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EDITED BY
MICHAEL HÜTTLER · HANS ERNST WEIDINGER

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OTTOMANIA
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THE AGE OF MOZART AND SELIM III (1756–1808)

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HANS ERNST WEIDINGER · MICHAEL HÜTTLER
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
AND
EUROPEAN THEATRE

I

THE AGE OF
MOZART AND SELIM III
(1756–1808)

edited by

Michael Hüttler · Hans Ernst Weidinger
The symposia were supported by the Turkish Embassy Vienna, the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the UNESCO International Theatre Institute (ITI) – Austrian Centre, the Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul, and Deniz Bank AG.

Michael Hüttler and Hans Ernst Weidinger (eds.): *Ottoman Empire and European Theatre. Vol. 1: The Age of Mozart and Selim III (1756–1808).*

Wien: HOLLITZER Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013 (Ottomania 1)

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HOLLITZER Wissenschaftsverlag
Trautsongasse 6/6, A-1080 Wien
a division of
HOLLITZER Baustoffwerke Graz GmbH
Stadiongasse 6-8, A-1010 Wien

www.hollitzer.at

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ISBN 978-3-99012-065-1 (hbk)
ISBN 978-3-99012-067-5 (epub)
ISBN 978-3-99012-066-8 (pdf)
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The poet Şeyh Galib (1757–1799) was an artist, an intellectual, a scholar, a musician and a frequenter of the private circle of Sultan Selim III (1761–1808, r.1789–1807) in late eighteenth-century Istanbul. His claim to have composed ‘fresh’ verse has long tormented modern critics, who have been trying to come to terms with it. Around fifteen years ago, Victoria Rowe Holbrook posed the question afresh: “Was Galib original?” In response, the author broke new ground as she deconstructed the paradigms of both Galib’s contemporaries and modern critics, and placed Ottoman poetry in the interdisciplinary world of contemporary literary theory. Subjecting Şeyh Galib’s celebrated mesnevî, the narrative poem Hüsün ü Aşk (‘Beauty and love’) of 1782–1783 to a meticulous postmodernist reading, Holbrook expanded on the anachronistic misunderstandings of Ottoman poetical convention as well as the mystifications caused by the notions of ‘imitation’ and ‘innovation’. In search of a definition for Galib’s new poetry, the author proposed

4 Arguing that “[...] the slur that Ottoman poetry in general imitated the Persian, to which
the idea of ‘originality’. Original can mean, first, pioneering or inventive, though in this case, it refers more specifically to abandoning the age-long Ottoman emulation of Persian poetry for something without precedent. Elaborating on the long-known and much discussed sources of the trilingual Galib, a Mevlevî in faith and culture, and his possible ways of access to and consumption of the ‘classic’ Islamic romances, Holbrook explored how Galib “expounded a poetics of originality in a ‘digression’ taken mid-way through Beauty and Love”.\(^5\) In a chapter titled “Mebâhis-i Diğer”, she argued, Şeyh Galib “departs from the subject, drops his narrative persona of the tale, and its tone, quality, and imagery, and takes up the expository persona of orator”.\(^6\) In other words, this detour turns out to be the narration of a ‘voyage’ that is the spiritual quest of the poet. This journey is different than the equally inventive early eighteenth-century poet Ahmed Nedin’s (1681–1730) non-spiritual self-search because in the context of mysticism, meanings are not simply meanings, but are divided into ‘inner’ or esoteric as well as ‘outer’ or exoteric meanings.\(^7\)

Gibb gave resounding international voice, is based on a misunderstanding […]” (Holbrook: “Originality and Ottoman Poetics”, p. 442). Holbrook criticized the dominance of philologist methodologies, Turkish republican literary institutions, and nationalist ideology. In chapter two (“Intertextuality and the Fortress of Form”) of The Unreadable Shores of Love, she exploits the conceptual tools of postmodern literary theory following Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva. – Mesnevî is an extensive poem written in Persian by Celâleddîn Rumi (Jalal ad-Din Rumi, 1207–1273), the celebrated Persian Sufi saint and poet, Islamic jurist and theologian. As a literary term it refers to poems with profound spiritual meaning, written in rhyming couplets a style of Persian poetry.

5 Holbrook: “Originality and Ottoman Poetics”, pp. 440–454. Şeyh Galib rose to become the şeyh (‘sheikh’) of the Mevlevî Lodge in Galata (also known as the Kulekapı Melevihâne) after 1787 and head of the mesnevîhân (reciters of the mesnevî) after 1794. Melevîs are the followers of the Mevlîvi Sufi order, founded in Konya by the followers of Celâleddîn Rumi.


Despite this novel twist in Galib’s Hüsün ü Aşk, the real person of the poet remains thinly described.\(^8\) This elusiveness may have further allowed his poetry to be construed, in accordance with the prevailing characterization of the period, to have “reflected, as well as contributed to, the creation in a few Ottomans of a mental attitude with a ‘modernist’ tendency, i.e., one open to change and one individualistic in temperament.”\(^9\)

As part of the same convention, the Mevlevî connection of the late eighteenth-century ‘reformists’ (also read: modernists) has been counterposed to a combined, unified Bektashi-Janissary identity postulated for the ‘anti-reformists’ (or conservatives) who were behind the May 1807 Rebellion.\(^10\) Thus, many historians have argued that Selim III’s support (or his want of support) of the Mevlevî order (including Şeyh Galib), who had had a long and close association with the ruling elite, may have been a deliberate strategy intended to counter the Bektashi-Janissaries. At the time of the Rebellion, however, Şeyh Galib had been dead for eight years. Furthermore, the Mevlevî şeyh (‘sheikh’) in Konya, El-Hâc Mehmed Emin Çelebi (d.1815), to take just one example, was an anti-reformist all along who was still able to remain as post-nişîn (head of a Mevlevî lodge, şeyh) long after the Rebellion, indeed for twenty years over 1785–1815. Such simple observations tend to cut against the sweeping generalizations cited above.

In the 1990s, at the time of Holbrook’s thoughtful reading of Hüsün ü Aşk, there was no comprehensive critique of this approach to the historical reconstruction of Selimian times. Neither is any alternative easily available today.\(^11\)

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herself also provided a sampling of poems from Galib’s Divân (compiled in 1780, nine years before Selim was enthroned) that commemorate specific steps taken to improve the Ottoman soldiery. These tended to corroborate, the author noted, the role the celebrated poet was assumed to have played as moral and intellectual guide to the men of the reform movement Nizâm-ı Cedid (‘New Order’). In a footnote, however, Holbrook added that these verses might have been inserted by the editors of the Divân’s 1836 Bulaq print. Nevertheless, the dominant Mevlevî presence in Selim III’s immediate circle is beyond doubt. Indeed, it may have appeared so overwhelming as to have induced the members of another Sufi order, the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidis – also identified as allies of the sultan, and pro-reform supporters of the Nizâm-ı Cedid, at the time of the revolt – to cultivate their Mevlevî connections, as their contemporaries noted. Most of the time, these eminent associates of the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidis were distinguished readers or teachers of Mevlânâ Celâleddîn Rûmî’s mesneví, a masterpiece of medieval Perso-Islamic mystical literature and theosophic teachings.

A TANGLE OF REFORMIST AND CONSERVATIVE IMPLICATIONS

This Mevlevî-Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi dimension of the reforming party, and the individuals involved in this alliance at the turn of the nineteenth century, is a whole area that certainly needs further exploration. Many other details are equally interesting for Ottoman intellectual history. Şeyh Galib’s father (Mustafa Reşid, 1700–1758) was a professional bureaucrat who was a Mevlevî

Kemal Sılay, writing also in the 1990s, was trapped in the secondary literature on the ‘Tulip Age’. Cf. Kemal Sılay: Nedim and the Poetics of the Ottoman Court: Medieval Inheritance and the Need for Change. Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1994.

Holbrook: The Unreadable Shores of Love, pp. 106–110.

