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A Retreating Power: the Ottoman Approach to the West in the 18th Century

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Bu makale, onsekizinci yüzyılda, Batı'nın Osmanlı dünyasındaki değişen algılanışı üzerinedir. Karlowitz Barış Antlaşmasının (1699) imzalanmasından sonra, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun askerî gücünün azalmasıyla birlikte Osmanlı elitinin Batı dünyasına eğilimi artmıştır. Avrupa'ya giden eğitimli seyyah ve elçilerin yazdıkları seyahatnâme ve sefaretnâmeler Batı'ya yaklaşımındaki değişim üzerine ilk elden bilgi sağlamaktadır. Sefaretnâme yazımında zaman içinde farklılıkların imâ edildiği ve Batı'nın teknolojik üstünlüğünün kabul edildiği bir yaklaşım hâkim olmaya başlamıştır. Bu metinlerde ilk defâ Hristiyan ve İslâm kültürleri arasında -kapalı bir şekilde olsa da- karşılaştırmalar yapılmaya başlanmıştır. Yüzyılın sonunda, bir Osmanlı elçisi devletin istikrarının korunabilmesi için muzaffer Avrupalıların taklit edilmesini önerir. Bu yüzyılda, Osmanlı aydınının 'kayıtsızdan', 'etki altında kalana' dönüştüğünü görüyoruz. Öte yandan, elçiler bu yüzyılda da Osmanlı'nın kültürel olarak 'üstün' olduğu fikrindedir. Osmanlı devleti, Avrupa'nın askerî metotları uygulandığı, reformlar yapıldığı taktirde tekrar en güçlü devlet olacaktır. Elçiler için Batı hâlâ kendi medeniyetleri ile karşıtlık içine yerleştirdikleri 'Öteki'dir. Batılı insan ve maddî kültür Batı'nın o dönemde kullandığı 'egzotik' tanımına girecek şekilde 'yabancı' olarak görülüp dışarıdan değerlendirilmektedir. Yakın dönemde Osmanlı toplum tarihi, askerî ve ekonomik tarihi üzerine yapılan yayınlar bu yüzyıldaki 'Batı'ya açılmanın' on altı ve on yedinci yüzyıllarda çeşitli idarî değişimlerin belirlediğini ortaya koymuştur. Farklılaşan yaklaşım tarzının sadece Batı ile iletişim ve etkileşimin sonucu olmadığı, aynı zamanda Osmanlı toplumundaki iç değişimin bir ürünü olduğu belirtilmiştir. Vergi toplama biçimindeki değişim, kıtalararası ticaretin gelişimi ve askerî kurumlarda yapılan reformlar toplum sınıflarının organizasyonunu etkilemiş ve yeni grupların ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Batı ile etkileşim artık askerî gerilemenin kaçınılmaz bir sonucu olarak değil, daha geniş bir bakış açısından, 'sınıf hareketliliği' görüşü üzerine temellendirilmiş olan 'toplum dönüşümü' paradigması ile açıklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, on altıncı yüzyıldan itibaren yükselen bir 'kent ve eşraf burjuvazisi' ve yeni bir 'yönetici sınıf' grubu, bir yandan Doğu'nun görsel ve edebî geleneklerine bağlılıklarını sürdürürken, bir yandan da Batı Avrupa kökenli sanat ve mimarlık öğelerinin aktarımını sağlamıştır. İlk defâ bu dönemde, Barok ve Rokoko tasarımlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Batı Avrupa kültürü ile gittikçe artan etkileşim içinde değişen bir toplum sınıfının estetik tercihleri farklılaşmış ve Rokoko üslubu, belli bir ölçüde de olsa, resim ve mimarlık tasarımında etkili olmaya başlamıştır.

INTRODUCTION

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), wife of the British ambassador to Istanbul, Edward Wortley Montagu, lived in the city from 1716 to 1718. In a letter to the Abbé Conti, she wrote that the Turks, 'are not so unpolished as we represent them. "This true their magnificence is of a different taste from ours, and perhaps of a better. I am almost of the opinion that they have a right notion of life: they consume it in music, gardens, wine, and delicate eating, while we are tormenting our brains with some scheme of politics or studying some science to which we can never attain, or if we do, we cannot persuade people to set that value upon it we do ourselves [...]. I allow you to laugh at me for the sensual declaration that I had rather be a rich Effendi with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton with all his knowledge"¹. This restrained admiration of Turkish manners by an educated British lady at the beginning of the 18th century is an indication of the changing image of the 'Turk' in Western Europe. This revision had already started in the second half of the 17th century, when, as Ahmet Evin states, the West began to regard Turkey not as a land of barbarians but as a political entity embodying its own benefits and drawbacks². Concomitantly, Western culture gradually became a centre of attraction for the educated Turk in the East, who sought to emulate recent technological and urban growth in the West.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Studies of the Ottoman outlook and approach to the West focus mainly on embassy letters and observations on art and architecture. The former represent the viewpoint of state representatives while the latter demonstrate the influence of Western aesthetics through Baroque and Rococo elements. The travels of the envoys who recorded their eye-witness experiences have attracted an increasing number of researchers. Likewise, the attention paid to modern transliterations/translations of some of the foremost travel accounts has also increased in Turkey and abroad of late. Recent studies on the social, military and fiscal history of the Ottoman Empire have revealed that 18th century openness to the West was conditioned by 16th and 17th century adjustments in a variety of spheres. The altered approach was not only an end-product of contacts and interaction with the West, but also of social change in Ottoman society. Governmental inclinations and decrees regarding tax collecting, intercontinental trade and military institutions affected the organisation of social classes, bringing about new cadres and social groups. Rather than being viewed as an unavoidable result of military retreat, increasing interaction with the West in the 18th century is now seen from a wider perspective, in light of recent research on social transformation and mobility. This new research also illustrates the integration of forms and motifs borrowed from Western art in the 18th century. As a result, we now understand that the aesthetic preferences and choices of a rising bourgeoisie and a new group of ruling elites (who were also fond of their own Oriental visual and literary traditions) opened the gates for new Western European artistic elements. This article draws on this research in order to give an overall impression of the 18th century Ottoman approach to the West.

