FROM BYZANTION TO ISTANBUL
8000 YEARS OF A CAPITAL

June 5 ~ September 4, 2010
Sabanci University
Sakip Sabanci Museum
Istanbul

SSM SABANCI UNIVERSITY SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM

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8000 YEARS OF A CAPITAL

SABANCI UNIVERSITY SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM · JUNE 5 ~ SEPTEMBER 4, 2010

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ISTANBUL *in the* 18TH CENTURY : DAYS *of* RECONCILIATION *and* CONSOLIDATION

Tülay Artan

The capital's decline and reconstruction

FROM 1658 to 1703, the Ottoman court ruled from Edirne without ever stripping Istanbul of its status and privileges as the official capital of the empire. Apart from the need, initially perceived by Köprülü Mehmed Paşa, to keep the (young) sultan away from sedition and court intrigue, often leading to urban revolts threatening the palace and even the person of the sovereign, also figuring in this move was the urgency of cutting down the court's relatively enormous expenses in the imperial capital.

For these and other reasons, over the second half of the seventeenth century Edirne developed from a provincial outpost into a modest and self-contained court city, attracting settlement, creating outlets for charity and worship, and fostering economic growth. In contrast, Istanbul came to a standstill, its walled-in quarters entering into progressive deterioration, with many sections permanently wiped out by fires or earthquakes. The imperial projects undertaken in this period were limited to the construction of two large fortresses at the Aegean mouth of the Dardanelles (1658-59), intended to protect the capital from the Venetians who were already occupying Limni (Lemnos) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), plus the completion of a waterfront mosque complex right at the entrance to the Golden Horn (1661-65). Both were patronized by the sultan's mother, Hadice Turhan Sultan.[1]

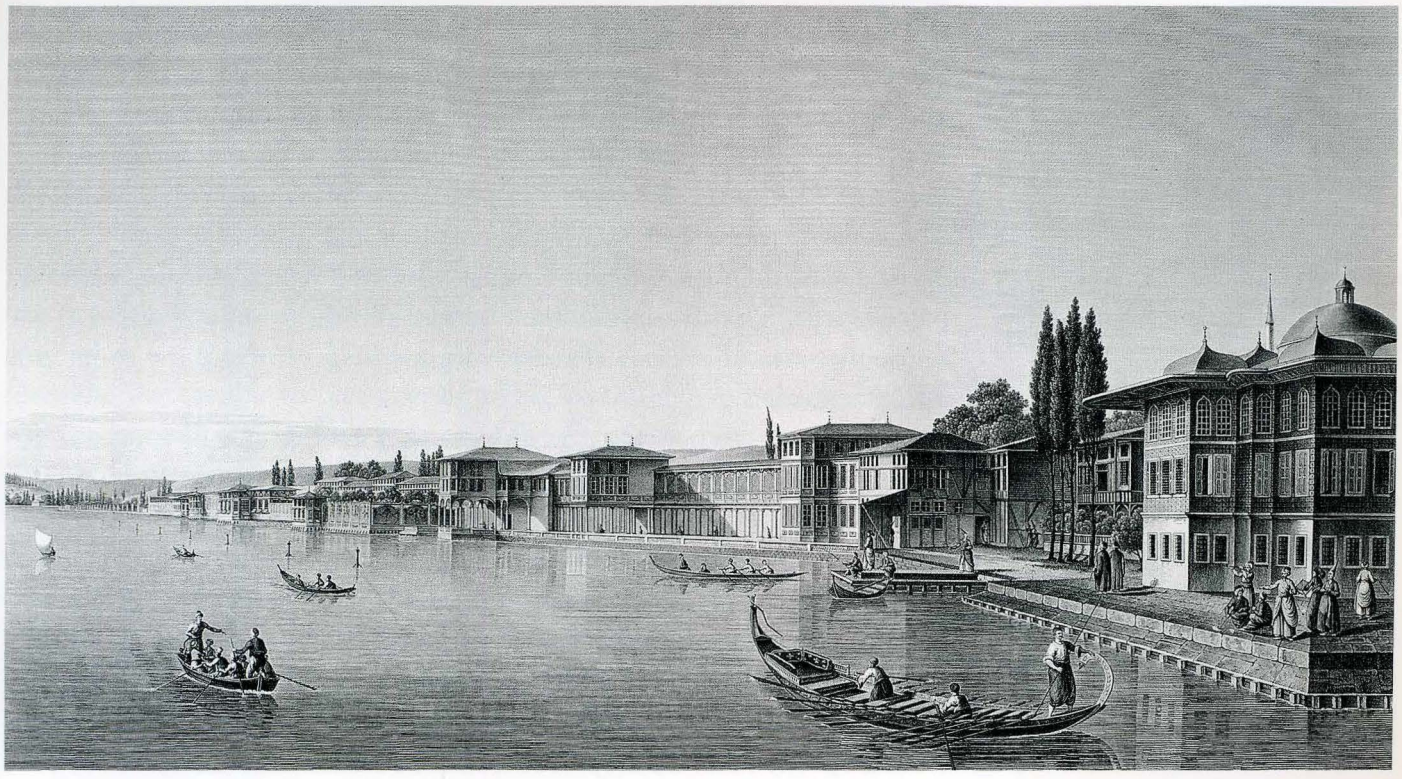
All this was during the 1648-87 reign of Mehmed IV, known as "the Hunter". Entrusting the administration to the powerful Köprülü dynasty of grand viziers, the sultan visited Istanbul only to attend some state ceremonies. Even then, he hardly ever stayed at the Topkapı Palace or at the summer palace in Beşiktaş on the European shore of the Bosphorus. In fact, most of the time he did not really enter his imperial capital but camped with the army at the Davud Paşa Palace, a hunting station outside the city walls. We know from narrative sources that huge numbers of tents, carriages, coffers, baskets or boxes, and other items were used in moving the palace folk from one city to the other. During the hunting parties, Mehmed IV and his retinue displayed lavish horse trappings as well as archers' rings, bows and arrows. Of all this, nothing has survived. Neither have the hunting lodges in the vicinity of Edirne, set out for the comfort of the sultan. There and further afield, they are known to have hunted thousands of stags; at least some of those antlers they may be supposed to have kept as trophies. All would seem to have been lost in the 1875 fire that reduced the Edirne Palace to ashes.

