traditional designs were rendered invisible and not given credit until a secular woman with a modern design came into the frame and earned the title of 'the first female mosque designer'? Was it because conservative women preferred not to be in front of the public eye? Was it because secular women fought with their efforts against being overshadowed? The conservative women who were the first examples of mosque designers were strong women who tried to do the best in their jobs within a male-dominated field. Although they were challenging the norms of patriarchy through their practices, they were not feminists. There was a fine negotiation; they got to do the practice of what would be called a male's domain; in return, they did not force it into the public eye. The era and society they live in have an as crucial role as their attitude on this topic. Moreover, challenging the norms for conservative women is still a problematic matter today. It is seen that the two early examples of mosques designed by women were built in a traditional neo-Ottoman style which again can be interpreted as trying

to fit the norm as part of the negotiation, as them being female mosque designers is already enough transgression.

Unlike other examples that did not get recognition at all, Şakirin Mosque and Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu did not only get attention from Turkish circles but also international agencies. The media's attention was due to a woman, believed to be for the first time designing a mosque, and the unusual modern and traditional fusion in her design and herself. The mosque does not have traditional mosque architecture but has traditional elements; the architect is not known to be religious but designing a mosque. Fadıllıoğlu appeared in CNN's leading women's series. The mosque started to be ascribed to her so much that it brought design ownership issues. Even the news article on CNN had the necessity to make an editor's note stating that the article acknowledges Hüsrev Tayla as the architect of the Şakirin Mosque (McKenzie, 2014).

It is not certain when the first female architect designed a mosque since archives were not kept from the past, and there is no widely accepted name for the first female mosque designer. The political conditions in Turkey in the 2000s laid the foundations of such news. AKP, which gained victory in 2002, was in favor of working on women's rights; moreover, as stated previously, there was a pursuit of modern mosque architecture. It was not a surprise that Şakirin Mosque's inauguration happened with the attendance of Prime Minister Erdoğan and his wife. The policies of AKP to bring women, Islam, and public space together were reflected in mosque architecture and supported the visibility of women in mosque designs; therefore, the foundations of the Fadıllıoğlu's title have been prepared. Other than Fadıllıoğlu's identity and design, the timing had a huge role in her title. Assuming that the first female mosque designer existed in Turkey might be a mistake. On the other hand, Turkey provides an excellent ground for these practices since dualities and negotiations were always part of its history.

The women architects before Fadıllıoğlu did not attain publicity, and instead, their existence was hindered as part of the negotiation. However, it is seen that the situation is not only related to time; after Fadıllıoğlu, women in mosque architecture

did not gain their authorship without difficulty, or it was not only related to the identity of the designers as some were conservative and some were secular. Esra Moza, the secular architect of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque, which opened in 2016, mentioned that no one made news about Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque or came to her to do an interview. Even though she sent her project to an architectural magazine, her project was rejected due to mosques being controversial topics (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021). However, another modern mosque designed by a known male architect, Emre Arolat, was not seen as a problem to be published. The gender of the architect of a mosque designer in this example was not perceived as newsworthy; although it was her project from the beginning until the end, she was the only main figure, and her authorship could not be questioned. The media did not recognize the authority she held in the design. Her lack of recognition can be due to either the change in the political character of AKP as women mosque designers were not perceived as important anymore or the size of the mosque, as it was a small-scale neighborhood mosque. However, while Ramazanoğlu Mosque, which is another neighborhood mosque, was represented as ‘women-friendly’ in the media with its ‘all female’ architects, the hesitation in the journal to publish the mosque conveys that it is not separate from the politics. AKP that supported modern mosque designs and women designers shifted to a more conservative language. The woman architect of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque could not attain her publicity compared to her counterpart, a man, the architect of Sancaklar Mosque by Arolat.

Ramazanoğlu Mosque is an example of women architects gaining publicity more than their involvement while rendering the participation of the male designer invisible. During the Ramazanoğlu Mosque construction, different parties intervened. One of the engineers in the Ramazanoğlu Mosque, Nurettin Karaca (personal communication, March 8, 2021), explained the building process saying that the two female architects working under *Diyanet* were the ones who drew the main projects, but they were removed from the project before the construction of the mezzanine floor started, due to their lack of experience. Instead, Necip Dinç, an experienced mosque architect, was brought into the project and built the mezzanine floor, mihrab, minbar, and entrances. It was mentioned that the mosque was not claimed by the women architects due to their low level of agency in the process. However, interestingly the mosque got publicity due to its four female architects.

