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Late Ottoman Mardin houses: Stylistic tendencies in facade decoration and artistic encounters

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Abstract
In the late Ottoman era in Mardin, from the second half of the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, wealthy Muslims and non-Muslims, administrative elites, and local aristocrats constructed a significant number of lavish mansions. These houses were adorned with expensive and remarkable limestone carvings and architectural ornaments. After the Ottoman reforms, the leading actors of the cosmopolitan community showcased their elevated social status by decorating the southern facades of their houses that faced the Mesopotamian plain.

This article examines the decorative program and repertoire of 50 late Ottoman house facades in Mardin and identifies the stylistic tendencies in the overall design concept by formal analysis. The applied decorative program of architectural elements and the ornamental motif repertoire are classified, resulting in the identification of two stylistic tendencies. The first style is based on Islamic medieval decorative language derived from the region's historical heritage, mainly from the early Christian and Artuqid periods, while the second style involves an intensive Ottoman revival neo-classic decorative vocabulary imported from Istanbul. The facades of Mardin houses, as such, display an autonomy that distinguishes them from the other houses in the region. The study, respectively, addresses the relationship between decorative styles and artistic encounters and takes into account the context of social, political, and ethno-religious developments.

Keywords
Architectural ornament, Decoration styles, Facade decoration, Late Ottoman houses, Mardin.

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1. Introduction

Mardin is well-known for its traditional houses, which are settled on an inclined and terraced topography, giving the city its unique urban character. The houses, especially their southern facades, were decorated with exquisite stone-carving architectural ornaments dated from the mid-19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century. This historical interval coincides with the period when Tanzimat reforms were implemented in the city.

The centralization and modernization policies of the Empire had a significant impact on the city's political, economic, and cultural structure as well as the urban landscape. The administrative elites of the central government and non-Muslim bureaucrats who were given the right to be represented on local boards of directors, as well as local nobles, merchants, and artisans from both Muslim and non-Muslim families, served as the leading actors behind the transformation of the city. As the dynamos of the reforms, they used domestic architecture, especially the facades, as a visual sign of their power and influence in the city. The Ottoman central authority represented itself as a modern secular state through the newly constructed administrative buildings, military barracks, and schools (Gökhan-Baydaş, 2007; Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 2018b) while the Christian community built new churches and bell towers to display their presence in the city (Akyüz, 1998). In addition to church-building activities, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries constructed schools, hospitals, and orphanages to establish better communication with the local Christian communities.

In the late 19th century, there was a notable increase in housing-related construction activities, coinciding with the ongoing reforms. The Diyarbakır Almanacs (Diyarbakır Salnameleri) offer evidence of the upsurge in residential development. According to the 7th Diyarbakır Almanac of 1875, the number of residences in Mardin was 2,291, while in the Diyarbakır Almanac of 1903, this figure surpassed 5,000 (Aydın et al., 2001, p. 225). Actually, Mardin's historically dense urban fabric had limited space for new constructions. Even new government buildings could only be built by demolishing the existing ones. As a result, only a limited number of new houses could be built. Therefore, in the late Ottoman era, building a new house mostly meant building a new floor on or next to an existing house. The characteristic stepped houses of Mardin were built on the sloping topography of the city with the addition of floors over time. In this sense, since the house was not built all at once, each floor may belong to a different period.

Prior to the 19th century, residential buildings in Mardin were devoid of architectural decoration (Alioğlu, 2003, p.95; Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 2018b, p. 167). However, during the late Ottoman era, wealthy and cosmopolitan Ottoman inhabitants from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Turks, Arabs, Syrians, Armenians, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, constructed new floors or apartments adorned with exquisite stone-carved decorations. This addition of decoration on facades significantly enhanced the city's urban aesthetics.

The city and its environs contain buildings from the early Christian and medieval Artuqid periods adorned with remarkable decorations. Afterward, the Ottoman architecture in Mardin had limited ornamentation for about 300 years until the second half of the 19th century (Altun, 1971; Altun, 1978). It is possible that the stonemason workshops in the city did not train stone carver craftsmen before the late nineteenth century and instead brought skilled stone carvers from elsewhere. In the mid-19th century, skilled artisans of Mardin apparently mastered the art of intensive architectural decorations despite their lack of prior stonemasonry experience. For nearly half a century, they have developed decorative styles with a consistent language and vocabulary on facades. The domestic architecture in other nearby regions, such as southeast Anatolia (Diyarbakır, Urfa, et al.) or northern Mesopotamia, do not exhibit the same level of enthusiasm and comprehensive stylistic approach to architectural decoration (Baş, 2010; Çetiner, 2012).

This article examines the decorative

program and ornamentation of late Ottoman elite houses in Mardin, an eastern province of the Ottoman Empire, by looking at 50 houses built in the late Ottoman period. The selection of houses was meticulous and based on specific criteria. Firstly, exquisitely embellished mansions of Mardin's elite families were prioritized. Secondly, ensured that the selected houses were distributed evenly throughout the neighborhood. Thirdly, diversity among the houses was aimed to reflect the city's cosmopolitan identity. The selected houses, thus, provide a comprehensive map of the architectural embellishments that hold specific meanings within the urban context (Figure 1). During the fieldworks in Mardin, however, some challenges influenced the selection of the houses. Some homeowners were unwilling to grant access to their houses for investigation, while others were sincerely hospitable and provided support.

The study employs a comprehensive method of stylistic analysis that primarily focuses on examining the architectural elements, decorative programs, motif repertoires, and principles of organization displayed on house facades. It also examines the sources of inspiration, the concept of styles, and their evolution. The analysis suggests that two eclectic decoration styles were used: one is based on the ornamental language of medieval Islamic architecture with the addition of local early Christian motifs based on late antique decorative vocabulary, while the other is on the Ottoman revivalist style (Neoclassic) enriched with Islamic motifs. Moreover, the study situates the discussion within the political and economic context of the region, considering the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity inherent in the city.

Houses with affluent and luxuriant architectural ornaments represent a display of wealth in society, and the use of decorative styles allows us to examine how house owners portray themselves through the facades of their houses. On the other hand, addressing the identity and role of patrons, architects, and craftsmen in the construction and decoration processes is challenging. Archival and written sources are limited for this purpose, but the facade decorations provide sufficient evidence. To concretize the argument, data is collected from the sampled 50 houses. The wide range of the sample is, thus, the article's unique and significant strength.