The Harem quarters of the Topkapı Palace had also been destroyed in a disastrous 1665 fire caused by arson, reflecting the capital's

continuing social unrest. Unlike the rest of the declining city, the royal women's apartments were immediately rebuilt. Thanks to the politically powerful, even heavy-handed Hadice Turhan Sultan, the Harem was not only enlarged and renovated, but also the two privy rooms known as the Twin Pavilions were refurbished and came to epitomize the current state of the arts.[2] Despite persisting problems in procuring polychrome tiles from Iznik, these Twin Pavilions were completely revetted with tiles, inside and outside. Also exclusively tile-revetted was the Tiled Kiosk at Beşiktaş, a magnificent new reception hall built on the waterfront of the summer palace in 1680 (fig. 1).[3]

This Tiled Kiosk, reputed to have been an awesome structure shining blue-and-white right on the water, frequently used and occasionally rebuilt throughout the eighteenth century, has also disappeared together with the palace that it was part of. But we can get a sense of what it might have been like by turning to one of the period's few architectural monuments still standing in Istanbul.[4] Built at the turn of the eighteenth century, the waterfront palace of Amcazâde Hüseyin Paşa, yet another grand vizier from the Köprülü dynasty, originally comprised both men's and women's apartments. Located at Anadoluhisarı on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, today the only surviving part of the palace is the reception hall (*divânhane*) that used to

Fig. 1 Antoine-Ignace Melling (1763-1831)
Tiled Kiosk, the Summer Palace at Beşiktaş
Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore, Paris: Didot
Topkapı Palace Library
Istanbul, Turkey