It was Butrus Abu-Manneh who embarked on the study of the close relationship between the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi order and the Ottoman ruling elite in the late eighteenth century and subsequent periods. He argued that there was a growing tendency towards the strengthening of Orthodox Sunni Islam in the Ottoman capital following the enthronement of Selim III. Along with the general trend of growing architectural patronage of the tekkes (notably the increasing visibility of the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi religious order), Abu-Manneh discussed three basic evidences for this Sunni Islamic revivalism: first, the building of many other religious buildings by the sultan and the members of the upper classes; second, the building of medreses, and third, the increase in the number of translations of Islamic classics. Cf. Butrus Abu-Manneh: Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826–1876). Istanbul: Isis Press, 2001, p. 7. While the increase in number and in visibility of the tekkes cannot be substantiated with the documentation presented, even a cursory research in secondary literature falsifies the first statement. As the author himself acknowledges, the second and third assertions await more extensive and convincing scrutiny.

and a Melâmî, while his instructor in Persian (Süleyman Neşet, 1735–1807) was a Mevlevî and a Naqshbendi. More significantly, the teachings of the Mujaddidis (literally, renewers) as the newly rising branch of the Naqshbendis, who advised “strict adherence to the sharia and the tenets of Sunni-Orthodox Islam which would produce a regeneration of the Muslim community and the state”, might have motivated and mobilized their şeyhs and deputies to support Selim’s modernization reforms. Although such a position may appear paradoxical, this is a time when many parties and individuals, including the Mevlevîs, were caught in two distinct and antithetical relationships with modernization, hence conflict and compromise. It is also tempting to probe into the social and economic conditions behind the inclination of the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi, with their mission of regenerating the Muslim community and state, to act together with the Mevlevîs. Both were urban and educated orders well integrated into the ruling establishment; indeed, their members were among the wealthiest.

A legacy of Şeyh Ahmed al-Sirhindî (1564–1624) of India (Sindh), known as the Mujaddid (‘renewer’), the rejuvenating identity and zeal of the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi, as well as the support they received from the Melâmîs during the reign of Ahmed III (1673–1736, r.1703–1730) for the cause of reform and restoration, had already involved their supporters in Istanbul in some strife earlier in the eighteenth century. Paradoxically, their call also bore a strong resemblance to those fundamentalists from earlier generations of the Ottoman Sunni-Orthodox establishment who had also caused great trouble, albeit in a different way. Pending


16 Abu-Manneh: Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire, pp. 12, 43.


further research, suffice it to note that along with a reformist line, very different orientations could also be elicited from the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi outlook. Sirhindî’s position on avoiding all bid’ad (‘innovations’) through strict adherence to the sunna (‘prophetic usage’) and the ordinances of the sharia (‘Islamic canon’), together with the definition of the Naqshbandi path as identical to that of the Companions of the Prophet,21 as well as, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the Khalidi sub-order which professed a deviation from Sirhindî’s framework in its declared enmity towards non-Muslims – including both the European Powers and the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire – all point, singly and in combination, to a strongly conservative dimension which would continue to produce serious repercussions (as with the Kadızadeli movement throughout the seventeenth century).22 As revivalists in the 1790s, the supporters of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi found themselves in the midst of an ever-growing intellectual and spiritual tangle (and therefore of multiple hostilities) in the Ottoman capital.

Mevlevî politics were no different.23 During the reign of Abdülhamid I (1725–1789, r.1774–1789), the Mevlevî order in Istanbul was shaken by rivalries as different şeyhs struggled for control. The şeyh families in the capital were no different than local dynasties elsewhere in the empire who could act somewhat independently from Konya. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the Mevlevî şeyh of Konya, El-Hâc Mehmed Emin Çelebi, was against the reforms of Selim III – probably because of the new restrictions on incomes of pious and philanthropic endowments (waqf) and other, traditional privileges.24 Against this background, it is legitimate to ask whether Galib might have been discredited and isolated before his untimely death. Could he have been accused of being a clandestine

21 Abu-Manneh: Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire, p. 23.
23 Among those who developed hostility against the Mevlevî şeyh of Konya were Mütercim Ahmed Åsim Efendi (1755–1820), Şanizâde Ataullah (1771–1826) , and much later Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822–1895), the contemporary or near-contemporary historians. Reşat Ekrem Koçu, a Republican historian, claimed that he was a Bektashi in disguise and was very fond of beautiful and young women, and that there was no seclusion for women in his household – an indication of ‘Bektashi rules’. Cf. Danaci Yıldız: Vaka-yı Selimiye or the Selimiye Incident, pp. 640–642.
Bektashi? Did he entertain Shiites in his convent? Was it his pomp and display, his unruly behaviour that turned other Mevlevîs against him? Or was it his intimate connections with the royal family, ranging from Yusuf Bey (İbrahimhan-zâde)25 to Beyhan Sultan (Selim III’s half-sister, 1765–1824), which led to some condescending rumours, even about an amorous triangle among the three. There are many anecdotes which have been going around in Mevlevî circles ever since, the historicity of which need to be established through research.26 It is fairly clear though that not only some Mevlevîs or Naqshbendi-Mujaddidis, but other Sufi reformers, too, must have been acting not just on the basis of their ideological outlook, but also (even, mostly) out of pragmatism, worldly desires (which turned them into hûb-ı dünya or ikbâl perest-i dünya) and self-interest in developing their political connections on the eve of (and after) the 1807 Rebellion.27

**EROTICISM AND ESOTERICISM**

In the complex web of associations, alliances and antagonisms of the 1790s, not only the political role that Şeyh Galib played in the court circles or groups of mystics around Selim III, but also the individual person of the poet, as well as his intimate relation to the sultan and his immediate retinue, need intense scrutiny.28 Galib remains almost an abstraction, an ascetic disengaged from his human body – even though there is enough evidence to reconstruct his family, politics, and perhaps most interestingly, his sexuality.29 In current research on Ottoman poetry, as well as, more broadly, recent studies of Islamic mysticism, the attempt

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25 A descendant of the sixteenth-century grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa and his royal wife, Esma (İsmihan) Sultan.
27 A case in point is Mehmed Emin Efendi who was described as obsessed with worldly desires but as not caring for the other world. Cf. Danacı Yıldız: *Vaka-yı Selimiye or the Selimiye Incident*, pp. 640–642.
to relate the word and the world to the human body is gaining momentum. The latest examination of Sufi conceptions of the body in religious writings from the late fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries has demonstrated that these often treated saints’ physical bodies as sites of sacred power.30 Another systematic study, this time of Mevlânâ Celâleddîn Rûmî’s mesnevî, has shed light on the esoteric significance of its explicitly sexual passages. The links between the dynamics of eroticism and esotericism operative in Rûmî’s mesnevî have also been explored by using the relevant conceptual tools of postmodern theories and by drawing on recent interpretations of medieval kabbalistic texts.31 Others have revisited Ahmed Nedîm and the late eighteenth-century Ottoman literary corpus that he inspired – in the context of which the poet emerged more fully as an individual – thereby also bringing the body into discussions of Ottoman lyricists and lyricism.32 Sünbûlzâde Vehbi (ca.1718–1809)33 and Enderunlu Fâzîl Bey (1759–1810).34

30 Scott Kugle: *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam*. Chapel Hill/NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007. Kugle refutes Islamic mysticism’s disengagement from the human body. The author focuses on six eminent Sufi saints from North Africa and South Asia, and singles out a specific part of the body to which each saint is frequently associated in religious literature. Exploring the concept of ‘embodiment’, Kugle tackles questions such as social identity, communal solidarity, religious allegiance, and cultural modernity and shows that the saints’ bodies are treated as symbolic resources for generating religious meaning and sacred power. Methodologically, Kugle draws from religious studies, anthropology, gender and sexuality studies, theology, feminism, and philosophy.


both contemporaries of Şeyh Galib, are also increasingly perceived as having displayed eroticism and esotericism in their poetry as a way of reflecting (on) their private lives and minds. The latter, in his *Defter-i Aşk* (‘Book of love’), the first Ottoman autobiographical love story, also laid his claim to having produced a novelty (*tarih-i nev-icad*). But here it was the content, not the poetics, which was innovative: *Defter-i Aşk* was meant to be a dynastic history of homosexuals.\(^{35}\) As in Şeyh Galib’s detour, the account here should be read as Enderunlu Fâzıl Bey’s self-conscious display of his real person, and ultimately as the poet’s call for or leap at becoming an individual. Şeyh Galib’s later work on the rule and customs of his order, the *As-Sohbet as-Safiyya* (‘Fellowship of the Pure’) of 1787–1789, should also be re-examined in this regard. This is written in the form of a commentary in Arabic on *At-Tuhaft al Bâhiyya fi Tariqat al-Mawlawiya* (‘The beautiful gift of the Mawlavî Order’) of Trabzonlu Ahmed Dede (d.1777), a Naqshbendi who later became a Mevlevi. Galib adopted a conversational format: “the author is saying…, but I say….”\(^{36}\) In the course of this indirect conversation, the poet seems to reveal more about his real self. But when he takes issue with the bureaucrats of his time, blaming them for their narrow vision, their pedantry, and their pederasty, it is a poetical debate and a rhetorical theme.\(^{37}\)