Ramazanoğlu Mosque is represented as ‘Women friendly’ in the media; it had headlines such as “When the architects of the mosque are women” (Yazman, 2011). Even though the project was designed by two architects working in *Diyanet* and the other two architects came in the implementation phase, there was no sign of *Diyanet* as the builder in the media, and the mosque became known as a project made by four women architects. The architect that carried the project to the media and gave interviews was Selma Uçar Dalgıntekin, and she did not mention *Diyanet*. As stated before, Dalgıntekin and Ümit had previous mosque designs that were not given any credit or obtained publicity that might happen due to several reasons as mentioned. The act of Dalgıntekin can be interpreted as her effort to be finally gaining visibility. After Fadılhoğlu, she might notice that women could exist in the field and get the publicity they deserved. However, the contraries arise due to the inconsistent level of agency and the authorship they have. While their say on the mosque was limited, and the result did not turn out as they expected, Dalgıntekin still had the claim on the mosque, unlike other architects. She represented the design through her and her colleagues’ gender and the considerations for women in the design; however, the architect working in *Diyanet* mentioned that the interview was given without her knowledge and consent. Her move gave all women in the design process authorship, even if they did not actually hold authorship or want to hold it.

Even though Necip Dinç was highly involved in the project in the later stages, his name is not written on any news regarding Ramazanoğlu Mosque, and it was only the imam and the people that worked in the construction pointing out his contributions. In contrast to the women architects, he stated that women were the initial designers, and the project belonged to the architects in *Diyanet*; therefore, their name is written as the project owner (N. Dinç, personal communication, April 6, 2021). The claim that has not been made by the three women architects was made by their male counterparts.

Similar to Ramazanoğlu Mosque’s case, after two women won the design competition for Çamlıca Mosque, they automatically became known as the architects of the mosque, regardless of their involvement in the detailed design phase. However, in some news, the architect of the mosque was represented as Hacı

Mehmet Güner (Haber46, 2019). The controversy about who the architect of Çamlıca Mosque is and Mehmet Güner's relationship with the mosque remains a mystery as they were explained in 4.2.2. section. According to Cengizkan (2012), it was heard that similar to Güner's first interview, the Çamlıca Mosque design was given to five architects initially; however, to ease the criticism regarding the method of awarding the work, the subject was opened for competition. Therefore, the original architect of the mosque was the team under the leadership of Mehmet Güner. However, these claims cannot be proven. Instead, Bahar Mızrak and Hayriye Gül Totu were given credit as the owner of the design project.

During the implementation process, women architects were not much involved; it was a team project chosen by the association, as mentioned in the previous chapters. However, Külünk stated that Totu and Mızrak are the concept design owners and said they were part of the team and were invited to almost every project meeting. They were involved in discussions on how to translate this concept into practice (E. Külünk, personal communication, August 26, 2021). Despite their questionable agency in the design, their representation as authority figures has a political reason. In the case of the oppositions against the government's ideological mosque style, female designers are benefited from overriding the conventions (Batuman, 2018a). Therefore, the real authority that is male, while not actually sharing the decision-making power regarding the design, gives the credit and so-called the authorship to women. The mosque was part of power struggles among men; however, it raised gender awareness and symbolized women's agency and empowerment (Batuman, 2018a). While women architects might not celebrate their agency in Çamlıca Mosque, the mosque became an example of women's authorship.

In the case of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, it was a mosque where women designers' existence was celebrated with their agency; moreover, women were given credit; on the other hand, the publicity they got overrode the architect, Salim Alp. Even though Alp was left from the project, he was the design owner; however, both Merih Aykaç and Sonay İlbay gained publicity and became known as the creators of the mosque.