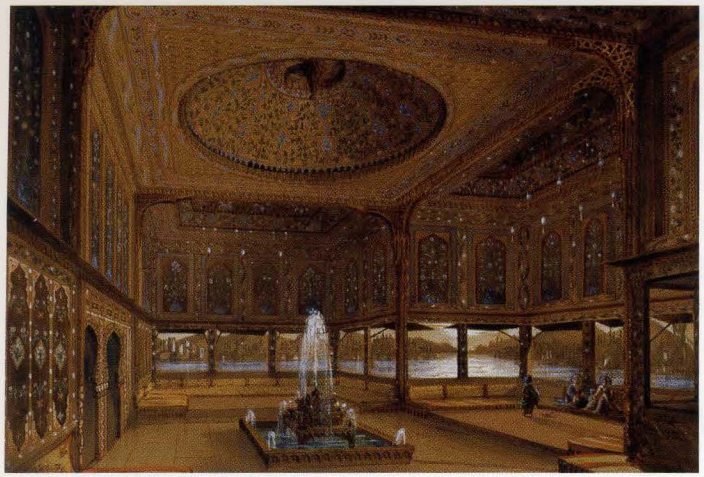


Fig. 2 Divânhane (Reception Room), Waterfront Mansion of Amcazâde Hüseyin Paşa
Anonymous
Azize Taylan Collection

belong to its men's quarters. With three projecting chambers, the kiosk is known to replicate the plan of the Tiled Kiosk at Beşiktaş. Both the exterior and the vast interior, however, were very different. On the outside, the *divanhane*'s wide windows closed with wooden shutters are typical of residential architecture in wood. The interior, too, was covered with wooden panels, all decorated with vases of flowers in bright polychrome lacquerwork, a style known as Edirnekâri. Each panel was of a different composition, and the flowers are painted in a highly naturalistic manner (fig. 2).

Re-inscribing the House of Osman into Istanbul

In the aftermath of the disastrous Vienna campaign of 1683 and the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, the Ottomans ceded most of the territories they had conquered from Hungary (after 1526) to the Habsburgs. This contraction had grim repercussions. The final blow was the bloody janissary revolt in fall 1703. Mustafa II (r. 1795-1703), deserted and humiliated, abandoned the throne to his brother Ahmed III. In accordance with the desires of the janissaries and the artisans of the capital, the court immediately returned to Istanbul. The Topkapı Palace was renovated without delay, and pavilions in the royal parks and gardens were repaired, restored or refurnished (cat. no. 398). The new Privy Room at the Topkapı Palace, built in 1705 to commemorate the reign of Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730), is known as the Fruit Room.[5] The walls of this chamber, where the sultan had his meals, are decorated with lacquered wood panels also in Edirnekârî style. Such paintings of flower vases and fruit bowls, all brighly coloured and unusually naturalistic, alternating with mirrors, transform the room into a flower garden (fig. 3).

Cat. 398 Cupboard door with painted decoration
Second half of the 18th century
Topkapı Palace Museum
Istanbul, Turkey

Displaying a new taste for things ephemeral, fragile or pleasurable, Ottoman arts were finally overcoming an earlier inertia, consisting of a perpetuity of inconsistent change and fluctuation in forms and forums of expression. Like literature, like painting, Ottoman music, too, may be said to have found a distinctive sound at this time. Its heavily Persian previous repertoire was increasingly marginalized in the course of the seventeenth century, so that by the early eighteenth century, Ottoman music had largely disassociated itself from Persian models. Consequently, Turkish poetic texts also replaced lyrics in Persian (cat. no. 428).