The primary literature relies on archival documents, such as the Ottoman Court Archives, Diyarbakır Almanacs (Diyarbakır Salnameleri) of 1869-1905 (İzgöer, 1999), and the 19th-century Mardin Court Records (Mardin Şer'iye Sicilleri), provides only limited information about the construction and decoration process, including the patrons, architects, and craftsmen involved. The Mardin Court Records list the names and wages of chief architects (mimarbaşı), architects (mimar), designers (nakkaş), sculptors (yontucu), and stonemasons (duvar ustası) from

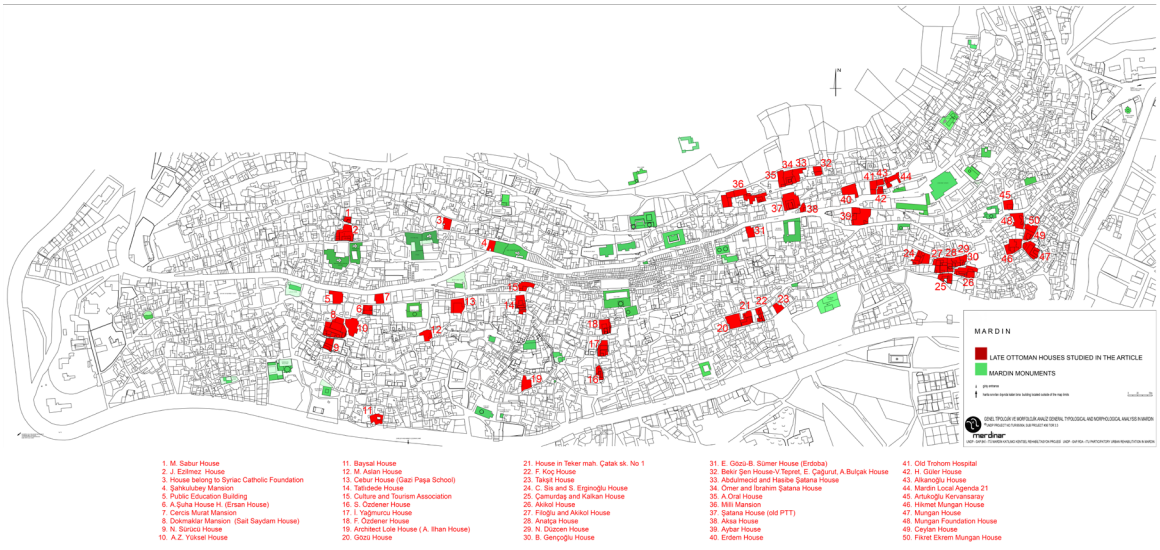

Figure 1. *Late-Ottoman houses studied in the article are marked on the map of Mardin, prepared by the author.*

diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (Akyüz, 1998; Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 2018a; Çerme, 2000; Wharton, 2016; Wharton, 2022).

Several comprehensive studies of Mardin's residential architecture and urban structure were conducted by Alioğlu (1989, 2003, 2005, 2008), who examined the organic street structure, layouts, floor plans, windows and door types, facade compositions, and moldings. However, the studies did not include the houses' comprehensive architectural decoration and motif repertoire. Recent studies have only partially explored the architectural decoration of Mardin houses. Güzel (2010) examined the architectural decoration of only seven houses. Soyukaya et al. released the 'Mardin Cultural Inventory,' in 2013, which is a comprehensive architectural heritage catalog that includes brief inventories and photographs of houses. Açıkyıldız-Şengül (2017) analyzed the architecture and decorations of three houses representing Muslim, Christian, and Jewish families, providing a diverse perspective on religious and ethnic backgrounds. The study presents a robust conceptual framework but includes few residential examples. Açıkyıldız-Şengül's (2018b) subsequent work, which examines the late Ottoman architecture of Mardin, including administrative buildings, churches, mosques, and domestic architecture, addresses houses and their decoration as a part of the late 19th-century provincial architectural practice in Mardin. Açıkyıldız-Şengül (2018a) also researched local architects and stonemasons in Mardin by using oral history and Mardin Court Records from the 19th century to highlight the diverse ethnic and religious identities of the local architects. Çerme (2000) and Wharton (2016, 2022) focus solely on Armenian architects. Wharton (2022) studied the houses built by the Armenian elites during the late Ottoman era in Bitlis and Mardin, which include the Şahkulubey Mansion in Mardin, owned by the Armenian Chermeyan family, who had business ties to Italy.

The literature shows that the facade decoration of late Ottoman houses in Mardin has not been adequately addressed and studied in terms of architectural elements, decorative programs, motif repertoire, and principles of organization. In this context, the study aims to demonstrate the inspirations from historical heritage, the stylistic references from the central Ottoman capital, and, hence, the decorative styles architects and artists developed on domestic facades by using a consistent language and vocabulary for almost half a century, and examines how decorative styles and artistic encounters relate to social, political, and ethno-religious developments in late Ottoman Mardin.

2. Late Ottoman Mardin in historical, socio-political, and ethnoreligious context: Houses, patrons, and architects

During the late Ottoman period, covering the reigns of Abdülmecid (1839-1861), Abdülaziz (1861-1876), and Abdülhamid (1876-1909), a series of reforms were implemented. These reforms, including the Tanzimat Edict (1839), the Islahat Edict (1856), and the Millet Regulations (1860), brought about rapid and radical transformations in traditional administrative, economic, and social spheres. Tanzimat reforms were carried out in Mardin after the city was incorporated into Diyarbakir province in 1866. (Özcoşar, 2006, p.97). It was a turbulent period in the city's history. The local aristocracy, including tribes (aşiret), emirates, and local notables, resisted the Ottoman state's centralization, bureaucratization, and modernization policies. These social groups saw themselves as the rightful proprietors of the city and were thus challenged with losing their power (Aydın et al., 2001, p.204; Özcoşar, 2019, pp. 1-23). By the end of the nineteenth century, the politics of modernization and bureaucratization that had taken root in the city had achieved a partial reconciliation despite occasional tensions between all hierarchical segments (Özcoşar,2019).

One major conflict in the city was between non-Muslim communities and stemmed from theological differences and political implications. According to the Diyarbakır Almanac of 1894-1995, the majority of the city's

Monophysite Orthodox population, especially the Armenian community, had converted to Dyophysite Catholicism as a result of the missionary activities.—The Syriac Orthodox community, on the other hand, was not significantly impacted by such activities. This division over Christology, which dates back to early Christianity when groups viewed each other as heretical, was a significant cause of fragmentation among the late Ottoman cosmopolitans. The conversion process was complex, involving not only religious matters but also political and economic hierarchies and powers (Özcoşar, 2008). Mardin and its hinterland were on the international trade routes (Demirel, 2006, p.630). Non-Muslims, especially Catholics, were given privileged access to international trade networks, which led to the emergence of a new commercial bourgeoisie elite. The Muslims who possessed economic influence, on the other hand, usually belonged to the military and administrative elite, local nobility, tax-collecting tribes, and merchants (Aydın et. al, 2001; Açıkyılıdız-Şengül, 2018).