According to an article in *Hürriyet News*, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque was designed by a female ‘architect’ named Sonay İlbaş (Hürriyet, 2020). In other news pages, it is only her name that is associated with the mosque’s design. The interviews she gave located her ‘the second female mosque designer’ after Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu (Timeturk, 2013), while neither of these claims is true. The question of ‘Who is the architect of the mosque?’ became another reason for the tension between the male architect and the female designers. Salim Alp tried to fix the magazine’s and news’ article’s wrong statements of others as the architects and claimed his authorship (S. Alp, personal communication, February 19, 2020). The authorship issue is similar to the Şakirin Mosque, where the architects of these mosques are men, but the credits were given to women designers. What Alp thinks differs his situation from Şakirin Mosque is that Tayla gave his rights on the mosque, whereas he did not, and blames the female designers for trying to be like Fadıllıoğlu (S. Alp, personal communication, February 19, 2020). Questioning why this news that favors women’s involvement in the mosque architecture became apparent, it is a similar case to the Şakirin Mosque. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque opened four years later than Şakirin Mosque in 2013; therefore, the political ground was similar. AKP was supporting women’s involvement and visibility in mosques as both users and designers and in favor of modern designs and trying to come up with a new architectural style at the time. Moreover, similarly, the opening of the mosque happened with the attendance of Prime Minister Erdoğan, his wife, and the president of *Diyanet* at the time, Mehmet Görmez which shows their support for it. Additionally, Mehmet Görmez congratulated Merih Aykaç during his inauguration speech directly and emphasized that ‘a woman’s hand touched the mosque’ (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020). Moreover, when the president of the time, Abdullah Gül, came to visit the mosque, the tour was given by the construction company and not the architect (Batuman, 2018a).

In some of these examples, it seems that even though a male architect initially made the mosque design, they are appropriated by female designers in the later stages. However, these mosques were attributed to these female designers and overshadowed the original architects. On the contrary, when the initial design was done by female architects and involved a male architect in the later stage, the mosque was still attributed to the women, even in the case women did not want to own the

project. In the cases where the architects were removed from the construction or not given authority in the later stages bring the question of who the owner of the design is. Is it only about owning the conceptual design or finishing the half project, or can an interior designer be the owner of the whole design? It is seen that in Çamlıca Mosque, the credit is given to the female concept design owners and not the male project coordinator, while in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, it is the opposite, and the initial architect was not as recognized in a way the female project coordinator was. These demonstrate the political character of mosque construction and ownership.

On the other hand, women's authorship is not absolute; there is no guarantee that it is provided to them as long as they obtain their agency within the project. They are bounded to the political structure the media follows. Even though in the 2000s, they became visible to claim their authorship, their efforts can still be hindered. While the mosque opened in 2013, which had a political role, was gaining publicity, the mosque in a neighborhood opened in 2016 could be ignored both due to the gender of the architects. It seems that women being mosque architects have news value; on the other hand, a female architect that did not share her design with a male designer in any process does not get publicity. Within three years, the approach to women architects has changed. In contrast, another mosque opened in 2019 was getting publicity because it was designed by two pious women architects. Representation of mosque architecture is not free from politics. Women designers' authorship depends on men, and men decide their level of publicity based on their gain. The reason for the changes in the designers and their appropriation of the design may be due to authorities trying to reach their wanted results, which in some cases means using the gender of the designers to overcome opposing criticisms. Therefore, women might have the agency in the design, but they do not hold the agency in the authorship of their design yet.

4.3.3. Identity

'Women architect' term appears with its 'otherness' to the architect. While 'architect' sounds gender-neutral and more inclusive, the emphasis on gender actually dramatizes the inequality, and the disadvantages women have in the field. Bringing attention to gender and being identified as a woman might mean

acknowledging the differences (Burns, 2012). However, Fowler and Wilson (as cited in Burns, 2012), in their study of women architects' identification, found that there is a tendency among women architects to self-identify as 'architects' rather than 'women architects', and when they face inequality, women base it on a larger context rather than the profession.

One of Çamlıca Mosque's architects, Hayriye Gül Totu, explained her gender identity regarding the mosque architecture (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021):

Mosque architecture has not found the importance it deserves. I think this is due to the fact that mosque design, construction, and operation were not considered the state policy for years, and the construction of mosques has been done with the efforts of donors and associations. It does not feel right to seek the prevalence of female designers in a building typology that has not yet taken place it deserves as part of the urban identity.

She does not think that her gender plays a role in the profession.

As in every sector, both men and women lead the projects together in the world of architecture. I do not think it is a different factor. I think the important thing in design is to be able to defend your idea and produce arguments that can make the other side accept your design. Persuasion and having the inspiration of the design from the right foundations leads the project rather than one's gender. (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021).