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the long and strenuous process of abandoning or departing from earlier models may be said to have revolved around the making of an individual out of the poet, and certainly that is at least a ‘localization’ — if nothing else. Here, ‘localization’ involved departing from Persianate forms and models in poetry; it was in this sense that it was innovative and therefore fresh. But whether becoming an individual in the Ottoman realm was a stage en route to modernity, or, as formulated by Rifâ’at Abou-el-Haj, “a locally generated modernity”, is a question to ponder.\(^{38}\)

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37 Holbrook noted that it was usual to level such charges of homosexuality (in the passive role of a catamite, *muğlim*) in a poetical debate, and that it was a rhetorical theme. Cf. Holbrook: *The Unreadable Shores of Love*, pp. 57–58.  
CORRESPONDING PROBLEMS AND TRENDS
IN MUSIC AND OTTOMAN MUSICOLOGY

If not in a way that is as captivating as Holbrook and other imaginative historians of Ottoman poetry who have been taking major steps to unveil the person and the individuality of the Ottoman poet, historians of eighteenth-century Ottoman music have also been exceptionally prolific and productive in tackling ruling conventions and assumptions in their own field. Over the last few decades, musicologists of different backgrounds have been painstakingly studying, translating, and exploring innumerable documents, ranging from narrative sources such as musical treatises, collections of lyrics and notations, and biographical dictionaries (tezkire) of musicians, to historical or literary accounts of both locals and Europeans, as well as miniatures normally studied only by art historians. They have not only provided a comprehensive interpretation of the development, transmission and diffusion of makam (‘modal’) music; in the process, they have also challenged a pervasive and enduring belief that has dominated scholarship for a long time.

The challenge here has been to deconstruct a myth regarding the continuity and dominance of Persianate musical forms and performance practices in Ottoman music at all times. A new scholarship has now persuasively demonstrated that roughly over the period 1600–1750 there was a break with the Persian model. The emergence of new rhythmic and modal structures, new compositional forms and musical genres, new instrumental ensembles, virtual erasure of the distinction between the religious and the secular musical specialist, and the blurring of the boundaries between sacred and secular styles of music both within and outside the imperial court have all been noted and evaluated as having contributed to the emergence of a distinct aesthetics and sound that emerged and crystallized Ottoman music, now properly so-called. What remains unchallenged (or even


While Feldman dated the change to the 1600s and later, Behar has repeatedly argued that “in
unquestioned) in this reappraisal, as also in the case of the Ottoman literary and visual arts, has to do with how all these tangible changes relate to the central postulate of a reforming or modernizing or secularizing state – supposedly extending, all in one breath, from the Tulip Age in the early eighteenth century to the Tanzimat (1839) and beyond. In other words, in standing against the much applauded acceptance of Western influence on Ottoman cultural forms (often read as stagnation and decline), now one has to face another danger: submission to a new wave of revisionist history that reformulates the Europeanization and westernization idea as a ‘locally generated modernity’ – sometimes most daringly labelled ‘secularism’ – that took off early in the eighteenth century.41

Moving on to specifics, the easing of religious boundaries (or of the authority and mandate of Islamic law) so as to allow musicians from diverse cultural or spiritual backgrounds to mingle and cooperate remains, I believe, an assertion that is quite elusive at the moment. Even if such a relaxation were actually the case, I would argue that it cannot be easily substantiated as a progressive, enduring or irreversible process. At the very least, it is difficult to deduce this just from the evidence for the increasing socialization and circulation of the prayer leaders of the mosques, churches and synagogues, as well as the presence of urban musicians from all creeds as non-professionals in musical assemblies. It is true that the spirit and favourable reception of the music performed by numbers of musicians both intra-communally and inter-communally was such that Selim III – who had succeeded two sultans notorious for their aversion to music (to the point of closing down the palace meşkhane) – was able to reconstitute the musical establishment at the court according to “his musical tastes, whims and preferences”.42 However, even when viewed from the court, what strikes the eye are not broad generalities or trends but the ambiguous complexities of the small private and social worlds that theorists, composers, instrumentalists or singers occupied. One of Prince Selim’s teachers, for example, was a palace woman by the name of Dilhayat Kalfa (1710–1780), who was a major composer in her own right, while Isak Fresko Romano (1745–1814) was another composer

41 Although Feldman is unconvinced about dating the secularist change to the so-called Tulip Age, he nevertheless engages himself with the claim about the secularism of the early eighteenth-century Ottoman society. Feldman: Music of the Ottoman Court, pp. 23, 61–63.
and Selim III’s tanbur instructor. Both Abdülbâki Nâsir Dede (1765–1821) and (Baba) Hamparsum Limoncuyan (1768–1839) were composers who were born into and worked together in musical circles in Istanbul, and who devised two separate notational systems on Selim III’s support and encouragement. While the notational system of the former was based on the numerical values attributed to the letters of the Arabic alphabet, the latter was able to devise a more successful notational system inspired by the symbols already in use for Armenian liturgical hymns. Together with such leading names, a whole crowd of musicians, including the singer and composer İlya (d.1799), the violinist Miron (d.1837), the virtuoso santur player Santurî Hüseyin, and other composers such as Musahib Numan Ağa (1750–1834), Sadik Ağa (d.1815), Sadullah Ağa (d.1801) and Şakir Ağa (d.1815), all seem to have enjoyed courtly patronage, and Mevlevî musicians to have received unprecedented favours. They were neither scholars nor intellectuals, and certainly were not likes of the Urdu poet and musician Khvâğa Mîr Dard (1721–1785), a Naqshbandi thinker and religious revivalist with a pluralist (re)interpretative project to integrate several key ontological, epistemological and practical Islamic discourses into a meta discourse. Nevertheless, it is safe to argue that the contemporary Ottoman musicians, whatever faith they belonged to, too, appear as outstanding individuals distinguished not only for their musical sophistication, but also for their permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, religion, nationality, differed from their own. Hence the interaction with the scholars and intellectuals they mixed and mingled with in the elite circles. Further studies may reveal more on the musicians as individuals and their political, cultural and spiritual worlds. Furthermore, the sultan and his sisters are known to have invited professional dancers to their courts who, according to European travellers’ accounts, performed to the music of local Greeks, Jews and Armenians, often representing underprivileged strata from the countryside.

But none of this fits readily into a uniform cultural form and structure, or in any one political outlook and alignment, including any particular approach towards

43 The grandson of Nayî Osman Dede (1652–ca. 1729), the first local who was able “to write down melodies”, was encouraged by the sultan to devise a notational system. Behar: “The Ottoman Musical Tradition”, p. 399.
secularism, modernity or westernization. This increased interaction, which has led to the identification of the ‘peculiar syncretic nature’ of Ottoman music, still cannot be considered a representative product of this period, if only because courtly or quasi-courtly life in Istanbul before and during the eighteenth century has yet to be thoroughly researched. Furthermore, earlier in the eighteenth century the likes of Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), Nayî Osman Dedê, Kemânî Hızîr Ağa (d.1760), Panayiotes Chalathzoglou, Kyrillos Marmarinos, Moshe Faro (Haham Musî), Tanburî Artîn, Kemânî Korci (Yorgi), and Zaharya Efendi may be said to have been not very different in their cultural variety than musicians of the Selimian era.47 Walter Feldman has spoken of sixteenth-century Ottoman culture as confined to the court and reflecting a “polymorphous juxtaposition” of different traditions.48 This corresponds perhaps to what Gülru Necipoğlu has defined as “unity within diversity” for the visual court culture that found a mature expression by the mid sixteenth century.49 Feldman then argues, however, that after the sixteenth century Ottoman culture was no longer confined to the court and no longer this kind of “polymorphous juxtaposition”. This remains a challenge to investigate.