Many wealthy families of various ethno-religious backgrounds constructed new mansions with rich architectural decorations in the late 19th century. According to Çerme (2000) and Wharton (2022), Armenian families such as Chermeyan, Atamyan, Incemyan, and Tufenkjian imported luxury materials and processed them as jewelers and filigree (telkari) masters. Notable among them are the Şahkulubey mansion of the Chermeyan family and the house of the Atamyan family, which was involved in filigree (telkari) work and had members such as Iskender Atamyan, who served on the city's administrative council in 1900, and the mansion of Serkis Lole, an Armenian architect who also served as the city's chief architect (Wharton, 2022). Additionally, Syrian Catholic Mikael Dokmak's Dokmaklar House (1890), which features exquisite and spectacular architectural ornamentation (Figures 2b, 4c) (Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 2017, pp. 20–22). Furthermore, there were several other residences owned by the Franciscan, Capuchin, and Protestant missionaries. The Şuha House may have been used as a place of worship [1], as suggested by the domed room adjacent to it (Figure 4b). The Gözü Mansion was built between 1880 and 1900 by Abdülkadir Pasha, the Governor of Mardin, while the Mungan Mansion (Figure 2a) was owned by the Mungan family, an old landowning family who had settled in Mardin during the reign of Murad IV.

The houses in the city were built with respect to an organic street pattern that followed the sloping topography. They include open courtyards, terraces, living units [2], kitchens, pantries, and semi-closed spaces like iwan (eyvan) and revaq (revak). The spaces on the ground floor are arranged around an open courtyard, while on the upper floors, they are all lined up behind terraces, providing a view of the Mesopotamian plain. The living units are arranged in inverted T, L, and I plan types and consist of a square or nearly square modules. Traditional ashlar masonry techniques and local limestone, which have been used in northern Mesopotamia since pre-Islamic times, are used in their construction. According to Alioğlu (1989, 2003, 2005, 2008), the design approach and extensive knowledge of traditional architecture have remained consistent over the centuries in Mardin. Families from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds shared a patriarchal way of living and resided in similarly constructed, planned, and designed houses.

Historically, Mardin has been a cosmopolitan city without segregated neighborhoods for Muslims and non-Muslims, unlike plenty of other Ottoman cities. The non-Muslim population enjoyed a relatively tolerant environment with no strict dress codes [3] or social restrictions [4]. During the late 19th century, the stone-carved decorations found on the facades of houses became the most prominent feature of the urban landscape. The houses of the elite became adorned with decorative features that reflected the owner's wealth, social status, and power. Thus, facade decoration serves as a more informative ground than architecture itself in studying Mardin's cosmopolitan diversity through residential architecture.

The reforms introduced new rights for all citizens of the Ottoman Empire. These included guaranteeing property rights and allowing individuals and communities to express their religious and cultural identities. Whereas before the Tanzimat, Muslims and non-Muslims were discriminated against regarding building height and story limit, and different regulations were introduced [5], these distinctions were no longer made after the Tanzimat (Batur, 1985, p.1047). These changes significantly impacted people's perceptions, leading them to attribute symbolic meaning to their houses. Architectural ornamentation is not only an aesthetic condition but may also have been used as a strategy to gain a psychological advantage in society. Thus, it became a popular trend among Mardin's wealthy and privileged citizens.

On the other hand, house building was a collaborative effort, and both the house owner, as the patron, and the members of the building trade (inşaat esnafı), which included the chief architect, architects, designers, sculptors, and stonemasons were involved in the process. Researchers have mainly discussed the ethnic and religious identity of construction workers based on written sources such as the Mardin Court Registers and oral histories. Açıkyıldız-Şengül (2018a) mentions that the construction works in Mardin during the 19th century were carried out by craftsmen from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, as documented in the Court Registers. However, it was the chief architect who was responsible for all the construction activities and was appointed by the imperial office. They also collected taxes from craftsmen and settled the disputes between them (Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 2018a). Historical records show that the position of chief architect was usually a hereditary one, passed down from father to son. Addressing the individuals involved in the construction and decoration of the houses is a crucial aspect to consider. However, lacking sufficient first-hand documentation, it becomes challenging to answer inquiries such as who was responsible for establishing the decorative program and selecting the motifs used on the facades. Similarly, understanding the extent of involvement of the owner, architect, designer, and sculptor in the decision-making process, as well as their respective contributions to the selection of the decorative style serving as a symbolic indicator of status, remains elusive. At this juncture, only the decoration itself can provide insight into pondering these questions.

3. Style in the context of "medieval Islamic decoration"

The architectural decorative heritage in Mardin is concentrated in two main periods: The Early Christian period and the Artuqid period. The Tur Abdin region near Mardin, which served as a refuge for Monophysites fleeing from Byzantium during the Early Christian period, stands out with its local interpretations of late antique decoration. Tur Abdin region is home to several churches dating back to the 6th and 8th centuries. (Mundell, 1981; Mundell-Mango, 1982; Keser, 2002). Following the Islamic rule in the region, especially between the 7th and 13th centuries, architecture exhibited remarkable decorative styles (Beyazıt, 2004; Beyazıt, 2016; Keser-Kayaalp, 2018).

Mardin's architectural heritage is characterized by the prominent stone-carving decoration of the Artuqid monuments. The Artuqids ruled Eastern Anatolia, Northern Syria, and Iraq from the 12th to the 15th centuries, constructing monumental buildings decorated with lavish limestone carvings. Ottomans ruled over Mardin from 1517 onwards; the Ottoman architecture followed the principles developed by the Artuqids until the mid-19th century (Altun, 1971; Altun, 1978; Beyazıt, 2004; Beyazıt, 2016; Eser, 2000). However, the Ottoman architecture in Mardin had limited ornamentation for about 300 years until the second half of the 19th century (Altun, 1971; Güzel, 2010).

During the late Ottoman period, Mardin mansions became embellished with notable stone carvings on various architectural elements such as windows, portals, iwans (eyan), revaqs (revak), and roof moldings on their facades (Figure 2). The ashlar masonry

wall surface was left plain, creating a visual contrast between the plain surface and distinctive stone carvings on architectural elements, accentuating the applied decoration. This aesthetic approach, featured in the 19th century, continues the decoration styles observed during the medieval Artuqid and Anatolian Seljuk periods (Beyazıt, 2004, p.1013).