Moreover, her gender-neutral perception is not limited to herself within the profession; she also does not differentiate the gender of the users as she believes mosque spaces are places of worship one pray, and there is no gender in it (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021). Therefore, she states that one cannot claim a right in the mosque.

Similar to Totu, her partner in Çamlıca Mosque, Bahar Mızrak thinks that both female designers and mosques that are designed by architects are new in Turkey, and designing or working should not be distinguished based on gender. However, unlike

Totu, she stated a difference she felt as a woman in the profession (B. Mızrak, personal communication, September 29, 2021):

As in every sector, being a woman in the construction industry is difficult. Because as much as you are a woman, you are a mother, a sister, a wife, and a daughter, and you are trying to do the best of all of them.

Even though, for her, architecture practice is gender-neutral, there are responsibilities of being a woman attached to one's identity. One of Ramazanoğlu architects, Esen Saraç Ümit, also stated that there was no gender in the profession as long as one is knowledgeable (E. S. Ümit, personal communication, March 08, 2021).

Comparably, Sonay İlbay, the interior designer of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, mentioned that the question is beyond being a female mosque designer.

Considering that even being the first female architect in the world (1894 graduate, Marion Mahony) dates back only two centuries earlier, I cannot help asking, 'What kind of world is it for women?' Who knows what kind of wars some women have fought in the past on some issues that seem very easy to overcome now... Maybe this war will never end in the mentality... (S. İlbay, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

She emphasized the patriarchal character of the world and the challenges of being a woman. However, her perception of the inequality women face does not seem to apply to the architectural profession. She stated that architecture is a profession that is based on science and art, and could not be associated with gender. Being in the news due to her gender as a mosque designer, she mentioned that there must be a perspective she did not comprehend, and she never felt a difference coming from administrations she worked with based on her gender (S. İlbay, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

The designers emphasize that women have not been dominant in the profession until recent years. They do not define themselves as 'women architects' but rather 'architects' in a neutral way. While they do not perceive their gender as a distinction, or something to be emphasized in the profession, the news made on their gender and their design benefits the designers greatly and provides publicity. As Berger (1972)

states, women are split into two: the object that is surveyed and the subject that does the survey. Its reflection can be seen in the architecture profession as well. Women, while claiming to be the ‘neutral’ architect and being the ‘subject’, do not reject the title of being ‘women mosque designers’. In fact, they get credit for their gender executing designs in such a male dominant field.

The gender appears to be free from the profession. On the other hand, being a woman is used as a justification factor. Even though women designers are subjects, doing their jobs free from their gender, they are also objects in which their sex is used as a tool by different agents. Their position and ‘how much women they are’ also depend on the decisions of men. It was mentioned that women mosque users were both subjects and also objects since they were constantly aware of how they were seen. In the Çamlıca Mosque case, women were professionals who could build a mosque, but they were not only architects designing a controversial mosque; in the eyes of the government and AKP supporters, they were ‘female architects’ who could overcome the debates compared to a traditional, old, male architect. The emphasis on the architects’ gender by men is a means of rendering them as objects.

Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu, while claiming ‘the first female mosque designer’ title, she also stated (Öğünç, 2009):

Of course, we were very excited to be given such an opportunity when there were very valuable architects and designers I know in modern design. But while thinking about these, I suddenly found myself answering a question in the name of womanhood, then questions about Islam... I do not have such an identity. But suddenly, you may have to. When they start with the words ‘Islam as a woman...’ the situation becomes tense.

There is a contrast in her expressions; while she does not claim her ‘womanhood identity’, she claims ‘first woman mosque designer’ identity.

While claiming that the profession is not gender-loaded, and their gender does not have a relationship with it, they also mention creating women-friendly spaces. They are against the placement of women in the basement in mosques and state that the places they created are based on a high level of comfort for women. The architects

that affirm the best place in their mosque is left for women not accepting their womanhood in their job creates a contradiction with itself.