**A HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR ‘INCREASED INTERACTION’**

In Istanbul in the late eighteenth century, interest in European music, opera or theatre was confined to sporadic events in the royal palaces and does not seem to have evolved into a vogue. There were, in fact, contradictory trends of all sorts. For example, going against the generalization that after the 1550s all things Persianate went downhill (albeit at different times in Ottoman sound, Osman

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48 Quoting Carter Vaughn Findley, Feldman claimed that Ottoman culture, confined to the court in the sixteenth century, was “a polymorphous juxtaposition” of elements. Cf. Feldman: *Music of the Ottoman Court*, p. 59. Referring to famous Ottoman composers, the Republican Turkish poet Yahya Kemal Beyath (1884–1958) once claimed that a Greek like Zaharya, a Jew like Isak or an Armenian like Nikôgos were nationally Turkish, and that if the Ottomans had exhibited the same degree of unity in other areas of culture that they had in music, the Turks now would be a very different nation. Cf. Feldman: “Music of the Ottoman Minority Composers”, p. 54.

poetry, or in the Ottoman visual arts), Mevlevîşm continued to have an impact on music that indirectly helped bring in Persianism to the eclecticity of Ottoman culture.\(^{50}\) Mevlevîş, whether as composers or performers, were central to the development of both courtly fasıl and the Mevlevî âyîn (with these two musical structures borrowing from one another), as well as the improvisatory instrumental taksim from the early seventeenth century onwards. By the end of the eighteenth century, we see Selim III also composing a new Mevlevî ceremony (âyîn-i şerîf) in the Sûz-i Dil-ârâ mode, which was written down by Abdülbâki Nâsîr Dede using his new notation. As Walter Feldman shows, the most significant developments in the court style were informed by the elaborate cyclical principles and significant non-metric genres of sung poetry and Qur’anic recitation in Mevlevî ritual, as practised both in Istanbul and a number of Anatolian cities. Furthermore, the long-necked lute (tanbûr) and the end-blown flute (ney), emblematic of Anatolian Sufism, came to be closely associated with – indeed to dominate – the new Ottoman style in this period. But the fundamental contribution of Mevlevî dervishes to Ottoman music in this period was in the development of a musical cosmopolitanism built on the multi-ethnic foundations of Ottoman culture.\(^{51}\)

It is in the late eighteenth century that musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds are best recorded as circulating in equally diverse urban spaces, ranging from meyhânê (‘taverns’) to kahvehânê (‘coffee-houses’), from princely courts to religious halls, teaching and performing the musical fashions of their times across communal lines. This may not have been something entirely new. Urban songs seem to have offered a lot to share – but even if pre-eighteenth-century urban dynamics cultivated such a mixed musical culture, given the lack of documentation about cross-communal meetings, they might appear as no more than infrequent border crossings. One exception would be the Jewish urban songs, and the Maftirim compositions in particular, which were a product of a conscious collaboration between Jewish mystics and Mevlevîş.\(^{52}\) According to tradition, Maftirim, the choir tradition in which Hebrew poetry was sung to the melodies of secular Ottoman court music or Sufî devotional music, was initiated by Rabbi Şelomo Ben Mazaltov (1509–1571) and Rabbi Israel Ben Moše Nadjara (ca. 1555–1625), who were both composers and poets. Maftirim was then revived in Edirne in 1696–1703 with the cooperation of Mevlevî dervishes which enabled the mystic Jewish hymns to be sung in Hebrew in the Ottoman song (şarkî) format. This interaction developed as Jews visited Mevlevî convents (Mevlevihanes) and


\(^{51}\) Feldman: *Music of the Ottoman Court*, pp. 494–505.

Mevlevîs came to synagogues to listen to rabbis singing Maftirim. It is noteworthy that “the Mevlevîs allowed their performances to be viewed by an audience, and they constructed their performance spaces (semâhâne) with an audience in mind”.\textsuperscript{53} In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries inter-communal collaboration on the compositional, rhythmic and melodic structures of Ottoman music continued to develop, spreading and emerging into a variety of secular urban spaces. Also in the eighteenth century, urban Greek songs penetrated the elite salons of Istanbul and some other urban centres. Drawing their lyrics from contemporary Greek verse, these songs (known as mismaiya) were “nearly always melancholic, nostalgic love songs, or else they will speak of the futility of this world”.\textsuperscript{54} The mismaiya were popular among the circles of that time who looked to Fener, the predominantly Greek neighbourhood on the Golden Horn, as their social and cultural reference point. The social atmosphere described is also the one we read from Nedîm.

It is noteworthy that, considering the late eighteenth-century output as a whole – including the many compositions of Selim III, which represent almost all secular and religious genres, including those newly invented due to his encouragement – there were no major structural changes from this period until the late nineteenth century. In light of subsequent developments, a more acceptable approach to the evident changes in question might be to see them as a consolidation of musical processes which were already, and separately, well under way before the Selimian era. The various Sufi orders and schools differed in many aspects, but Naqhsibandis and Mevlevîs were united in their emphasis on the need to practice rememberance of Allah (called dhkir). Unlike some Sufi schools which primarily used silent meditation, in Naqshibandî and Mevlevî gatherings they shared not only stories, dreamwork and poetry, but also practiced certain techniques (or meditations), such as breathing, sound, music and movement, including whirling and dance, that prepared the way for or led one to the multi-layered transformative soul journey.\textsuperscript{55} Although the Naqshibandis and Mevlevî scholars attended their respective circles and though their emphases differed, these scholars envisaged spiritual reform on a grand scale, as a moral response to cultural disintegration.

It is essential to acknowledge that this consolidation rested on a new kind of patronage, by a horizontally diverse and upwardly mobile elite, including even the higher members of the religious class (ulema) who were among the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi and Mevlevî members of the reform party, and replacing the musical patronage of the court. As the artists, poets and musicians promoted by religious

\textsuperscript{53} Feldman: \textit{Music of the Ottoman Court}, p. 502.
\textsuperscript{54} Petros Tabouris: \textit{Mismaiya: Masterpieces of the First Greek Songs (17th–19th Century A.D.).} Athens: F. M. Records, s.a. (CD recording and text).
\textsuperscript{55} Ziad: “Poetry, Music and the Muhammadî Path, pp. 345–376.
scholars were integrated within the new elite of the Ottoman capital, significant
cultural barriers between the court and the households of the military-bureaucratic
class and the religious establishment broke down.\textsuperscript{56} There arose not only a new
urban cosmopolitanism in the capital, but also a new country life flourishing on its
waterfronts, as well as a conspicuous consumption and sociability which became
part and parcel of this new lifestyle, freed from the manners and mannerisms of the
congested historical peninsula. Of all this there is a lot that remains unexplored.
Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that the patronage of this new urban and urbane
elite marginalized the predominantly Persianate court musicians and put a high
premium on more local music-making. Of course, ‘local’ in the context of the
Ottoman capital is a concept that is yet to be elaborated. Being able to define
‘localities in the capital’, such as the Pera, the Bosphorus or the Golden Horn, and
breaking them down to their respective sections of coastline, or considering even
distant villages as geographic and cultural localities, might help answer questions
such as how the local cultures and societies of Istanbul compared with one another.
In other words, what presence did elite Istanbulite or imperial culture and society
have in various localities at different points in time?

**HOW FAR, HOW LOCAL WAS THE IMAGERY?**

Music can surely be an important factor in delineating a locality, that is to say
either a district and/or a community, for it is most emphatically a social and
collective process. The important role the Mevlevî order played in the proliferation
of musical principles, rhythmic and modal structures, compositional forms and
musical genres, was because of their receptiveness to incorporating music and
dance into their daily routines. Their openness to the ‘others’, perhaps intensified
as a consequence of the political preferences of the şeyh families taking a stance
against the central administration of the Mevlevî order in Konya, offers important
clues about the late eighteenth-century social transformation that they became
part and parcel of. In turn, they continue to receive an unparalleled attention
from musicologists today.

In the absence of such an obvious link to the (worldly and other-worldly) mental
structures of a community or an individual, studies of Ottoman visual culture,
whether architectural or pictorial, have come to neglect the political, cultural and
spiritual world of artists and patrons alike.\textsuperscript{57} Hence, all change and development

\textsuperscript{56} Feldman: *Music of the Ottoman Court*, p. 23, cited after Madeleine Zilfi: *The Politics of Piety: The

\textsuperscript{57} The singular exception is the work of Baha Tanman. In addition to his numerous studies on the
architecture of convents, he has also written on Sufi painting. Cf. Baha Tanman: “Merzifon,
Kara Mustafa Paşa Camii Şadırvanının Kubbesinde Zileli Emin’in Yarattığı ‘Osmanlı Dünyası’
have come to be explained by the impact of external factors. Resting on the “westernization in the Tulip Age” paradigm, the interpretation of the eighteenth-century novelties in painting such as increased attention to the detail, the portrayal of the new perspectives and attitudes of the society, the expressions and reactions of people from all strata, experiments in techniques, experiments in taboos, both unthinkable and unmentionable, has been attributed to times when “the empire opened up to the West for the first time” or when “the Ottoman palace entered into conscious communication with the European countries for the first time”. 58