Fig. 3 Privy chamber of Ahmed III/Fruit Room
1705
Topkapı Palace Harem Quarters

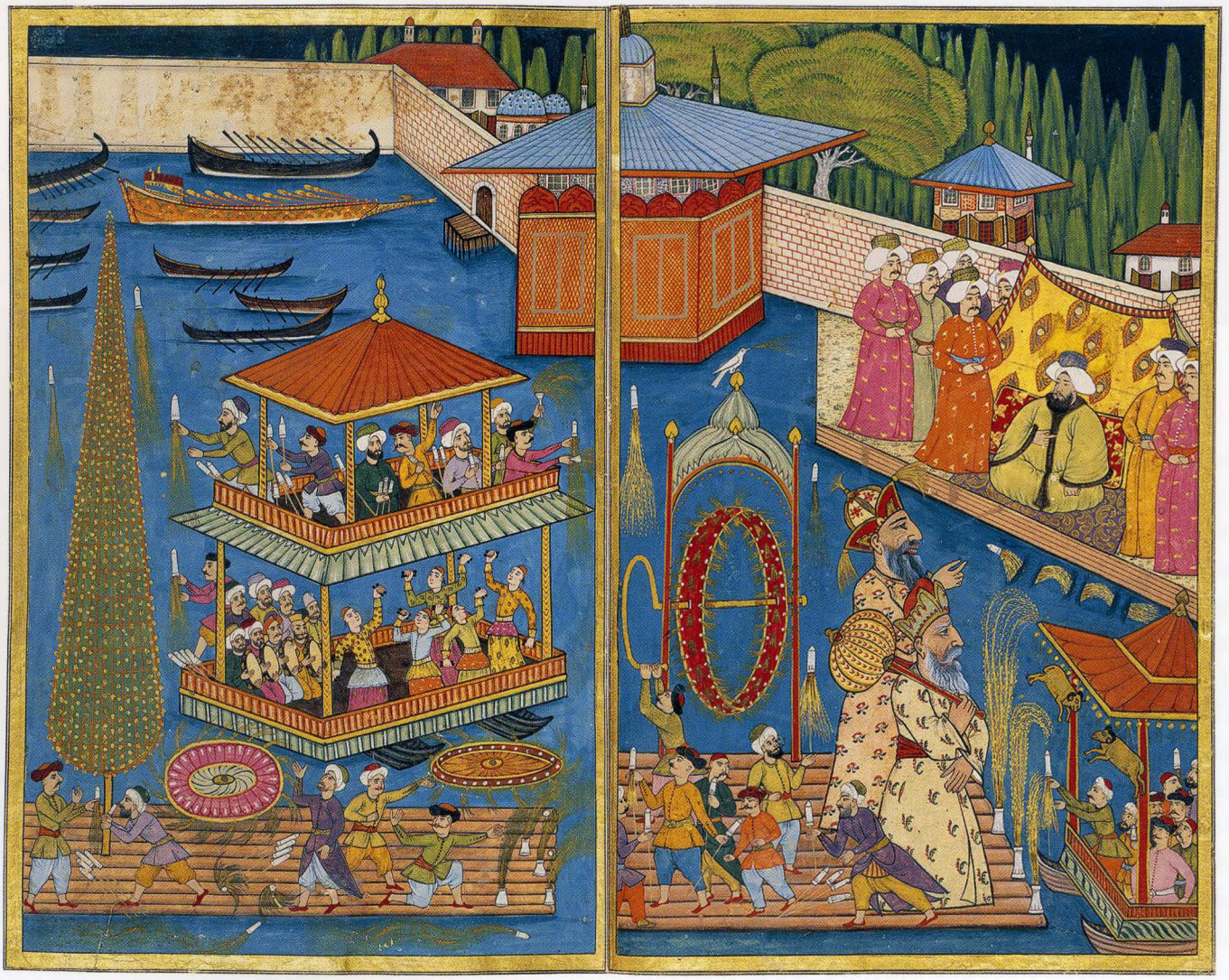
At about the same time, Ahmed III launched a series of new rites and ceremonies which, after a hiatus of half a century, were to keep the capital busy and alive. Politics in Istanbul was still tense – not only because of an emerging Russian threat on the Ottoman Black Sea frontier, but also on account of continuing internal strife. As part of an enterprise to upgrade royal rituals and reinstate them as urban ceremonies accessible to the general public, several major royal weddings were organised over the first quarter of the eighteenth century. First in 1708, and then again in 1709 and 1710, a total of four princesses were married off by the sultan. In theatrical processions moving along carefully designed routes, bridal gifts were displayed on dozens of lavishly decorated (wooden) trays. On each such tray there would be three boxes of candies covered by delicately coloured wrappers. Meanwhile, many silver trays would display the bridegrooms' gifts, including diadems, aigrets, rings, earrings, bracelets, necklaces and belts, together with jewelled mirrors, clogs and other footwear. Similarly, processions