Contrary to previous architects, Merih Aykaç, the coordinator in Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, embraces her gender in the field and emphasizes the ‘woman sensibility’ in her mosque design. According to Aykaç, the woman sensibility, coming from motherhood, helped her to embrace and respond to the wishes of the people she worked with that knew their jobs. “Normally, it is difficult to be a woman at the construction site, the craftsmen do not want to receive a woman’s directive, but my motherly attitude had a positive effect on the employees, as the work being done is a mosque.” (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020). She also stated that she paid special attention to the cleanability and the maintenance of the chosen materials and their aesthetics thanks to this sensibility (M. Aykaç, Personal Communication, February 23, 2020). Besides her ‘woman architect’ identity, she also thinks that her gender takes part and reflects itself in the design.

Esra Moza, the architect of the Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque, had a different identity compared to other woman architect examples. Her identity as the employer and the power figure overpowered her woman designer identity during the construction. Moreover, she never got publicity regarding her mosque or was called a ‘female mosque designer’ in the media, unlike Fadıllıoğlu. Therefore, neither during the mosque building process nor afterward was she associated with gender, she stayed neutral. On the other hand, she was happy to state that the female users of the mosque always said that the mosque must be done by a woman because women’s prayer space was given the privilege (E. Moza, personal communication, March 22, 2021). Even though Moza appears to be gender-neutral in the mosque construction process, she was happy about being a role model for other women, ‘women can do it, too’.

4.4. CONCLUSION REMARKS ON WOMEN MOSQUE DESIGNERS

As it was explained in detail in the previous sections, mosque building is a complicated procedure that involves different actors such as mosque building and survival associations, municipalities, benefactors, Mufti offices, the General

Directorate for Foundations, the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs, and *Diyanet*. The last three can be part of the mosque design process with the blueprints they provide to benefactors for free. Moreover, *Diyanet*, which cannot build mosques by itself but is in charge of the management of all mosques in Turkey, has been conducting studies to increase their say in mosque design and to produce mosques that answer to the needs of today. While mosques can be designed by design offices, they can also be a result of design competitions. Women can be involved in the mosque design and construction process while holding various positions. They become part of the mosque design as public servants working for the production of blueprints, they can win mosque design competitions and involve in the mosque building process, they can be designers working in private offices and be asked to draw mosque projects, or they can take part as project coordinators.

In the case of public servants, the hierarchy within the structure does not leave room for them to actualize their agency, and the women architects are obligated to follow the top-down orders. Design competitions would be expected for the winners to actualize their agencies and implement their own projects; however, in the case discussed before, the identity of the women architects became a tool for the men, and their authority in the design was diminished. Looking at the examples where mosques were designed by women designers, there is a mutual negotiation in the process and the parties are equal, unlike in the case of the public servant. Some of the designers in these examples were related to the benefactors, and the kinship between the benefactor and the designer, put them into the employer position, which enhanced their agency. On the other hand, it does not guarantee that they will be trusted. The project coordinator could also actualize her agency during the process; instead of the male architect, she was chosen to implement the project and make changes accordingly, which aligned with the state's policy of supporting women's involvement in mosques. The project coordinator responded to the wishes of the builders and also implemented design changes. The position of women in mosque building assigns them a different level of agency and affects their involvement; on the other hand, besides their position, the limitations caused by outside factors prevent their involvement.

Women architects' agency is most of the time depends on the male authority based on how much agency it recognizes them. In the case of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque and Şakirin Mosque, the male architects were removed, and instead, women designers were given power over the design. In other cases, such as Ramazanoğlu Mosque and Çamlıca Mosque, it is possible to see the opposite of the previous situation. Even though they were initially involved, women's agency was denied in the process, and male designers became in charge. What is common in these examples is that, regardless of women's level of involvement, the projects were attributed to women designers, which in some instances hindered the male architect.

The agency of women and their publicity has not been correlated, and again based on the wishes of men, women obtain some level of authorship parallel to the government's support of women's participation in mosques. In the last twenty years, the Islamist government has supported women's involvement in mosques and the design process. Fadillioğlu designed a modern mosque around that time when the government supported women and favored modern designs. The previous women architects who designed mosques were rendered invisible. Even though women mosque designers were given credit, maybe more than they deserve, it was part of politics; therefore, their genders were used as a tool. On the other hand, with the change in politics, women's authorship is still at stake. The designer of Alacaatlı Uluyol Mosque, who was the architect, interior designer, and the project coordinator of the mosque herself, without the inclusion of a male party, was not given any publicity due to the fact that mosques are perceived as political spaces. Moreover, even though the state has recognized women architects' authorship as part of its politics, the male architects do not always welcome women mosque designers' publicity. Not only the agency women claimed but also their identity became a discussion among experienced male mosque architects.