All this and other ways of transformation, however, were more likely to have been the result of the changing patronage patterns and the emergence of alternative career lines for the artists and architects that seem to have started much earlier in the beginnings of the seventeenth century. 59

From the early eighteenth century onwards, new subject matters emerged and found favour, including genre scenes dominated by women, as well as nudes and other erotica. 60 A popular group of sensual women’s portraits from the end
of the eighteenth century presents an enigma and may perhaps be the product of a major painting workshop in Istanbul, independent of the court. The lead artist that epitomizes this school of painting is best known for his representation of the Sa’dâbâd, the timber palace surrounded by the royal park located at the far end of the Golden Horn. This crowded scene, teeming with courtly ladies, was included, along with an entire portrait gallery, in the illustrations for the Hûbannâme (‘Book of beautiful man’) and Zenannâme (‘Book of beautiful women’), the only complete copy of the famous mesnevî that Enderunlu Fâzîl wrote in praise of the most beautiful men and women of the world. There are many illustrated copies of these ‘Books of Beauties’, though usually comprising separate parts for men and women. In the face of the keenness of art historians to censure all

in: Defter, 20, 1993, pp. 91–115. The miniatures of TSM Library (R. 816) (1728) are attributed to a certain Nakkaş Ibrahim, the artist who illustrated the second copy of the celebrated Surnâme-i Vehbi, dedicated to Ibrahim Paşa. The miniatures of the Hamse at Baltimore Walters Art Gallery (W. 666) (1721) feature another artist who remains unknown. His works have been detected in single pages (a women’s gathering on the Bosphorus and Beşiktaş Mevlevîhanesi), also at the Philadelphia Free Library. Cf. Serpil Başçı, Filiz Çağman, Günsel Renda, and Zeren Tanındı (eds.): Osmanlı Resim Sanatı. Istanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2007, pp. 268–271. Hamse miniatures depict often sensual material, ranging from bestiality to fornication, and socially accepted and unaccepted forms homosexuality, but never ever tender or dreamy love scenes. Art historians largely dismiss these miniatures altogether because their subject matter is not princely and none of them seems to have been illustrated by artists belonging to the palace workshop, represented foremost by Levnî, the last prolific artist to work in the classical tradition. In a manner different than his tutor Musavvir Hüseyin’s sexy women, Levnî and his successors seem to have also concentrated on women’s portraits, which created a space for depictions of the works of Musavvir Hüseyin and their East-West context. Cf. Majer, Hans-Georg: ”Works of Musavvir Hüseyin and Their East-West Context”, in: Art turc/Turkish Art: 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, Genève 17–23 Septembre 1995, ed. François Déroche, Charles Genequand, Günsel Renda, and Michael Rogers. Geneva: Fondation Max van Berchem et Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Genève, 1999, pp. 463–471. – Gül İrepoğlu: Levnî: Painting, Poetry, Colour. Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1999.


62 Istanbul, Istanbul University Library (TY 5502) (1793).

things naughty and disreputable in Ottoman miniature painting, it has fallen to a literary historian to point to the overt sexuality of the women in these paintings. Arguing for parallels between these illustrations and the radically innovative *apertura* of Nedîm and his followers, Kemal Silay has noted that the *Zenânnâme* “provides stunning evidence of a new openness concerning sexuality or at least nudity in the arts of the Ottoman aristocracy.” Delightful women from all over the world, from Anatolia to Algeria, from India to the Americas, are depicted in local costume. When it comes to the women of the Ottoman capital, the nipples are always emphasized even when they are fully clothed. As Kemal Silay says:

> In a society with a dominant Islamic culture like that of the Ottoman Empire, where representation of the human figure itself was restricted, [...] the unveiling of the female breast in painting was pivotal and marked a concerted effort towards weakening religious restrictions upon artistic creativity.

While the production and consumption of princely albums in the late eighteenth century that had sexy women as their subject matter had always been an exclusive domain, in contrast, poetry as flagrant as Fâzîl Enderûnî’s had always been much more widespread and commonplace – though Şanîzâde Mehmed Ataullah Efendi, one of the most enlightened intellectuals in Selim III’s retinue and a supporter of the reforms, found the language (the content) of the poet unacceptable (*lisanına perhizsiz* and *bi-perva*). Furthermore, there are clues here and there that paintings in this vein, too, were no longer restricted to small elite circles. Thus, even more daring work by the painter (or painters of a prominent artistic school) of the *Hûbannâme* and *Zenannâme* is found illustrating an Ottoman pornographic album.
(bahnâme).\textsuperscript{69} Depicting a series of sex fantasies, probably set in a Pera brothel, the artist chose to represent the young men involved wearing their characteristic, identifying headgear, ranging from the red berets of the Nizâm-ı Cedid, or the turbans typical of various period bureaucrats (certainly including Naqshi-Mujaddidis), to those of the Sufi orders – most notably the Mevlevîs.

A veritable mine of information, a treasure trove for research on the interior decoration of the 1790s if for nothing else, the miniatures of the bahnâme in question depict scandalous women from Istanbul, dressed or nude, who are strikingly similar to the women in the Zenannâme.\textsuperscript{70} Furthermore, a miniature costume album of single-figure studies from the 1790s (with French titles) features many ladies that strongly resemble the loose women of the bahnâme.\textsuperscript{71} Likewise, many of the women’s portraits in the three volumes of Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson’s (1740–1807) Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman (published in Paris in 1787, 1790 and 1820) were modelled on the portraits of the same artist or artists from the very same school.\textsuperscript{72} However, other portrait albums of the period by contemporary artists, possibly by native Greeks or Armenians, such as the one presented to the


king of Poland in 1781, or another variously signed by Konstantin (Kapıdağlı), Rafail, and Istrati, display different painterly styles. Thus Kapıdağlı, apparently “a Greek peasant in Istanbul who displayed such proofs of natural talent as to induce the emperor to patronize him”, stands out as an eminent artist with a distinct style, suggesting training in a European institution. His several portraits of Selim III as well as his paintings in the church of Demetrius (in Kurtuluş, Istanbul) have all been identified. It is no surprise to find such locals and Europeans mingling in the artistic circles of the time – hence terms like “painters of Galata or the Bosphorus”.

It is also intriguing to encounter more work of the artists in these circles in unconventional media. There are, for example, four large lacquered panels that are a rendering in toto of a costume album; depicted on these panels are several portraits of court women. While the aforementioned bahnâme was intended to be consumed in private, the courtly ladies on these lacquered panels, together with the court personages and some commoners, were intended for wall displays. It is also noteworthy that this particular artist painted at least three albums of sultans’ portraits.

The technical jump to gouache-tempera by the mid eighteenth century can be attributed to the presence of just such a group of artists with academic training in European art institutions. D’Ohsson, a native of Istanbul associated with diplomatic circles in France and Sweden, collected many art works in the Ottoman capital over the course of ten years, including paintings by Konstantin

78 Private collection, Istanbul.
Kapıdağlı (Konstantinos Kyzikos), Jean-Baptiste Hilair (1753–1822), and Louis-François Cassas (1726–1827). Finally, 223 of them were included as engravings in d’Ohsson’s monumental project. D’Ohsson himself was a devout supporter of the Ottoman reforms led by the Naqšši-Mujaddidi-Mevlevi political party and he must have felt quite at home in Paris, in a cultural milieu in which “political philosophy, libel and pornography merged to undermine the French Monarchy.”

Today, several paintings originally in d’Ohsson’s collection, on which the engravings of the Tableau général were based, have been identified in European collections; hence the possibility that there once existed more paintings of this particular school in Istanbul, perhaps including those of the unthinkable and unmentionable kinds. The infrequency with which such miniatures turn up in the palace collections, however, suggests that in the inhospitable atmosphere of the aftermath of the 1807 revolt, these were proscribed by fanatical puritans—or even by the owners themselves, who might have sensed and been intimidated by a growing hostility for figurative painting in the first half of the nineteenth century (which is a subject for future study). Such genre painting has survived mostly in the form of single pages, which, being very rare, mostly circulate between private collections, surfacing only sporadically for auctions. This makes it extremely difficult for them to be collectively subjected to scholarly analysis.

Another clue towards the popularity of Ottoman female erotica comes from a rather distant artistic realm. Meissen porcelain, which was very popular among royal women in Selimian times, incorporated similar themes for decorative ware that targeted non-Ottoman markets. It has been suggested that the models for the Meissen nudes in neo-classical style were developed from paintings such as Abdullah Buhari’s Baigneuse (and in turn, these Meissen portraits of oriental women inspired Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s [1780–1867] famous Odalisque).