The decoration program of the windows, iwans, and revaqs prominently features the pointed arch and its variants, whether used structurally or aesthetically. This decoration element indicates the medieval Islamic artistic character of the facade (Draper, 2005).

The window decoration is characterized by the blind arched niches surrounding the rectangular windows and rising along the facade. These niches include various types of pointed arches, such as multifoil arches (çok dilimli kemer), trefoil arches (üç dilimli kemer), horseshoe arches (atnalı kemer), and multifoil ogee arches with S and C-shaped voussoirs (S ve C eğrisel kesimli kaşkemer) (Figure 3). The last type is distinguished by the Baroque style, which is unique to the Mardin and formed by C- and S-shaped stones that create a curved and multifoil profile (Figure 3f). A similar arch type appeared in Ottoman architecture, beginning with the Nuruosmaniye Mosque in Istanbul, but it has a rounded curvilinear line. The pointed ogee arch type is preferred on the facades of Mardin houses. In addition, some blind arches have been decorated with stone carvings, decorative cusped successive arches, stone carving ornaments, engaged columns, clerestory windows, and round or teardrop-shaped medallions.

The early example of blind-arched niches that rise along the facade of Islamic architecture appeared in the facades of Kubbet-us Sahra (Dome of the Rock) dating back to the 7th century. Additionally, many instances of Fatimid, Zengid, Ayyubid, Great Seljuk, Mamluk, and Anatolian Seljuk architecture include these niches (Jones, 1978, pp. 165-166; Baş, 2014; Özgür Yıldız, 2016). Multifoil arches, which thrived in upper Mesopotamia and were made famous by the Artuqids, can be seen at Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Urfa, Van, and other nearby cities (Baş, 2014, p.381).

One of the other decoration features for arches is the "ovolo (convex)-cavetto (concave)" profile moldings, which

Figure 2. *Medieval Islamic style facade decoration: The houses of Mungan (a), Dokmaklar (b) and Yağmurcu (c).*

Figure 3. *Windows: types of arches and decorations: Houses of Şuha (a), Şatana(b), Cercis (c), Yağmurcu (d), Teker Mah (e) and Dokmaklar (f).*

are usually profiled with plain or chevron (zig-zag) patterns on voussoirs (kemertaşı). The mihrab of Sitti Radviyya Tomb (1176-1184) and the courtyard revaq of Diyarbakir Masudiyya (1194-1224) and Qasim Padisah (1452-1507) Madrasahs are examples of chevrons in the region. The chevron moldings used in the facades of houses are similar to those used in the Qasim Padisah Madrasah. According to Kolay and Erdogan (2019, p.254), chevron moldings from Syria were introduced into medieval Anatolian architecture. The arch types and molding features favored in late Ottoman architecture are consistent with the established medieval architectural style of the region.

Another prominent facade element is the decorated portal (taçkapı) (Figures 4a, b, c). Portals have two types of decorative programs; however, both were constructed in a similar manner, usually including a multifoil arch resting on engaged columns, a clerestory window, and an ornamented medallion on the vertical axis of the doorway. The first is characterized by a lightly ornamented massive block protruding from the facade wall with an upraised molding, as seen in the portal of the Yağmurcu House (Figure 4a). The second is recessed into the surface of the facade wall and is more ornate, with a unique repertoire of motifs including figurative motifs, vine scrolls, and crosses. Examples of the second type are the portals of the houses of Şah-

Figure 4. *Portal and iwans: Houses of Yağmurcu (a), Şuha (b), Dokmaklar (c), Şatana (d), Baysal (e) and Mungan (f).*

kulubey (2nd floor), Şuha (Figure 4b), and Dokmaklar (2nd and 3rd floors) (Figure 4c). All these arrangements are surrounded by a series of ovolo-cavetto moldings and ornamental borders.

Portal was the most prominent element of facade de aesthetics in medieval Islamic architecture. The facades of the Artuqid buildings in the city's architectural heritage are decorated with portals. The Latifiyya Mosque (1371) (Figure 6d), Sultan Isa (1385), and Qasim Padisah (1452-1507) Madrasahs are examples of spectacular portals with muqarnas vaults, similar in style to the Anatolian Seljuks (Yeşilbaş, 2020). The portals of the domestic facades in Mardin were constructed without muqarnas vaults. The absence of muqarnas vaults may be due to the limited skills of the craftsmen or the fact that the portals embedded in the facade do not provide enough space for the construction of muqarnas. Alternatively, the historical portals of Umayyad, Zengid, and Ayyubid architecture without muqarnas may have inspired the builders. (Eser, 2000; Özgür-Yıldız, 2016).

The iwan and revaq are crucial architectural features with a rich history in upper Mesopotamian, Iranian, and Anatolian architecture (Gün, 2018). They are a defining characteristic of Islamic architecture. Iwan and revaq are significant elements of the aesthetics of facades through their positive-negative, shadow-light contrast and plasticity. The arches of the iwan and revaq are ornamented by ovolo-cavetto plain or zigzag moldings, cusped voussoirs, and accentuated and adorned keystones (kilittaşı). The roof molding, which has a parallel repertoire in Artuqid monuments and medieval Islamic architecture, is generally decorated with muqarnas, dogtooth, or semicircular shapes extending across the entire roof level.[6]

Architectural elements mentioned above are embellished with motifs, and their repertoire is classified into four categories: vegetal patterns, geometric patterns, figural representations, and calligraphy. Furthermore, unusual motifs such as the cross, Solomon's seal, and vases with or without flowers were identified but not categorized as a distinct category. In the ornaments, these motives are organized in two ways: the first involves replacing motifs in a rhythmic pattern or undulating branches in bordures, and the second involves arranging motifs in intricate or radiating patterns to fill the surface of architectural elements such as capitals, spandrels, and medallions.