Women architects do not want to be a 'woman mosque designer', unlike the language used in the thesis. They want to be a professional that is gender-neutral. While they do not want to accept their gender having any relation to their work, they claim that they give special care to the women's section, and they are proud to get the publicity based on their gender. In the case studies, some architects mentioned

the difficulties of being a woman in the male-dominated field; however, only one mentioned that her gender affected the design which is in a positive way.

These findings convey that still, women's agency and authorship in mosque designs are bound to the men's decisions. When they think it is appropriate, they allow women to take agency in which they decide the level; when it benefits them, they give the credit to women, which is very political. For years, women that have been negotiating their place in this male-dominated field were not given credit. Today, women are carving their place out in mosque architecture, even though they might not be trusted initially. Rather than waiting to get credit, they publish their designs. Although their self-identification tends to be gender-free, until the struggles and differences they face in the field disappear, emphasizing them would benefit women in terms of their visibility.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The thesis focused on the changing relationship of women with mosque spaces. Even though the Islamist government supported women's involvement in mosques as a strategy to render religion visible in public and unite the whole nation under the same interpretation of Islam, its transformation of mosques into more welcoming places for women could not go beyond superficial improvements. While aiming to break the distance between women and mosques, it kept its conservative language and did not want to change the existing gender roles, preserved the segregation, and perceived women as mothers; therefore, the invitation to the mosque was not for all women but women who fit into their gendered norms. Moreover, the spatial improvements were never permanent and could be regressed based on the wishes of the male congregation, whose mentality was not changed by the authorities.

The impermanent improvements done by the authorities let women mosque users unite in claiming their own rights in mosque spaces. Looking at cases around the world, mosque spaces have been male-centered and patriarchal, and women have been fighting over their rights in them. While it caused women to seek different solutions, in Turkey, women focused on the equal usage of the space and wanted to pray in a space where they could grasp the atmosphere of the mosque, seeing the mihrab, minbar, and praying under the dome. The pious women with no architectural background started to map the mosques to have an understanding of how patriarchy worked in order to build resistance to the gender hierarchy. They discovered that the

spaces allocated to women are very limited, not absolute, and can easily be given up. As gender issues reflect themselves in spaces, the space itself shapes gender relations, too. Therefore, in order to be part of the congregation in mosques, women who did not want to obey the mindset that perceived them as lesser started to unite and go to Friday prayings together and transgress into the men's section. They recognized spatial organization as a tool of subordination and emancipation.

The thesis aimed to reveal how the role of women and their relation to the production of mosque space changed in Turkey. For the thesis, I looked into the role of women as mosque users with spatial analysis and studied women as mosque designers, trying to understand their position in mosque architecture. In order to demonstrate the spatial differences allocated to each gender in mosques, I conducted field research as a methodology and made spatial analyses.

Today, most mosques hold the women's section on the mezzanine floor, which has visual access to the mihrab. However, even though mosques might be designed in a less patriarchal way, later changes in the design aim to render women invisible in mosque spaces due to the collective culture, as in the case of Ramazanoğlu Mosque. With high screens and the aim of hiding women from the male congregation, a limitation is applied to their bodies. They cannot see the rest of the mosque and congregation in order for men not to see them. Moreover, it is always women's spaces in the mosque that can be given up. Women who are not given equal opportunities in mosque spaces do not get to have a space in prayers such as Tarawih or Friday. There are implementations of designs such as Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque that specifically leave space for women during any prayer. While not equal to men's space, they accept women as the users. The women's space in mosques has been ambivalent, and there is no regulation that is dictating the strict segregation. One example of it is Çamlıca Mosque; with the addition of the third subject, tourists, the gendered segregation in mosques is softened. Tourists, while entering spaces traditionally assigned to a specific gender, diminish the strict segregation.

