

## PART II

# Building (*Bina*)

*And so the great and famous persons who made Byzantium a Muslim city, Constantinople Istanbul, İstanbul İslambol [literally, full of Islam]; the peerless masterpieces and mosques; and thus the eternal seals of Islam and faith; and thus the medals of the nation [milliyet]. These are the works, the memories that make Istanbul ours. The fountains, the mosques, the public fountains founded beside the mosques, the public kitchens [imaret], the madrasas, the libraries. . . . Brought together in these is a balance of this world and the next; they are the faith of Islam embodied in built form [yapı şeklinde]. Not the inescapable looting of the shore, the greed for money that burns the old mansions [yalı], the soulless, faceless apartments rising to the sky. . . .*

—ABDÜLBAKİ GÖKPINARLI, “EYÜP SULTAN AND ISTANBUL”

*Whosoever builds a mosque for Allah, Allah builds for him a home in Paradise.*

*Man banā lillāhi maṣjidan banā allāhu lahu baītan fī-l-jannati.*

— HADITH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD, INSCRIBED ABOVE AN  
ENTRANCE TO THE MOSQUE OF EYÜP SULTAN



BUILDINGS MAKE PLACES. They do so in a variety of ways. For example, they provide focal points, places for people to gather and to consider from afar. Buildings—especially monumental ones—also have a politics, often seeking to concretize fluid forms of identity,<sup>1</sup> render communities and populations legible,<sup>2</sup> or orchestrate a spectacle of the state.<sup>3</sup> Their construction, destruction, and redevelopment can help to organize an urban political economy.<sup>4</sup> Buildings can make places by functioning as mnemonic sites, “material vehicles of meaning that either [help] construct a memory of [a past] . . . or [serve] as symbolic markers for commemorations of present national accomplishments and the possibilities of the future.”<sup>5</sup> Yet even though buildings often seek to stabilize a specific configuration of history and geography, “the affective materialities of a place . . . may surpass instrumental efforts to make selective pasts speak through them.”<sup>6</sup>

Buildings seem to be distinct, well-bounded objects, the boundary between inside and outside marked with walls, doors, thresholds, and windows. For this reason, they often help to mark out legible spaces of the sacred and the profane; in twentieth-century Turkey, they also seem to draw sharp lines between the secular and the religious.

Yet the relationships embodied in built form are neither stable nor homogeneous but embedded in “networks of association that work to keep [them] in place or to pull [them] apart.”<sup>7</sup> From this point of view, studying buildings asks us to consider how various building materials link them elsewhere in shifting and unstable ways.<sup>8</sup> Although buildings seem to be grounded in a specific site, they are in fact linked to other places and times through a variety of material and imagined



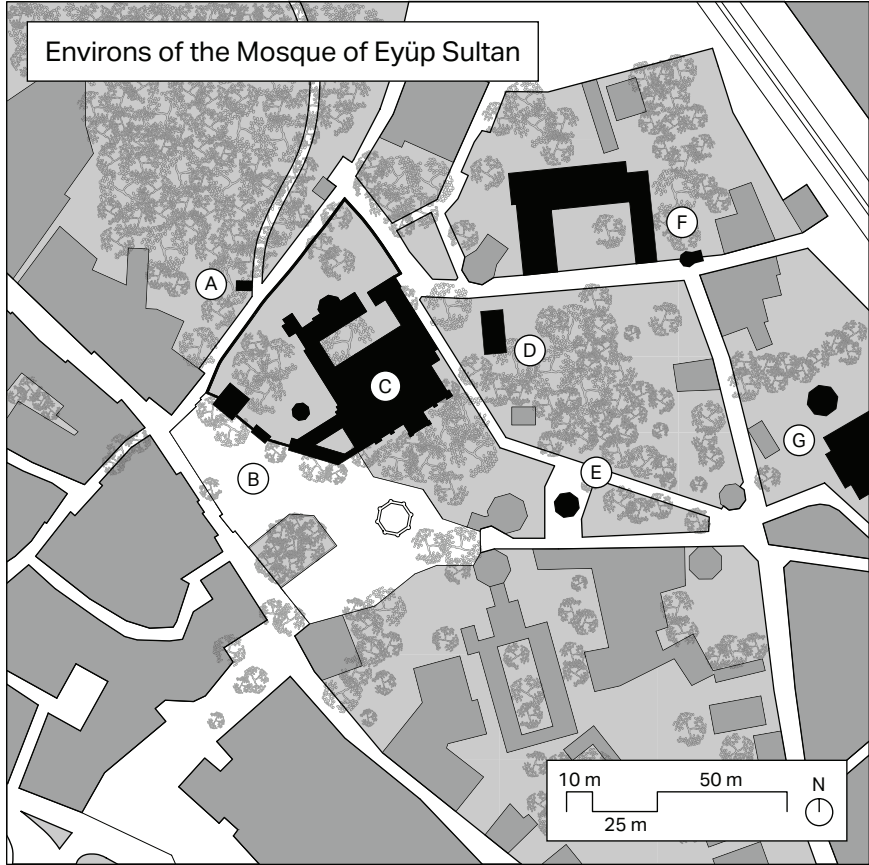
FIGURE 11. View of the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan from the central square, November 2012. The *hadith* is inscribed above the entrance.