81 Carter Vaughn Findley: “Writer and Subject, Self and Other: Mouradgea d’Ohsson and His Tableau général de l’Empire Ottoman”, in: Theolin et al.: The Torch of the Empire, p. 28.

But it would seem that the talented artists in the Meissen workshops, who were usually working from engravings such as those by Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737), had access to more contemporary renderings of Ottoman nudes that were available in the market. Towards the end of the eighteenth century illustrations of nude females appeared also as constellations in astrological treatises. A case in point is an illustrated copy of the translation of *İqd al-Juman fi Ta’rikh Ahl al-Zaman* (‘A pearl necklace of the contemporary history’, 1747), a Mamluk encyclopaedic work. These plump nudes, too, diverged drastically from earlier depictions of constellations, as they were based on the illustrations of Western European astronomical atlases. Not only the daring figures but the artistry in the delineation of volume, shadow, and *chiaroscuro* is a novel attitude.⁸³

At the same time, we have to remember that even though some patrons might have distanced themselves from figural representation, there were still efforts to behave in a princely way, hence the depictions of the sultans’ personal traits and heroic deeds. D’Ohsson’s presentation of a large genealogical tree of all the Ottoman sultans, based on the palace collection, to Selim III, and of its smaller copies to various dignitaries, is said to have created a sensation at the court. D’Ohsson had seen these portraits in 1770 and had had them secretly copied. Similar efforts continued well into the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, d’Ohsson was also keen to describe the difficulties he encountered “because Ottomans, other than sultans, would not allow their portraits to be painted”.⁸⁴

Did Mevleviş, known to have allowed, even promoted pictorial representation in the past,⁸⁵ play a role in this proliferation of representations of informal settings and private lives? Maybe. Was inter-confessional or inter-communal strife over figural painting escalating in this period? So it would seem. Were painters in touch with poets, architects, intellectuals? Doubtless. But these are only so many probabilities, and it would be untimely to talk about an opening up of society in the absence of properly research-based answers to such questions. At least until then, our understanding will continue to be riddled by ambiguities. Thus on the one hand, the tastes of the high elite clearly underwent an eclectic proliferation. But also, as reflected in Şanizâde’s Ataullah’s reaction to Fâzıl Enderunî’s explicit transgressions, there were always limits to the toleration of the ‘other’, even for sexuality in an all-male court society. There could have been political limits, too,

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to acceptance. It is not easy to read the power relations of Selimian times in terms of a clash between two diametrically opposite groups. More fundamentally, it does not seem possible to identify the contending sides as monolithic, whether in class or corporate terms. Rather, upon closer examination the so-called reformists and anti-reformists dissolve into heterogenous groups of composites. We have seen that Mevlevîsm, the spiritual garb that the cultural elite of the Ottomans felt most comfortable in, was at least politically allied to the high elite of the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi order at the turn of the nineteenth century. Both were supporters of the *Nizâm-ı Cedid* reforms (and were at odds with social groups fed by Bektashi ideology). However, there were other factors making for differences between them as well as between other power groups. Furthermore, there were many influential individuals holding on to a variety of personal dynamics, such as blood relations, patron-client networks, professional identities, secret religious affiliations, and other loyalties or antagonisms. They were all in search of opportunities for forming temporary coalitions which would work to the best of their interests. Some among them may have pushed the customary cultural horizons of the Ottoman elite to their limits.

**INDIVIDUALS AND PARTIES, LOYALTIES AND ANTAGONISMS**

Two cases in point are the very persons of Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson and Antoine Ignace Melling (1763–1831). The former was born in Istanbul to a Catholic Armenian-Levantine family originally from Izmir. He rose to become chief translator at the Swedish Embassy. Eventually appointed ambassador of Sweden in the Ottoman capital, he busied himself throughout the rest of his career with promoting the Ottoman sultan in Europe as an embodiment of ‘enlightened despotism’. D’Ohsson was married to the daughter of a Catholic Armenian banker (a client of the grand vizier Ragîb Mehmed Paşa, also a Naqsh-Mujaddidi), who had lost his fortune in 1763 and regained it in 1774 (at the time of the marriage). As the treasurer of the *waqf* of the Holy Cities, d’Ohsson’s father-in-law seems to have been well connected with the palace. D’Ohsson’s own large-scale ventures, revolving around Ottoman military procurements, enabled him to grow wealthy and powerful. He managed to amass, and to trade in, large amounts of luxury goods and works of art. He is likely to have been a Freemason. As one modern historian concludes, “Mouradgea was at home in the cosmopolitan cultures of both the francophone Enlightenment and the Ottoman imperial synthesis”. But

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86 Findley: “Writer and Subject, Self and Other”.
As for the latter, Antoine Ignace Melling was a native of Karlsruhe, a painter, architect and voyager who lived in Istanbul for eighteen years. Following his professional training, Melling had joined the Russian ambassador’s household and retinue with the aim of drawing pictures for various dignitaries, and had arrived in the Ottoman capital after visiting Italy and Egypt. The multi-talented artist then caught the attention of Ottoman royalty while working for the Danish ambassador Baron Hübsch. He spent nearly twenty years in Istanbul, designing and furnishing palaces, and planning gardens and kiosks exclusively for the sultan and his sisters. Throughout that time Melling remained a foreigner although he eventually married an Istanbuliote Levantine, and even learned some Turkish – enough to communicate in writing with his patron, Hatice Sultan, one of Selim III’s half-sisters. For her part, Hatice Sultan, too, made some effort to communicate with him by learning the Latin alphabet. The artist-architect fell out of favour rather unexpectedly as a result of the plotting and scheming of Hatice Sultan’s palace officials, whom he seems to have irritated, perhaps because of his apparent intimacy with the princess. In the end, Melling fled without even receiving his due payments, and his persistent letters to the sultan did not help him collect them. He had fallen out of favour for good even though he was one of the most talented artists in the Ottoman capital at that time. So when he returned to France, he easily recast himself as a landscape painter to the Empress Joséphine (1763–1814). His most influential work was published over 1809–1819 as *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore*. While the first thirteen livraisons of Melling’s *Voyage pittoresque* were published two decades after the first volume of d’Ohsson’s *Tableau général* (1787, 1790, 1820), in a broader way they overlapped in time since both works were completed a decade after the death of Selim III (1808). Certainly these two were not the only two marginal individuals in Istanbul who were going back and forth across cultural frontiers; there have been many more.

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89 Istanbul, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, HAT (176/7696 (29 Z 1213)): This statement was made on the occasion of d’Ohsson’s demand of the salaries of the Swedish architect-officer and other Swedes working on the construction of a ship in Rhodes so that they would return. The resentment was such that the sultan continued to say that the ambassador’s dismissal should be asked from the Swedish government by way of İbrahim Efendi in Vienna.

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both foreigners and locals, though not of the calibre or stature of a diplomatic agent or an architect-cum-designer for a Francophile monarch.91 As far as we know, d’Ohsson and Melling never crossed paths, and that also tells us something significant about the scope and vigour of Istanbul’s artistic milieu at the time.92

Equally vigorous were the artists in the provinces. A contemporary compilation of Ottoman erotica, containing a translation of Rujū’ al-Shaykh ilā Shiḥāh ʿalā al-Bāḥ (‘Return of the old man to youth through the power of sex’), as well as Enderunlu Fâzîl Bey’s provocative poems Zenannâme, Hûbannâme, and Çenginâme (‘Book of dancers’), and Sünbülzâde Vehbi’s equally erotic Şevkengîz (‘Ardor-inducing’), is a case in point.93 It was illustrated with eighty-five miniatures, including a few non-erotic genre scenes. It is interesting that while the erotic ones, displaying a novel iconography, remain unique to the manuscript in question, the few genre scenes were repeated in various other manuscripts illustrating the Zenannâme and Hûbannâme. The colophon is dated 1817. However, it also gives the date of the translation from Arabic into Ottoman Turkish as 1773, and one of the full-page miniatures bears the date 1799. All of this suggests that the manuscript took several years to complete. Furthermore, the colophon notes that (some part of) the manuscript was translated in Shumen, an important center of book production in the eighteenth century.94 It is noteworthy that the interiors depicted in these miniatures are quite different than those equally luxurious homes or brothels of the capital and the men’s costumes strongly suggest a Balkan provenance. The women, however, look like fashionably chic late-eighteenth century Istanbulites. Unlike the poets, the artists of the miniatures and the patron remain anonymous.