Women's agencies in mosque spaces are not limited to their user perspective. Bringing women architects into the discussion is crucial to making their works and their agencies visible. As women architects assumed absent in architectural history

for years, women mosque designers, that are known to be a handful, were not evident until the mid-2000s. After a modern woman gained recognition with her modern mosque design, more examples of women mosque designers appeared. While the political conditions laid the foundation for such an acknowledgment, the conservative women who built mosques even earlier and tried to exist in a male-dominated field never got the credit they deserved. It might have been one of the conditions for them to exist in the field, being invisible. The negotiation that let them continue their jobs never acknowledged their existence. However, even though women designers today may find acknowledgment from the architectural community, it is not always positive. In the case of the Şakirin Mosque, the criticisms have not arrived only because of Fadılloğlu's modern design, but reactionary male architects were bothered by her overall identity, as well.

In contrast to women not getting enough credit, there are cases of women architects getting more recognition than they deserved, which in some instances let women designers known as the architects of the mosques that were actually designed by men. The projects of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque and Şakirin Mosque were also attributed to women who were not their architects. In the Çamlıca Mosque case, due to the mosque's controversial character, women who owned the project design but were not much involved in the process of design got all the credit. The gender and piety of the architects were used as a tool to override these criticisms. Therefore, women's level of authorship has also been determined by the male authority. Moreover, it has never been separate from politics.

Throughout the thesis, the language of 'women architects, female mosque designers' have been used to recognize its difference from the counterpart, in this case, the 'architect'. Looking at the profession as gender-neutral would have disregarded the imbalances, instabilities, and politics. However, unlike in my language, most women architects prefer to be just 'architects' without their woman identities; surprisingly, they accept the credit of being female designers in the male-dominated field.

The thesis has talked about women mosque users and women mosque designers in separate terms without getting into much detail on the relationship between them. Hayden (1982) and Weisman (1992) had claims that a space designed by women

would be more women-friendly and consider women's needs. However, while these women mosque designers do not accept their woman identity, is it possible for them to create spaces that are women-friendly?

The question of what is 'women-friendly' arises because while some think that a high level of privacy is better for them, other women may perceive a non-segregational approach better. Similarly, women architects' approaches are different from each other, and they all claim that they gave special interest to women's sections. However, none of the architects, regardless of their identity, accepts the allocation of the women's prayer room to the basement; on the other hand, they do not challenge the existing spatial forms. Totu, the architect of Çamlıca Mosque, explains why she thinks the women's section should not be changed (H. G. Totu, personal communication, April 10, 2021):

In my opinion, the height and shape of the women's gathering place due to its function is not open to discussion. In cases where you make the women's gathering place in the sanctuary, or you cannot provide the necessary privacy, users will intervene in these areas in line with their needs in a way that will also disrupt the design. For example, they will try to separate this area with a wooden separator or a fabric curtain that has nothing to do with the design. Therefore, I do not find it appropriate to interfere with the spatial truths brought by centuries of tradition and religious orders and rules, especially in worship buildings.

Totu perceives the design of the women's section as absolute and thinks that the traditional way is how women feel comfortable. On the other hand, the agency of women mosque designers has been questionable. Even though Turkey became an example to the world with female mosque designers, women are not free from the male agents, and in most of the case studies, their designs were interrupted by men. Therefore, seeking a difference in their designs based on their gender would not be right. On the other hand, there are women mosque designers who did not let men challenge their authority.

In traditional mosque architecture, the mezzanine floor is generally placed under the semi domes. Both Fadıllıoğlu and Moza, the secular women with modern designs that had total control over their designs, integrated women's sections under the dome with the risk of limiting men's sections. They interrupted some part of the men's

section's visual connection with the dome due to the extended mezzanine floor. While this application of devaluing men's praying space and revaluing women's praying space is a rare example actualized by women architects, attributing the 'women-friendliness' of the design to their gender would be a mistake. Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque, which was designed by Alp, a male architect, while locating women under the semi-dome, has a special area in the women's section that always belongs to women, including Friday prayers. Therefore, while women architects might give special care to women's prayer spaces, male architects also create favorable spaces for women. On the other hand, the mosque design and the arrangement of the women's section mostly depend on the builder and are not free from politics.

The easiest way to obtain the agency for women is through kinship; both Moza and Fadilloğlu were designers related to the mosque benefactor; therefore, besides their women identity, they were in the position of employers. While the mutual negotiation that appears between designer/project coordinator and client relationship as in the case of İlbay and Aykaç, for Moza and Fadilloğlu, the situation was more favoring their design because of their dual identity. On the other hand, the equal dialogue turns into top-down decision-making in the case of public servants. They were obligated to follow the design ordered by the officials, and their agency was denied.