Cat. 428 Psalms
Ali Ufki Bey (Albertus Bobovius)
1665-73
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Paris, France

transferring the brides' trousseaux from the Topkapı Palace to their eventual residences also displayed textiles, Chinese porcelains, gold-plated coffee-sets, and other household utensils made out of gold and silver, encrusted with precious stones.

In 1716, there was another military campaign against Austria, which resulted in a setback. The negotiations for the treaty that were eventually concluded at Passarowitz in July 1718 coincided with the appointment of Damad İbrahim Paşa to the grand vizierate. The atmosphere in Istanbul changed considerably in this period. After an interval of ten years, İbrahim Paşa, the sultan's favourite and son-in-law, arranged for nine more princesses to be married off in triplets in 1720, 1724, and 1728. The brides in question were the daughters of both Ahmed III and Mustafa II.[6] Also in 1720, three princes were circumcised

Fig. 4 Levnî Abdülcelil Çelebi (d. 1733)
Entertainment on the Golden Horn,
Sûrnâme-i Vehbî
Topkapı Palace Library
Istanbul, Turkey



together with sons of dignitaries (including one of the grand vizier's own), as well as hundreds of poor boys. An illustrated Festival Book that recorded circumcision festivities seems to indicate that the natural harbor of the Golden Horn was now turning into a gigantic urban "plaza", crowded by numerous waterfront palaces, piers, and boats of various kinds (fig. 4).[7]

The Byzantine Hippodrome, the single most important public arena in the Ottoman capital, was reinvented in this festive context. A new processional route going through it in circles was established for the repetitive marriage parades. Moreover, the grand vizier's routine movings through the city became a major event that drew crowds of spectators, including women and children.[8] The Byzantine Mese, now called Divanyolu, was also straightened and rebuilt as a major thoroughfare connecting the Hagia Sophia with the Adrianople Gate. A shorter leg of this ceremonial avenue (from the Hagia Sophia to Dikilitaş/Çemberlitaş) had been initially molded into an architectural project over the last decade of the sixteenth century. Then in the latter part of the seventeenth century, illustrious statesmen, including the Köprülü grand viziers (1651-1702), had competed with one another to build along this section of the Divanyolu. The second leg of this ceremonial axis, running from Beyazid to the Şehzade Mosque, became architecturally recognizable after Damad Ibrahim Paşa commissioned his own socio-religious complex on it together with a porticoed street of shops, mostly selling imported luxuries and exotica.

Waterfront palaces and their gardens

A quest for the visibility of royal grandeur seems to have coincided with Ahmed III's and İbrahim's grand design to re-assimilate the power that had begun to be accumulated by the administrative elite. The sultan and the grand vizier took the major step of allowing, indeed inciting royal women to engage in public manifestations of dynastic sovereignty on their own. A crucial factor in this regard was the delegation of the sultanic prerogative of constructing palaces in the capital to Ahmed III's daughters and nieces. The exercise of this privilege of building and maintaining palaces on the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus gave rise to an enhanced public image for the dynasty as a whole. It also changed the appearance and the functioning of the city. For these royal, quasi-royal and sub-royal edifices were in turn followed and emulated by the summer houses of a whole host of lesser dignitaries, retired jurists, and Islamic scholars plus non-Muslim merchants, goldsmiths, moneylenders or physicians who were closely connected with the court. Thus, just as the Golden Horn had proved to be an extensive urban "plaza" for stately

gatherings and processions, the Bosphorus, too, gently winding its way from one lake-like bay to another (all inhabited till then only by fishermen), evolved into a new ceremonial avenue lined with large and small palaces or kiosks (cat. no. 393).[9]