The stylized patterns of vegetal motifs such as palmette, rumi (half-palmette), and flowers used extensively in Islamic art are often arranged in a series of confronted half-leaves. They are prominently featured on the borders of Dokmaklar House (2nd and 3rd floors) (Figure 5a), Şahkulubey Mansion (2nd and 3rd floors), and Cercis Murat Mansion. Additionally, half-palmettes are depicted with elongated and twisted stems. The lateral leaves transform into undulating branches, enveloping architectural elements' surfaces. Examples of these can be found on the capitals of Aslan Mansion (Figure 4d), and the spandrels or medallions of Mungan Mansion (2nd floor) and Şatana House (old post office, now a hotel) is a type of depiction in a decorative design is not seen in the medieval Islamic architecture in Upper Mesopotamia (Baş, 2014; Beyazıd, 2016; Eser, 2000). On the other hand, it reminds Hagia Sophia's capitals on the upper floor. Another prevalent vegetal motif in decoration was a local, early Christian version of late antique acanthus leaves. This pattern depicts a cropped image of the junction area where a pair of acanthus leaves meet by twisting leaves. This indigenous motif, inspired by acanthus, found its way into the decoration of several mansions, such as Dokmaklar (2nd and 3rd floors) (Figure 5b), Şahkulubey, and Mungan (2nd floor) (Figure 5c). However, other motifs from the ancient repertoire were not commonly utilized in house decoration. Similar patterns are also observed in some early Christian churches, such as the Church of Mar Hahanyo in Deir Za'feran, Yoldat Aloho (Mother of God) in Hah, and Mar Yaq'up in Nibis. These churches feature narrow bands on their cornices containing rows of softly pointed acanthus leaves (Keser-Kayaalp, 2018, p. 191). The identical patterns can be found in stone carvings

at distant sites, such as in the frieze of a church at Daphne in Antioch (refer to Figure 6b), the architrave block of the Forum of Theodosius (Niewöhner, 2017, figs. 28–29) as well as in the medieval facade decorations of the Armenian Church of Oğuzlu in Kars (Bozoğlu Bay, 2019, figs. 578, 582, 584, 589). However, the acanthus-based pattern was not found in the historical Islamic heritage of the city of Mardin (Beyazıt, 2016).

Portals of Dokmaklar (Figure 5a) and Şuha Mansions feature a distinctive decorative motif of vine scrolls with grapes and figural elements. Similar contemporaneous ornamental designs composed of vine tendrils can be observed on the minaret portal (1888-1889) (Figure 6c), the mihrab of the Great Mosque of Mardin, on the portal of the Cavalry Barracks (1890-1891), and various ecclesiastical Kdushkudshins (altar) in churches (Akyüz, 1998; Telli, 2022). Other decorative features, like those depicting birds holding flowers or leaves in their beaks, are visible on the small niches of the Dokmaklar Mansion facade and the iwan capital of a house (today Artuklu Hotel) located opposite Bab'us Sur Mosque.

The decorative repertoire of geometric motifs is rather limited, primarily comprising muqarnas, plaits, zencirek (angular plaits), and eight-pointed star patterns. Muqarnas, a distinctive Islamic design, is predominantly employed in the borders of various architectural elements. Geometric patterns are prevalent in a group of houses distinguished by notable iwan decoration, such as the Aslan (Figure 5d) and Mungan (2nd floor) houses. Plaits, zencirek, and eight-pointed star motifs are prominently featured in the decoration of the Latifiyya Mosque (1371) (Figure 6d), as well as the Sultan Isa (1385) and Qasim Padisah (1452-1507) Madrasahs. These motifs are also observed in the contemporary portal of the Great Mosque of Mardin (1888-1889) (Figure 6c). Additionally, Tuncer (1973) observes similarities in decoration, including muqarnas and eight-pointed stars, in both Muslim and Christian religious architecture in Southeast Anatolia, particularly in Diyarbakır and Mardin.

The figural repertoire of decoration includes a pair of cherubs, pigeons, and human figures that are unique to Mardin houses and are presented in a specific scheme. The figures are placed on architectural elements: pigeons on the imposts, cherubs and human figures on capitals, and vine tendrils on the borders (Figure 5e, f) (Çalışır-Pençe, 2022). A pair of peacocks are identified on the imposts of the iwan in the Şahkulu Bey Mansion, and a pair of lions on the spandrels of the iwan in the Aslan House (Figure 5g). Symmetrical lion figures holding swords, as seen in Aslan House, are not typical in the figure decoration repertoire of the Artuqids and Anatolian Seljuks or their contemporaries. Uncommon figurative decorations, such as the barely noticeable figure of a cherub, can be seen on the contemporary iwan portal of the monastery of Deir Za'feran and representations of cherubim, seraphim, and doves in Yoldat Aloho (Mother of God) in Hah.

Calligraphic inscriptions employed in the decorative program are prevalent in both Muslim and non-Muslim houses. These inscriptions typically showcase Arabic script within medallions and may encompass a date, a verse from the Quran, or a poem (Figure 5h).

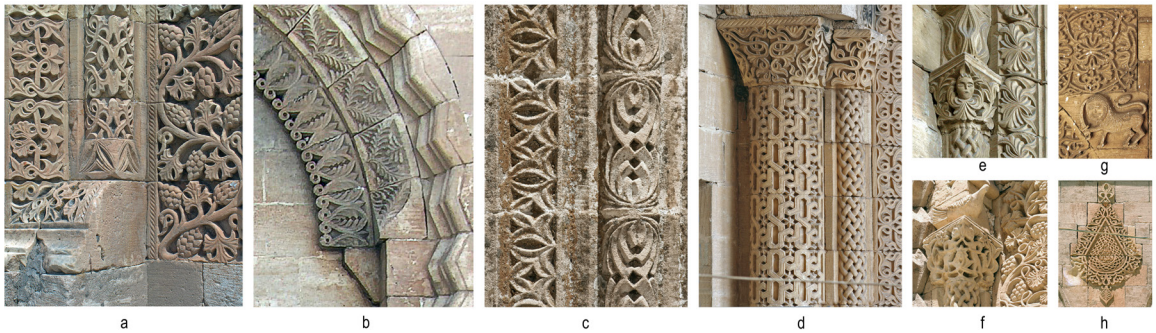

Figure 5. *Motif repertoire: Houses of Dokmaklar (a, b), Mungan (c), Aslan (d), Şahkulubey (e), Şuha (f), Aslan (g) and Mungan (h).*