Even though it has been mentioned that the agency and authorship of women were bound to the male authority, women manage to obtain it through various negotiations. In the past, they executed their jobs in a male's domain but gave up on the publicity. Today, the authorities giving the agency to women due to various political reasons still empower women designers, and the publicity they get becomes an example for future women designers. The era and society they live in have crucial roles on the topic. However, these negotiations open up the future for women to claim mosque spaces as much as men.

In recent years, Turkey has shifted its approach to women's equality. Its language turned into a more conservative one. In addition, the mosque building was a civil area and depended on the builder's taste; authorities did not have a say in its design.

However, with the latest implementations, today's 'Mosque Planning and Design Project', a guide, acts as a directive for designers; moreover, in the future will be legally binding guidelines. Therefore, *Diyanet* will have a say in mosque design and its spatial arrangements. Considering that it will always be influenced by politics, assuming the future of mosque architecture is not simple. However, the agency of women architects and the spatial allocation of women users will be more bond to the authorities than ever. On the other hand, there is no doubt that women will continue to claim mosque spaces in the forms of transgression, appropriation, and negotiation as they have demonstrated so far.

The thesis has looked at the spatial and architectural aspects of women's role in mosques. There have not been many mosques that were built by women; therefore, the case studies were limited in nature, and the thesis had to make conclusions based on these studies. Therefore, with the rising number of examples of women mosque designers, the framework that was created for the thesis can be applied in future studies. Moreover, women mosque designers started to appear around the world, as in the case of Marina Tabassum and her Bait Ur Rauf Mosque in 2012. Therefore, the study can be helpful in the further examination of women mosque designers in different contexts, where women claim their agencies in different ways. The thesis focused on the designer and user perspective of women in mosque spaces. While the designer's perspective had to be supported with interviews and personal connections with architects, for the user part, only literature review and space analysis were done. The master's thesis did not involve a detailed examination of the users' thoughts on the chosen case studies. In future studies, the framework created for the female mosque users can be combined with the user interviews in order for more detailed results.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1-) How did you get involved in the design of the mosque? Who was the employer?
- 2-) How did you collaborate with other architects and engineers on the project?
- 3-) What were the demands regarding the mosque? What did you consider when designing the mosque?
- 4-) How did you organize the women's and men's praying halls, what did you pay attention to? How do you approach the women's section in mosques?
- 5-) While solving the women's praying spaces, did you consider other possibilities other than the balcony, or were there any demands on this issue?
- 6-) What kind of opportunities did you offer for women users in the mosque space, and how do you think being a woman affected the design of the mosque?
- 7-) What was considered in the verses chosen for the women's section in the mosque?
- 8-) Were there things that were changed in the construction of the mosque compared to your initial design? Or were additions and subtractions made in the later stage after the construction?
- 9-) Women designers are not very common on the subject of mosques, they are only recently seen. How were you received in this regard?
- 10-) How did working with male employees during design and construction affect you and the process?
- 11-) Have you had any observations or feedback from women users after construction?
- 12-) What did you do after the mosque construction? How has being a part of this mosque construction affected your career?
- 13-) As time passes, society undergoes transformation, and people's needs change as well. Has there been any change in your ideas or designs regarding mosque design

compared to what you did in the previous project? Would you or did you go to a similar practice in women's praying spaces?

14-) Where exactly is *Diyanet* located in the mosque construction process?

15-) Besides the foundations established to build mosques, there is also the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs. What exactly is the relationship between foundation and *Diyanet*? What is the role of muftis in the construction of mosques?

16-) Although *Diyanet* does not build mosques, it supports the construction by providing blueprints. By whom are these projects drawn, and what is taken into account in their design?

17-) Do you have goals and principles for mosque architecture?

18-) How many architects work under *Diyanet*, and what exactly are their duties?

19-) The Mufti of Istanbul launched a project to beautify the women's praying sections in 2011 to encourage women to attend mosques. Is there any attempt by *Diyanet* to increase women's participation in the mosque?

20-) How are women users and women's praying sections considered in mosque blueprints?

21-) Is there something you would like to add?