One of Lady Mary Montagu's letters, dated May 1718, refers to "some hundreds of magnificent palaces" along the Bosphorus.[10] It is understood that the building boom was well advanced even before Damad İbrahim took over; however, following the May 1719 earthquake, the grand vizier embarked on a massive rebuilding effort in the capital. Ahmed III himself patronized several new wooden palaces, including one on Seraglio Point. Simultaneously, and in contrast to the fragile but impressive waterfront palaces open to public gaze, another and far more magnificent summer palace was constructed in the countryside at the far end of the Golden Horn, in the meadows upstream from where the Sweet Waters of Europe (the Kağıdhane stream) ran into the inlet.[11] As a stage for many royal parties, often lasting several days, the Sa'dâbâd (Abode of Felicity) compound was different from those retreats in the suburban gardens and parks of bygone times when the sultans simply withdrew to seclusion so as to enhance the mystery of the kingship.[12] Here, in contrast, as the sultan encouraged his dignitaries to build their own kiosks in the vicinity of his palace, the park developed into a setting to enhance dynastic grandeur in concert with the adminisrative.

Sa'dâbâd was probably inspired by Versailles – not in terms of architectural or decorative style, but rather the relation between the king and the aristocracy that Versailles dictated. The appeal of the European cultural advances of the time, and of life at the French court in particular, as witnessed and reported by Ottoman ambassadors, appears certain to have played a role in its conception. However, the court was keen to observe traditions, too. A particular convention they cherished was about the naming of royal kiosks displaying a new taste (*nev-âbâd*). It was Murad IV, who had seen kiosks and palaces in Iran during his eastern campaigns of 1635 and 1638, who initiated the *âbâd* manner of naming Iranian-style kiosks at Kağıdhane.[13] Another eighteenth century manisfestation of the Sa'dâbâd outlook was a new kiosk called Hümayûnâbâd. Likewise, some of the contemporary palaces and kiosks on both shores of the Bosphorus were called Hüsrevâbâd, Eminâbâd, Neşedâbâd, Ferâhâbâd, Gülşenâbâd, Feyzâbâd, Hayrâbâd, Şerefâbâd and Şevketâbâd.

Following the 1730 revolt, Mahmud I ordered the demolition of dignitaries' and courtiers' kiosks at Kağıdhane in accordance with the rebels' wishes. But the royal pavilion was saved. Throughout the century,

Cat. 455 Coffeehouse in Istanbul
Miniature, late 16th century
Chester Beatty Library
Dublin, Ireland

the Sa'dâbâd palace and its gardens were restored and maintained and were frequented by the royalty. Behind the palace walls, lovers met in secret trysts, and mystics meditated in search of physical solitude.

The Sa'dâbâd was further remodelled and rebuilt during the reigns of Selim III and Mahmud II, incorporating a few more structures and accommodating the tastes of the late eighteenth century. Visual depictions from this period show the wall separating the royal domain from the rest of the park. Outside the palace gardens, people from all walks of life, including Sufîs, notably Mevlevî dervishes, soldiers of the New Order (*Nizâm-ı Cedid*), peddlers, performers (one with a monkey!) and even idle men are often represented together with many groups of women and children.[14] However, Selim III, an ardent observer of Islamic canon, continued to enforce sumptuary laws by prohibiting the use of excessively ostentatious materials or provocatively daring designs in women's clothing. He also banned the free movement of women in general. All along, prostitutes, pimps, drug addicts and the like were strictly policed. In all this Selim III was no different than his immediate predecessors.[15]

Public and private realms

It is fair to conclude that in contrast to princesses' growing symbolic visibility, outdoor life was limited for elite or non-elite Istanbuliote women through the greater part of the eighteenth century. Ultimately, late nineteenth century oil paintings and photographs begin to testify to crowds spending their leisure time sitting on lawns or in row-boats (cat. no. 472). Select royal parks were finally opening to the public, and genteel Istanbuliotes were mixing with those of lesser means. But this was not the case in the eighteenth century. In this regard it is worth noting that a miniature painting from the 1790s has been taken to represent outdoor life through the entire 1700s, and that it has thereby led to misconceptions about women's supposedly increasing participation in public life. The artist's careful portrayal of social ranks has also been largely ignored.[16]