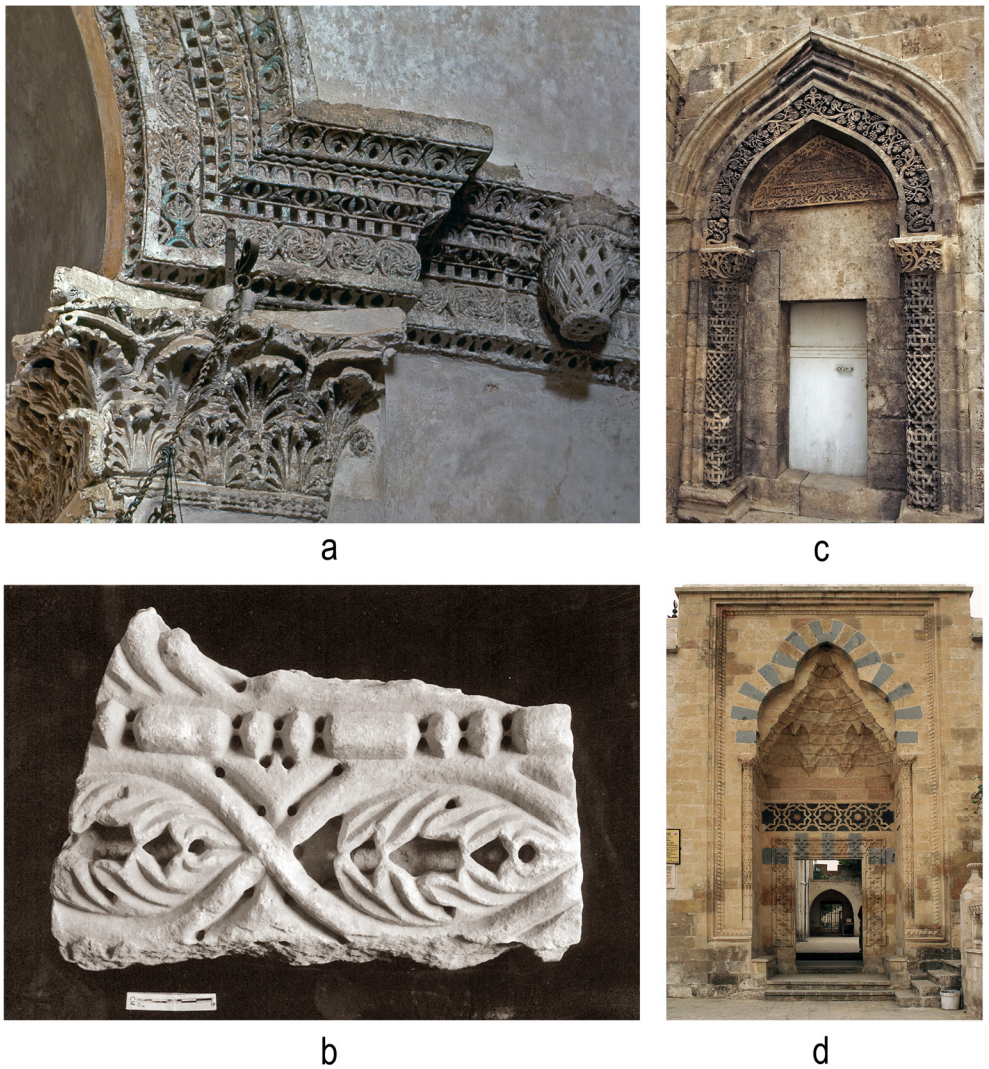

Figure 6. *Historical and contemporary encounters: Deir Za'feran, Church of Mar Hahanyo (a), frieze, Church at Daphne (accessed July 1, 2023) http://vrc.princeton.edu/archives/items/show/16853.), photo courtesy of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University (b), minaret gate, Great Mosque of Mardin (c), Latifiyya Mosque (d).*

4. Style in the context of "revivalist -styles of Ottoman architectural decoration"

Western architectural styles were introduced into the Ottoman center of Istanbul in the 18th century and gradually spread throughout the Empire in subsequent centuries. During the 19th century, a comprehensive range of architectural styles emerged, dominated by revivalist Neoclassical and eclectic styles that combined designs from different regions and periods, including Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and Islamic architecture. Following the reign of Mahmut II, the state's modernization and centralization policy is represented through the construction of Neoclassical and Empire-style [7] (Ampir üslup) edifices inspired by Greco-Roman architecture. This style was widely adopted in provincial cities during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) (Ödekan, 1994; Aydın, 2012; Eraslan, 2021).

Tanzimat reforms were carried out in the city after Mardin was incorporated into Diyarbakir province in 1866. The Tanizmat reforms transformed the city's political, administrative, and social character, as well as its urban fabric. A group of administrative buildings were constructed in the northeastern part of the city, where the Gül and Şehidiye neighborhoods meet. Built with gabled roofs and round-arched windows on a plain, sober facade design These buildings, including the Governor's House (Vali Konağı), Town Hall

(Belediye Binası) (1869-70), Government House (Hükümet Konağı) (1874-75), Revenue Hall (Vergi Dairesi) and Cavalry Barracks (Süvari Kışla) (1890-91), display the architectural character of the government buildings in Istanbul; except for the portals of Cavalry Barracks and Rüşdiyye Mektebi (Secondary School) their facades were unadorned. According to Soyukaya et al. (2013, p.355), this area was once the residence of Süleyman Pasha, a former administrator, suggesting that the northeastern part of the city may have served as an administrative center in the past as well.

The decorative programs and repertoires used on the residential facades in Mardin changed with the introduced of the neoclassical style in the late 19th century. The earliest dated house with neoclassical facade decoration is the Alkanoğlu House, which dates to 1895-96 (Figure 7a). This house is located together with a group of neoclassical houses on the same plot at the corner of the Gül and Şehidiye neighborhoods (Figure 1, numbers 40-44). The group includes the Erdem and Güler Houses, the house currently used by Local Gündem 21, the former Trahom Hospital, and the Alkanoğlu House. It can be inferred that the new style originated in the Şehidiye neighborhood, the administrative center of the Ottoman state, and spread to houses in the other neighborhoods, such as the Gözü House (1907) in the Teker neighborhood (Figure 8d) and the Cebur Mansion (today Gazi Paşa Primary School) (1907) in the Great Mosque neighborhood (Figures 7b, 9b). Although it is not known for certain, these houses may have belonged to the administrative elite.

The utilization of rounded arches instead of pointed arches in various architectural elements, including windows and iwans, signifies the most significant change in the facade decoration of Mardin houses. Additionally, the elimination of blind arched niches represents another noticeable alteration in the window decoration program.

The analysis has revealed two distinct window decoration programs. The first group, exemplified by the Gözü and Cebur houses, showcases rounded windows with triangular pediments or entablatures predominantly situated on rectangular surfaces that project from the wall. The second group features aedicule-framed windows, as evidenced in the residences of Sürücü (1911) (Figure 8f), Mimar Lole (Figures 8e, 9c), and Ölçenoğlu houses (Figures 8e, f). The aedicule form is adorned with local ornamental motifs as well as Empire-style vocabulary.