The late eighteenth century economic expansion, fostered by the rise of local, regional, and trans-imperial trade with the proliferation of the merchant networks operating within the Ottoman realm and beyond, allowed the provincial

91 “Documentary evidence of d’Ohsson’s participation in Selim’s diplomacy is lacking: yet d’Ohsson’s writing shows that the ills he expected his ‘enlightened sultan’ to overcome were precisely those then targeted by Ottoman reformers”, Findley: “Writer and Subject, Self and Other”, p. 46.
92 By 1809 Melling had set up an engraving studio for the purpose of reproducing completed images of his drawings. A series of facsimiles were sent out to subscribers between 1809 and 1819.
notables a new life style and poets, calligraphers, artists and architects found new opportunities under their patronage. The commercial elite of the major cities such as Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo, but also those of the smaller towns in the Balkans, the Mediterranean littoral or in central Anatolia (like Ambelakia, Iraklion, Yozgat, Tokat or Kayseri) shared a common taste for wall decorations. Even a notable family in a remote and isolated town on the Datça peninsula commissioned public and private buildings and employed decorators to embellish their mansion(s) with murals. Usually landscapes, fruits and flowers, or musical instruments were depicted. Later in the nineteenth century clock towers, carriages, or even trains, all symbols of a modernizing urban life, found expression on the public and private walls and domes. While the religious or cultural affiliations were often not expressed through their choice of decorative themes, some of these provincial patrons, even though they had established links with the capital, afforded not to be part of the imperial hierarchies.

**Westernization and Modernization: An Organizational Reform in Ottoman Architecture**

By way of another orthodoxy, it has also been contended that the early eighteenth-century Ottoman diplomatic missions to the West returned home with impressions of European architectural styles, and facilitated the absorption of elements of the vocabulary of the European baroque into the Ottoman architectural repertoire. This interpretation is based solely on the analysis of the formal features of late eighteenth-century architecture, which has not survived except for mosques and some other public, monumental buildings. Another line of interpretation suggests that the so-called Ottoman Baroque represented a recognition of the military, technical and economic achievements of the European empires. The model thereby designed at the centre, it is further argued, was so powerful that it was not lost on up-and-coming Ottoman provincial leaders seeking to express their independent achievements and power. Hence the impressive architectural patronage of local magnates such as the Aydınoğulları, Karaosmanoğlu, Çapanoğlu or the İshak Paşaazades.

The Russian war of 1768–1774 required the sultan to cut down on all other expenses, and to resort to the treasury only sparingly. Nevertheless, Mustafa III’s (1717–1774, r.1757–1774) not very short reign saw numerous other ventures in Istanbul including socio-religious complexes (Laleli Mosque, 1764; Fatih Mosque, 1767–1771; Zeynep Sultan Mosque, 1769); but unfortunately, other ambitious projects such as the Suez Canal did not materialize. When he died in 1774, he was not followed by his son Selim, then only thirteen years old, but by his brother (Abdülmehit I, r.1774–1789).
After the disastrous conclusion of the war of 1768–1774, Abdülhamid I also felt threatened by Russia throughout his reign. Ironically, it was immediately after the actual signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 that the sultan embarked on architectural projects in the capital. Also at this time, more and more Europeans who were in Istanbul in this or that (frequently minor) technical capacity (such as shipbuilding) were being co-opted into construction work seemingly on the spur of the moment, while the office of the chief of the Corps of Royal Architects gradually assumed more of an umbrella or a rubber-stamping role. In 1775, for example, someone (perhaps an architect) in the retinue of Baron François de Tott (1733–1793) – a French aristocrat of Hungarian origin and military officer who was involved in the Ottoman military reform and was busy drilling the artillery at Kağıthane – was given the task to build a room at the Sa’dâbâd palatial complex under the supervision of the said chief architect. The Russian annexation of the Crimea in 1783, and the outbreak of yet another war with both Austria and Russia in 1787, led to a despondent mood. While a wealth of documentation awaits to be studied, it is understood that a great number of military officers and experts, mostly French, kept arriving in Istanbul between 1783–1789. Then the French Revolution interrupted this constant flow, and the Ottomans turned to England, Sweden, and Venice for naval architects to complete their galleons under construction. Because of the financial dire straits, the ruling elite was
encouraged to help in the construction and repair of fortresses and other public structures. In 1784 Grand Admiral Cezayirli Hasan Paşa commissioned the new Naval Barracks (*Kalyoncu Kışla*) in Kasımpaşa and paid for it out of his personal funds. This was in stark contrast to the practices of the ‘Classical Age’, when military engineering (fortifications, city walls, arsenals, cannon-founding) had never been entrusted to individuals, though it was common for a whole range of public construction, ranging from socio-religious complexes (mosques, *medreses*, lesser religious schools, libraries, soup kitchens, and hospitals) through commercial establishments (khans, caravanserais, shops, mills, and *bedestens*) to public works (*hammams*, fountains, water channels, aqueducts, bridges, and thoroughfares) to be delegated for construction and maintenance to pious foundations.

Altogether Abdülhamid I was connected to four royal mosques. One, built in the name of the sultan’s mother Rabia, is at Beylerbeyi (1778), while another is the Unkapanı mosque of Şebsefa Kadın (1787), his favourite consort. To commemorate his own name, Abdülhamid I commissioned another complex at Bahçekapı (1776–1780), at the centre of which was not a mosque but a *medrese*. In contrast to the Beylerbeyi mosque, the fourth mosque at Emirgân, built in the names of Abdülhamid I’s young Prince Mehmed and his mother Hümaşah (1781), is quite unassuming. As reflected in Abdülhamid I’s Topkapı Palace bed chamber, novelty and opulence were sought only in the daily trappings of intimate lives.

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The war of 1787–1789, too, ended unfavourably for the Ottomans, and Abdülhamid I died heartbroken, vacating the throne for Selim III, who was twenty-eight at the time. The young sultan reinforced the military ordinances introduced by his father Mustafa III, and after concluding the treaties of Sistova (Svishtov, 1791) and Jassy (Iaşi, 1792), embarked on the Nizâm-ı Cedid. For the new army in the making, new military schools and new military barracks were built, all of an unprecedentedly monumental scale and style. Thus in a way, the reforms were stamped on the face of the imperial capital. The need for technical personnel made itself felt yet again, particularly in recruiting the architects and engineers who would be employed in shipbuilding. When d’Ohsson returned to Istanbul from Vienna in 1792, he was accompanied by two English naval architects. He also helped to procure such experts from Sweden. Both the School of Engineering at the Arsenal (Hendese Odası or Mühendishane-i Tersane), established in 1773–1776, and the New School of Engineering (Mühendishâne-i Cedide), founded in 1793, were reorganized in 1806 upon proposals and recommendations once more provided by d’Ohsson. The former then became the Imperial School of Naval Engineering (Mühendishâne-i Bahr-i Hümayun), while the latter came to be called the Imperial School of Military Engineering (Mühendishâne-i Berri-i Hümayun). It is noteworthy that in 1794, the sultan wrote to his grand vizier,

‘I arrived at Kağıdhane; the buildings are strange. Due attention is not being paid to state buildings. I saw the Hasköy Barracks. It is built in the style of an ordinary timber mansion. I, however, had ordered it to be built like the Arsenal Barracks.’

After a few more complaints about things that had not been done or were incomplete, he continued:

100 Baron de Tott was the most important assistant of Mustafa III during the military reformations which included incorporating the fixing of bayonets to the rifles, establishing new artillery, and opening maritime and artillery academies where he made obligatory that even the older soldiers be educated.


‘Tell the Reis Efendi to continue to watch out for engineers, architects and officers from France: he should recruit architects, our fortresses lack engineers; this won’t do.’

On the same day, which was July 28, 1794, he also wrote that he had approved of the drawings for the bastions and fortifications on the Anatolian and Rumelian shores, and ordered the building supervisors to join François Kauffer and the royal architects in visiting the construction sites. Only the naval architects were listed in the payrolls. Clearly, they were part and parcel of these projects that called for new forms of expression in Ottoman civil and religious architecture. But at the moment it is hard to tell just how this process was realized. European architects were working from manuals and were also cooperating with local craftsmen in translating decorative images into stone. Therefore, in addition to some movement, depth, and light and shade, some amount of exaggeration was also inevitable, and the end products were variations on both Ottoman and European forms.