This is not to say that there was no increased mobility in urban space. Some constraints were probably relaxed, enabling even the city's poor, as well as women, to move around.[17] The improvement of public works in the first quarter of the century is likely to have facilitated such movement – and outings. Piers were built and restored, and transportation by sea (using row-boats) was upgraded. Such piers (later, ferry stops) turned into public squares, housing barbers, baths, food shops and coffehouses (cat. no. 455). Late eighteenth century coffeehouses, remarkably spacious and luxurious when compared to

Cat. 472 Kâğıthane
Stanislas Chlebowski
1837
Istanbul Harbiye Military Museum and Cultural Complex
Istanbul, Turkey

earlier ones, were still serving as a place of social intercourse and entertainment. They also helped the formation and manipulation of public opinion. Some piers, like those at Üsküdar and Galata, also accomodated taverns and brothels. Travelers, merchants, sailors, rowers, and all kinds of riffraff used to hang around these landing places. Elite women frequenting markets and fountains around the piers of İstanbul, apparently on their way to family visits in distant neighbourhoods, are documented only in nineteenth century visual sources.[18]

Parallel to the repair or rebuilding of aqueducts and reservoirs, many fountains were also built or restored throughout this period. Two monumental, free-standing fountains commissioned by Ahmed III, one just across from the Imperial Gate of the Topkapı Palace, and the other at the Üsküdar pier, were soon going to be replicated by more free-standing fountains commissioned by royals and dignitaries alike. A semi-private kind of sociability on a neighbourhood scale was arising, helping to improve living standards especially in the newly growing Bosphorus villages. The lesser elite, too, became patrons of such fountains. At the same time, with the availability of more water, hamams and kitchens came to be housed indoors.

A few visual representations of residential architecture, coming from artists attached to the Pera embassies, show the tiled roofs of wooden houses in the densely populated quarters of Galata overlooking the Golden Horn. In contrast to findings on the sixteenth century Ottoman capital, the number of dwellings with three or more storeys seems to be already high at this time.[19] As in multi-storey wooden houses on the Bosphorus, indoor toilets, bathrooms, kitchens and pantries must have been turning quite common; furthermore, large or small gardens equipped with wells seem to have become a significant element of these houses.[20] Wooden houses required frequent maintenance and rebuilding; hence adaptations for comfort, luxury or style had to be made without any loss of time.

Life indoors meant the same routines for women of different faiths but the same economic background. Elite women spent their time in the company of other women, sewing and embroidering, indulging in music and dance, in gossip and coffee-drinking, or playing games. Weddings and childbirth were celebrated with meals, displays of gifts and trousseaus, while deaths were mourned in similar settings. The indoor attire of affluent ladies and their home furnishings, ranging from lavish cushions, carpets, hangings and spreads to small objects of daily use (such as incense-burners and braziers, coffee pots and cups, plates and vases), all of which loom large in visual depictions from the period, demonstrate a shared taste. Early in the eighteenth century, in contrast to such obvious markers of luxury and comfort, no signs of conspicuous consumption (for example, imports or exotica, such as clocks, mirrors, porcelain, chandeliers or parrots) can be seen on display in the nouveaux riches Ottoman houses. While such trifles may have become increasingly affordable for many, it seems that they were not readily available in the marketplace.[21] Even grand viziers had to turn to European ambassadors in Istanbul, pushed them to present gifts of this sort.[22]

Towards the end of the century, imposing elements of the Neo-classical and Empire styles began to be incorporated into traditional Ottoman forms. Selim III's sisters all emerged as passionate builders and patrons of the arts. For visual accounts of these imposing timber palaces, we have to turn to the period's European engravings that were being produced in large numbers. Narrative accounts further help us to imagine the sounds of the fortepiano 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 these interiors, flouting all sartorial laws and all measures against luxury consumption in a gaudy mixture of styles and

materials.[23] Erotic illustrations related to a brothel (located perhaps in Galata) in the early 1790s also reveal scores of European-style luxury goods including chairs, armchairs or cabinets.[24] In contrast to luxury consumption in the early eighteenth century (which was perhaps limited to the court circles), a marked and passionate search for comfort was much in evidence at the end of the century.