Historically, the traditional residential architecture in Mardin has utilized tectonic systems that feature massive void arrangements and positive-negative organization. However, the 19th-century trends suggest a shift towards Neoclassical design principles, resulting in the closure of iwans and diminishing openings on facades. This transformation, while not eliminating iwans, represents a departure from traditional architectural facade design. The front face of iwans has evolved into a tripartite appearance to align with the new classical style in some examples (Figures 8a, b, c). The use of revaq has become increasingly scarce over time. In some mansions, such as Tatlı Dede House, the revaqs were even closed (see Soyukaya et al., 2013, p.219). It can be argued that iwans and revaq, which

Figure 7. *Western-style facade decoration: houses of Alkanoğlu (Eros Art House) (a), Cebur (b), architect Lole (c).*

are fundamental elements of Islamic architecture, have been gradually integrated into classical facade design in the way of new appearance.

The roof molding that also features distinct elements of the facades consists of many narrow bands with motifs taken from Islamic and ancient design *vocabulary (Figures 7b, c, 8a-f)*. Compared to the moldings in medieval Islamic-style residences, these are more decorative in design.

The Neoclassical style is characterized by specific elements such as rounded arches, accentuated keystones, engaged columns or pilasters, rusticated quoins at the corners, plastered plain cornices, arcaded cornices, aedicules, triangular pediments, and pseudo-gabled roofs. However, in Mardin, it became a prevailing decorative trend to further embellish Neoclassical-style architectural elements with motifs inspired by various decorative sources, drawing from ancient, Islamic, and classical revival styles from Europe. A variety of motifs are arranged in a series of rows, including Islamic muqarnas, palmettes, rumis, flowers, octagonal stars, ancient dentils, trefoils, flutes, pearls, and basic geometric shapes such as triangles, semicircles, interlaced semicircles, and square lozenges (see Figures 9b, c, d). Moreover, the facades featuring aedicule framing around the windows often include vases, tassels, crescents, and radial sun motifs inspired by the Empire style (Figure 9a) (Aydın, 2012; Batur, 1985; Ödekan, 1994; Eraslan, 2021). A similar decorative vocabulary can be observed in the contemporary portal on the courtyard wall of the Rüşdiyye Mektebi, which also showcases globes derived from the decorative vocabulary of the Empire style.

The style applies classical design principles, such as symmetry, geometric order, and balance, to the entire facade. The facade of the Cebur Mansion, for instance, exemplifies a symmetrical design, with round-arched windows symmetrically arranged on either side of the iwan and a niche mimicking a

***Figure 8**. Window and iwan decoration: houses of Cebur (a), Culture and Tourism Association (b), N. Ceylan (c), Gözü (d), architect Lole (e), and Sürücü (f).*

Figure 9. *Motif repertoire: houses of Sürücü (a), Gözü (b) Cebur (c) and Architect Lole (d).*

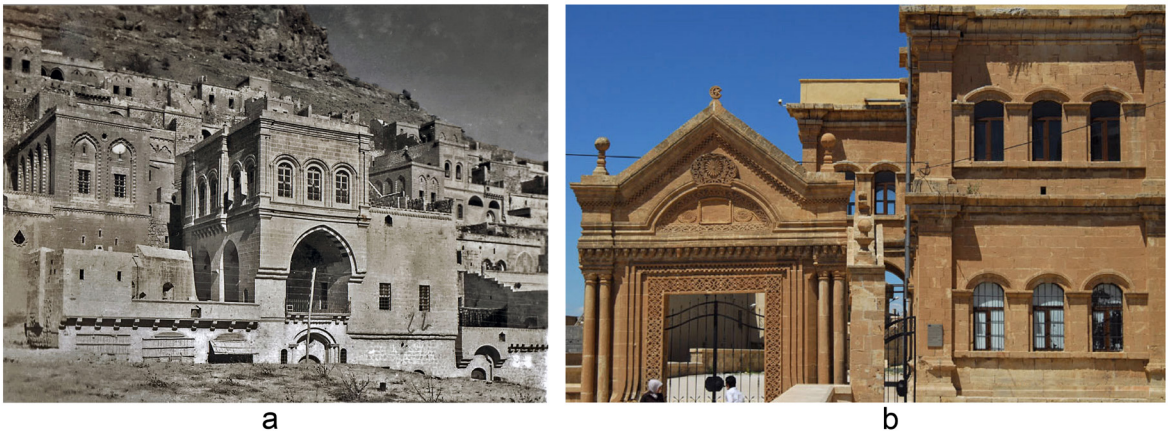

Figure 10. *Aksa House and Rüşdiyye Mektebi, accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.mustafacambaz.com/details.php?image_id=27776&mode=search, by Mustafa Cambaz, photo courtesy of Mustafa Cambaz.*

window for visual continuity and equilibrium (figure 7b). Similarly, the terrace balustrades along the house walls of the Lole Mansion contribute to a unified design and visual continuity (Figure 7c).

Some of the houses in the architectural landscape of the city, such as the Erdem House, the Koç House (Genç & Karadayı-Yenice, 2022), and the one currently used by the Culture and Tourism Association, have distinctive architectural features such as bay windows and pseudo-gable roofs, which are rare in the region.

The facades of these buildings are designed based on Neoclassical principles and incorporate decorative motifs inspired by the region's early Christian and Islamic decorative vocabulary. The local ornaments are selectively applied to create a unique and distinctive appearance. The combination of Empire and Neoclassical principles seen in 19th-century architecture in Istanbul with indigenous decorative elements highlights the integral relationship between architecture and cultural identity.

5. Evaluation and conclusion

During the late Ottoman period, spanning from the second half of the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, affluent and influential cosmopolitan families in Mardin constructed homes adorned with elegant and striking architectural embellishments. The facades reflect a passion for new decorative experiments and a willingness among homeowners and builders to follow architectural decoration trends. This suggests the presence of a dynamic and innovative community of craftsmen engaged in architectural ornamentation. However, our understanding of the actors in this vibrant art scene is limited to names that reveal ethnic and religious identities. Moreover, while it may appear that local craftsmen were primarily responsible for the decoration, it is conceivable that artisans from elsewhere also contributed to the process. The architectural decoration in the facades of these homes, reminiscent of the medieval Islamic style, reflects the dual heritage of both medieval Islamic and early Christian architectural

decoration in Upper Mesopotamia. This phenomenon prompts considerations of the mutual exchange among craftsmen. It is noteworthy to mention that stone masons likely skillfully utilized historical decorative models, and these examples manifested in the houses.