As displayed in these buildings, a complete change of taste, from baroque and rococo to neoclassical and empire, marked the Ottoman capital during the reign of Selim III (1789–1807). A shift from the stately dome to the grand pitched roof became the most identifying feature of the new monumentality conceived by the sultan as fit for the new public buildings. The advisors, architects, and designers who were involved in the various stages of planning and construction – the likes of Antoine Ignace Melling – remain unknown. Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, the French ambassador over 1784–1792, was accompanied by a naval and military staff of thirty officers, including artists for whom he paid out of his own pocket. Two engineers, Kauffer and Jean-Baptiste Le Chevalier, who prepared the first accurate map of Istanbul, were also part of the French mission. But first the war of 1787–1789 and then the French Revolution jeopardized French patronage in Istanbul.

104 Ibidem: “Reis efendiye söyle, Fransa’dan mühendis mimar ve ofçiyal gözetmeye devam eylesin, mimar celbeylesin, kalelerimiz mühendissizdir, olmaz.”
In striking contrast to these new public buildings, neither the 1792 Halıcıoğlu complex of Mihrişah Sultan (including a hospice, school and fountain, as well as her tomb), nor the Eyüb Sultan mosque, finally rebuilt in 1800 after being destroyed in the 1766 earthquake, display any European features. But the Selimiye Mosque at Üsküdar (1805) epitomizes the new tastes and preferred styles of the times, and therefore is seen as an embodiment of Selim III’s westernizing vision.108 This last mosque, once drawn by Jean-Baptiste Hilair, then preserved as an engraving, attests to how the cultural historicism or revivalism that had already presented itself artistically in the mosques built during the reigns of Mustafa III and Abdülhamid I was now being enhanced by artists and architects who had been partly trained in European institutions. In other words, the architectural vocabulary of the Ottoman artistic tradition, which existed side by side with other currents, eventually led to the assimilation of various aspects of the European styles, culminating in the neo-classical and the empire idioms. The inscription band decorating the interior of the Selimiye Mosque starts with the basmala, and is followed by the Surah Al-Fatḥ (Surah 48, ‘Victory’), the Qur’anic verse which was frequently used to decorate the period mosque interiors.109 In line with the emphasis in Sufi discourse of the time on the figure of the Prophet (and the centrality of Prophetic traditions [hadith] and the Prophetic example [sunna]), the choice of this sura from the Qur’an, too, signifies a reference to the normative example of the Prophet. Since any one familiar with the Qur’an, even the illiterate, could decipher the frequently quoted verses, this was a direct message from the scholars who posited the key themes of the reform impulse. It is equally important to note that the first şeyhs of the tekke built within the Selimiye complex belonged to the Mevlevî-Mujaddidi school.110 Of course, what also needs to be added to this picture is that one of the major blows that brought both the reforms and the life of Selim III to an end is known as the Selimiye Mosque incident of 1805. It broke out at the time of the sultan’s first ceremonial Friday visit to the mosque. This is probably the first recorded case of any collective protest by the Janissaries


against the sultan’s reforms – as reflected in architectural vocabulary. It caused the ceremony to be delayed by about a month. Crucial in this regard has been the mis-identification of the architects responsible for many of these imperial projects. Traditionally they have all been attributed to the royal chief architect, Mehmed Tahir Ağa. But as already indicated, by then this had largely become a position of official approval. It is largely overlooked that behind the chief architect’s imprimatur, Simeon Kalfa was the real head architect for the Nuruosmaniye (1754) and perhaps also for the Ayazma Mosque (1757), and that Konstantin occupied the same position in the construction of the Laleli Mosque (1764), and Yani the Blind (Kör Yani) for the New Fatih Mosque (1771). Likewise, it has been suggested that Edirneli Agop Ağa could have been the architect of the Beylerbeyi Mosque (1778), while the general atmosphere of the Emirgân mosque (1781) suggests that probably its architect, too, was not a traditional functionary of the Royal Corps of Architects. Family lines were also involved. Thus the architect of the Selimiye Mosque (1805), Foti Kalfa, was the son of Simeon Kalfa, the architect of the Nuruosmaniye Mosque. Both father and son, moreover, are said to have been descended from the Komnenos dynasty of the twelfth century. The resurfacing of a major architectural element such as the tympana, characteristic of the Nuruosmaniye and Ayazma mosques, could therefore also be explained as a family preference.

For the waterfront palaces of the sultan’s half-sisters, which now played an indispensable role in displaying the dynastic presence in the capital, it was perfectly appropriate to incorporate the imposing elements of the neo-classical and empire styles (such as pediments, garlands, and Ionic and Corinthian columns) into traditional forms. Beyhan Sultan, Hatice Sultan, and Esma Sultan all emerged as passionate builders and patrons of the arts during the reign of Selim III. Although each princess led her own distinctive life, their numerous waterfront palaces along the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus were of equal grandeur, and perhaps of similar taste. Their interiors, at least, are known to have been decorated in the same manner: the few Europeans who had a chance to visit the private quarters of these palaces have all identified their decorative style as neo-classical or empire mixing with oriental. Of all these palaces, only the architect-decorator of Hatice’s waterfront palace at Deşterdarburnu on the European shore of the

Bosphorus is known: Antoine Ignace Melling, who of course was busy working on other imperial buildings, too, including especially the apartments of the sultan’s mother at the imperial summer palace at Beşiktaş. For visual accounts of these monumental timber palaces, we have to turn to numerous European engravings which were being profusely produced at the time. Melling himself included large numbers of such engravings in his own monumental project, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* (1819). He provides illustrations of the summer palaces, of Ottoman society at leisure, and of *vedute* of Istanbul and its environs.\(^{115}\)

Narrative accounts further help us to imagine the sounds of the forte-piano and the harp, accompanying French dancing, as well as of the *ney* and *tanbur*, in the gardens and spacious halls of these waterfront palaces. Bohemian chandeliers, large numbers of Meissen, Vienna or Paris porcelains, and the highest quality textiles from Lyon or London decorated the interiors, flouting all sartorial laws and all the measures against luxury consumption in a gaudy mixture of styles and materials. Contemporary tombs and fountains also display the period’s strikingly sculptural decorative features, albeit on a smaller scale. But the only surviving examples of civil architecture to exhibit the most eclectic artistic novelties of the time (apart from the furnishings) are the apartments of the sultan’s mother at the Topkapı Palace, as well as the Aynalıkavak Kiosk of 1790–1791. The Mevlevî Lodge at Galata was extensively repaired during Şeyh Galib’s time: the *semâhâne* or hall where the dervishes whirled into a trance of communion with God was rebuilt,\(^{116}\) and the cells and wooden sarcophagi were restored.\(^ {117}\) The fountain and library (of Halet Efendi) at the entrance and the tomb of Şeyh Galib in the courtyard both display a striking distance from the earlier, monumental baroque and rococo. The only element that would link the neo-classicism of the complex with the earlier taste is the flat arch of the entrance. Unfortunately, the original *tekke* at Selimiye, like many other Sufi convents of the period, has not survived. Since it is likely to have been civil architecture (palaces, mansions, houses, and convents of more perishable building materials) that was the preferred medium for conveying

\(^{115}\) Nevertheless, it is important to note Boer’s reading where she discusses how Melling’s text effectuates “a ‘French vision’ of various stereotypical characteristics related to the Orient – the absolute master, luxury, Islam and the attitude of the people – leading to the juxtaposition of the Orient and the narrator’s ‘own oace’, i.e. French society […] Hence, the *Voyage pittoresque* is hardly a pittoresque travel, but rather one that comes with guidelines for looking and interpreting.” Inge Boer: “Reading Melling’s *Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople*”, in: *Arcadia*, 38/2, 2003, pp. 287–294.

\(^{116}\) The *semâhâne* was frequently rebuilt; the structure that still stands is from 1859–1860.

the reforming mood prevailing among the upper classes, the claim that the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidi religious order became increasingly visible through their architectural patronage of tekkes remains a problem to ponder.

CONCLUSION

In the face of the widespread eclecticism of late eighteenth-century learned elites in literary or artistic matters, it does seem a bit too simplistic to attribute to this or that religious order or a single political faction the upper hand in enforcing the reforms; individuals’ loose affiliations with more than one order or faction complicate the story, and multiple allegiances tend to blur the distinctions among the numerous groups. This cuts against the overwhelming emphasis in the secondary literature on the unilateral manoeuvrings of the sultan in the capital, on his manipulations of the Mevleвиyye against the Bektashiyye, or on clear-cut definitions of the supporters and opponents of modernization. Further research into the private lives of the individuals, poets, musicians, artists or architects, some of whom seem to have challenged the dogmas on their own or acted together with those who attempted a reconciliation of competing existential philosophies, will shed more light on the canons of a conventional historiography postulating homogenous cliques, political programmes, or alliances of individuals with carrier goals.

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