Exhaustion and the search for a new repertoire

Eventually, even the traditional Ottoman mosque was influenced by the new spirit of the eighteenth century, reflected in highly elevated mosques with soaring domes and exceedingly tall and delicate minarets.[25] The Nuruosmaniye Mosque (1755), as well as the Ayazma Mosque (1757) and Selim III's Üsküdar Mosque (1805), made repeated use of four gigantic lateral arches on their external facades – indicating perhaps a particular interpretation devised by a family of Greek architects. The last-named mosque in particular attests to how the cultural historicism or revivalism that had already presented itself artistically in mosques built during the reigns of Mustafa III and Abdülhamid I was now being enhanced by non-Muslim artists and architects who had been partly trained in European institutions. Numerous Greek, Armenian and Jewish shrines were also built or renovated in this period. No significant architectural expressiveness can be found on such churches or the synagogue exteriors.[26] The interior decorations, however, exemplify period tastes.

Towards the end of the century, for the new army in the making, new military schools and new military barracks were built – all on an unprecedentedly monumental style and scale. In this way, modernization came to be stamped on the face of the imperial capital. In striking contrast to these new public buildings, neither the 1792 Halıcıoğlu complex of the sultan's mother Mihrişah Sultan (including a hospice, school and fountain as well as her tomb), nor the Eyüb Sultan mosque, rebuilt in 1800 after being destroyed in the 1766 earthquake, display any European features.

Such diverging artistic attitudes need explanation. Despite a novel twist at the turn of the nineteenth century, entailing an increasing degree of freedom for artists from court patronage, as well as quantum jumps in individuality and self-expressiveness, the real personalities of the eminent poets, painters, architects or musicians largely remain obscure. This elusiveness seems to have allowed the contemporary arts to be construed in accordance with the prevailing characterization of the period. Thus it is that the arts, ranging from literature to music, architecture and

painting are generally accepted 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."[27]

Likewise, the political alliances of the period's Istanbuliote elite have been seen as reflections of modernity and reform. The Mevlevî connection of the reformists or modernists around Selim III has usually been counter-posed to a combined, unified identity postulated for the anti-reformists or conservatives behind (or identified with) the May 1807 Rebellion. However, the presence of members of another Sufî order, the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis, complicates this picture. Identified as allies of the sultan and pro-reform supporters of the new military organization, the Naqshbendi-Mujaddidis cultivated their Mevlevî connections. They actually represented a growing tendency towards the strengthening of Sunni Islamic orthodoxy in the Ottoman capital following the enthronement of Selim III.[28] As their name implies, the Mujaddidis were Renewers –meant in a religious and conservative sense. Hence the various confusions of modern historians about reform, based on perceptions of religious reforms and socio-political reforms as synonymous. Equally misleading is their equating "reformation" to "modernization" or "Europeanization".

Islamic reformists of the late eighteenth century adopted earlier fundamentalist tenets and turned belief in a purified, reformed Islam into political policy. Many of the uprisings in the seventeenth and eighteenth century were started by unruly artisans or merchants, who attached themselves to certain khans, hamams or tekkes, and then joined forces with janissaries, *sipahi*s, armorers, artillerymen, gunners or bandits. The masses often assembled in the Hippodrome in protest, challenging the sovereign by their very presence. Military setbacks, economic disruption, scarcity and famine in the countryside, the migration of young and single, landless but armed men to the capital, led to violent crimes by day and night, including arson, armed robbery, assault, rape, and murder, in the streets as well as in the gardens and vineyards. Even the Topkapı Palace was no longer safe for the dynasty.

Nevertheless, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the empire made several and wide-rangings attempts towards reconciliation and consolidation, Istanbul, repeatedly renewed itself and continued to offer yet another characteristic of its imperial nature.✣