In the late 19th century, there was a departure from medieval Islamic design principles, with a notable trend towards Neoclassical and Empire styles. The Alkonoğlu House (1894-95) is considered the first possible example of the Neoclassical style in the city, based on stylistic analysis. The designer of the facade remains unknown, but it is likely that the same artisan applied similar facade decorations to the houses in the same city block in the Şehidiye neighborhood (Figure 1, numbers 40-44).

In this case the consistent style of decoration, ornamental characteristics, and motif repertoire may suggest that some houses shared the same architects. For example, considering that the S. Aksa House (1901) and the Rüşdiyye School both exhibit pure Neoclassical style features and similar facade designs, it is plausible to consider that the same architect designed them. Additionally, the decorative elements on the facades of Lole's and Sürücü's houses, both featuring an Empire-style decorative vocabulary, bear resemblances to those on the courtyard gate of the Rüşdiyye School. This suggests that architect Lole might have been responsible for designing and crafting motifs on these facades, inspired by decorative trends observed in Istanbul architecture, including sun radials, crescents, and tassels.

Wharton (2022) argued that the facade design of the Şahkulubey Mansion resembles Renaissance loggias, such as the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence, as previously noted by Çerme (2000). The medallions on the facade are shaped like teardrops, a feature borrowed from Artuqid decoration vocabulary. The mansion's facade exhibits hybrid design choices that suggest the owner's international connections and appreciation for local aesthetics. Our analysis of decorative styles indicates that the stylistic influences behind Şahkulubey Mansion can be traced back to Istanbul rather than Florence. There is no evidence to suggest that the architects responsible for the facade traveled to Florence. However, before the construction of Revaq of the Mansion (1909), there were structures in the city that reflected Neoclassical aesthetics. Examples of such structures are the Rüşdiyye Mektebi and S. Aksa House, both built in 1901. Therefore, it is more likely that the styling of the facade of Şahkulubey Mansion is connected to the neoclassical style that was popular throughout Istanbul.

The wealth and social status of the owners significantly influenced the size of the houses, the richness of decoration, and the quality of workmanship. Facades were adorned with religious symbols such as the Cross and figurative motifs like pigeons and cherubs, reflecting the religious identity of the owner. The portals featured a specific decoration program and a repertoire of figural decorations on their facades (Çalışır-Pençe, 2022). The artisans responsible for crafting these portals may have originated from Mardin, as the decoration scheme and repertoire used here are not found in any other city of the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly, compositions featuring only bird figures are also present in a few residences of Muslim families, indicating a cautious approach among Muslims towards visually representing figures. The Aslan House, for instance, showcases a lion figure reminiscent of the Artuqid type of figural decoration, with the addition of a sword, possibly referencing the family's Alevi identity, as the figure of a lion holding a sword is a common symbol of Hazrat Ali. Solomon's seal motifs are also featured in the facade decorations, but this is not necessarily a reliable indicator of Jewish identity, as claimed by Açıkyıldız-Şengül (2017). Such motifs can be observed in both Christian and Islamic buildings, such as the gate of the Forty Martyrs Church (Kırklar Kilisesi) and the Babusur Mosque.

During the late Ottoman period, it was common to apply architectural decoration to domestic facades. However, this practice was not associated with any particular ethno-religious group, except for using religious sym-

bols such as the cross and figurative motifs. Local acanthus leaves, vine scrolls, dentils, teardrops, rumi, and palmettes were commonly used in houses of both Muslims and non-Muslims, indicating a shared taste and appreciation among families who have lived together for centuries and shared a typical lifestyle. Tuncer (1973) demonstrated that the historic churches in the region also exhibit a common ornamental language, while Wharton (2016) argued that the contemporary 19th-century churches display the same attitude. The churches constructed in Mardin after the reforms (Akyüz, 1998) demonstrate a similar enthusiasm for decoration and architectural styles as the residences.

This article illustrates the architectural styles used on the facades of the houses built during the late Ottoman period in Mardin. Respectively, architectural decoration showcases the eclectic and heterogeneous combination of historical and contemporary styles that have been transformed into a new and distinctive ornamental context in Mardin, and represents the aesthetic value of the house, the vivid architectural activity in the city, and the social changes that took place in Mardin as a result of the Tanzimat reforms.

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Endnotes

[1] BOA.A.DVN.NMH.4 The petition of the French ambassador regarding the right of Syrian Catholics to worship in their homes.

[2] Alioğlu (2003, p.64) defines a "living unit" as a multifunctional space designed specifically to meet the needs of a nuclear family that can be used for sleeping, living, and eating.

[3] In his article, Ercan (1990) explains the dress, housing, and behavioral laws that non-Muslims had to follow in the Ottoman Empire. These laws were widespread in the Ottoman states and included restrictions on the quality of clothing and shoes, as well as specific dress types and colors. Açıkyıldız-Şengül (2017, p.8) notes that there is not much difference between the dress of Muslim and non-Muslim people in Mardin, as seen in photographs.

[4] During his visit to Mardin in 1826, Buckingham observed that non-Muslims were permitted to ride horses and give the salute of " Salam Alaikum," and even Shereefs returned the salute. He expressed that these practices could potentially cause offense among the Muslim population, even in Damascus: ".. colours of the dress are not at all regarded, and even green may be worn; but a horse or an ass cannot be mounted, nor can the salute of peace be exchanged between a Mohammedan and a Christian, of any class or sect" (Buckingham, 1827, p.185).

[5] Altınay (1988, p.83), in the section 'Regarding the Height of Islamic and Christian Houses to be Built in Istanbul,' stated that Muslim houses are twelve zirai high, while non-Muslim houses could be nine zirai high. Zirai is a unit of measurement equivalent to 75.8 cm.

[6] See figure Alioğlu, 2003, p.92. See figures Beyazıt, 2016, pp.328;385.

[7] The Empire style is part of the neoclassical style that first appeared during the reign of Napoleon I (1804–1815). The style became popular again during the reign of Napoleon III (1852–1871). It uses Greek and Roman forms and military symbols of power and victory, such as swords, cannons, pistols, and flags, as well as motifs of cups, vases, tassels, torches, emblems, laurel wreaths, sunbeam medallions, and human and animal figures. The Empire style (known as the Ampir style in Ottoman architecture) was first applied to architectural decoration during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II. The most prominent motifs in the houses of Mardin are the radially patterned oval sun (şemse) motifs and crescents are found in the Ampir style.

(Aydın, 2012, p.78; Batur, 1983, p.1058; Ödekan, 1994, p.248).

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