infrastructures. Buildings make place precisely because they stabilize—sometimes briefly, sometimes for centuries—a set of relationships that exist within them and stretch well beyond them.<sup>9</sup>

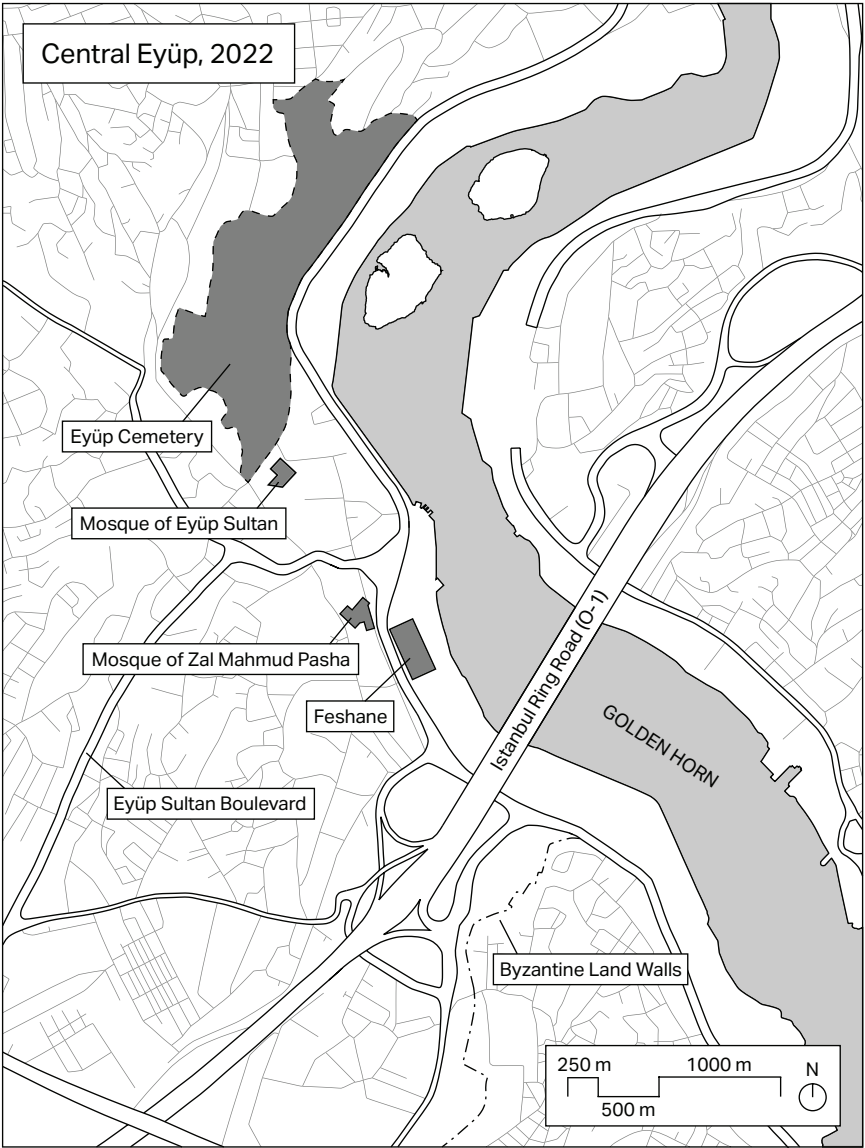
Building—translated as *bina*—can refer both to the object (a building) and the practice (to build). As with *rivayet*, I use *bina* in a deliberate expansive sense, as a point of departure to help us think about the “multiplicity that is constitutive of all geographies as they are produced, destroyed, and remade.”<sup>10</sup> This approach is especially important because Eyüp’s buildings are often encountered as self-evident markers of the past. They are, to quote Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, “The memories that make Istanbul ours.”

We should take these claims seriously and seek to understand how groups and individuals make sense of themselves in relation to this place. On the other hand, however, it is equally important to interrogate the “we” that is defined in relation to this “where.” Thinking of places—and thus buildings—as *multiple* helps to remind us that the shape of this world could always be otherwise. Rather than seek to define a “correct” meaning about Eyüp, this section works through buildings to “open [their] various dimensions” and “[give] visibility to the various dimensions” less often considered.<sup>11</sup>





MAP 3. Environs of the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan, showing the Fountain of the Eternal Eyüpsultanlıs (A); the central square (B); the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan (C); the *sıbyan mektebi* (D); the tomb of Mirimiran Paşa (E); the *imaret* and *sebil* of Mihrişah Valide Sultan (F); and the tomb of Sultan Reşad (G).



MAP 4. Central Eyüp, 2022.