THE FORMATION OF A NEW CLASS

There are sociopolitical reasons for this new era of interaction. The defeat of the Ottoman army outside Vienna in 1683 began the retreat of Ottoman power in Europe. A series of defeats and disadvantageous peace treaties followed. The political conjuncture in Europe allowed for a gradual Turkish retreat from Eastern Europe which lasted almost two centuries. Rivalry among the great European powers shaped their foreign policies. The French, who were at this time seeking an eastern ally against the Habsburgs and Romanovs, turned to the Ottomans. Louis XIV had not sent troops to defend Vienna during the Ottoman siege and later refused to take part in the War of the Holy League, financed by the Pope against the Ottomans. At the end of this war, the allies – Russia, Austria, Poland and Venice – signed the Peace Treaty of Karlowitz with the Sublime Porte in 1699. Later, the Treaty of Pasarowitz (1718) strengthened the political power of the Habsburg Empire in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1719, the inauguration of the port of Trieste by Charles VI heralded Austria's economic ascendancy in the Mediterranean. Hence, one of the most important outcomes of the Second Siege of Vienna was the strengthening of the Habsburg Empire's power and the improvement of its commercial position³. In the middle of the 17th century, the Ottomans and the French signed an agreement that brought a minor three per cent customs duty to all goods imported from France⁴. In the same period, commodities produced in Ottoman lands were subject to higher tax rates. Shortly after this convention French goods invaded Ottoman bazaars. Their number increased in the second half of the 18th century. The Baroque-Rococo decorations on objects imported from France were highly significant in the creation of a new decorative style in Turkey⁵. A class of military men with higher incomes, as well as the members of the ruling class in Istanbul, were the chief consumers of the imported merchandise⁶. Meanwhile, the houses of ordinary people remained unadorned, preserving a traditional simplicity. D'Ohsson relates this to the lack of knowledge of living in foreign countries⁷. Since travelling was unsafe and risky, only merchants and official envoys could venture it⁸.

European commercial ascendancy in the Middle East brought about political and social change. Western governments started to back their respective companies in order to maintain economic dependencies in the Ottoman lands. As political power was dependent on economic power, the delegates of trade companies acquired a great deal of influence and indeed became the official representatives of their countries. The *Bâbîâli* (Sublime Porte) acknowledged their new status and started to discuss diplomatic, political, commercial and even religious issues with them⁹. Thus, the Ottoman state entered into an age of lively relationships with the West European capitals and their representatives in the East. In the second quarter of the 18th century, a new political atmosphere changed attitudes towards Western civilisation, which until then had been considered inferior. Agreements with Western governments no longer contained statements stressing the supremacy and glory of the Sultan¹⁰. As noted by Lewis, the Ottomans became aware of the fact that they were 'no longer the Empire of Islam confronting Christendom but one state among several, among whom there might be allies

as well as enemies¹¹. The waning hostility of the Westerners towards the Turks and a new Turkish approach to the Europeans opened avenues for dialogue. The accounts of French travellers contributed much to this development¹².

From the 1660s, prestigious roles opened up for Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, and conversions to Islam probably became less frequent¹³. Greeks and other minority groups resided mainly in coastal towns where intercontinental trade was intense. Traders and financiers from these and Levantine groups had been in a close relationship with Western culture. This was not only because of their commercial ties with Europeans, but also because they could access and read printed material that they had had the right to publish and circulate since the 16th century¹⁴. While Muslim merchants were concentrating on local trade¹⁵, Christians and Jews profited from intercontinental trade. In the 18th century, the latter accumulated wealth and started to pursue a European lifestyle in the major cities of the Empire. Hence, minority groups emerged as a kind of commercial bourgeoisie. The same century witnessed the appearance of a new class among Muslim subjects of the Sultan in the towns. Beginning in the second half of the 18th century, a new group of officials was trained in a Western style. This led to the Ottoman-Muslim-Turkish bureaucratic-bourgeois formation, with bureaucrats ready to become faithful instruments of administrative reform¹⁶. Together with non-Muslims, the Muslim ruling class and high officials were influential in the Westernisation of the Empire. On the other hand, the Ottoman elite's increasing western orientation caused a growing alienation of the traditional, conservative groups from the upper classes¹⁷.

In his seminal book, Abou-El-Haj emphasised that there are 'indigenous roots for internal change in Ottoman society'. In the later 16th century, population growth, the flow of American silver and the rise of raw silk and cotton prices, generated an economic crisis. The spread of tax farming and an increase in the power of the tax farmers followed this. At the very end of the 17th century, life-time tax farms, so-called *malikane*, had been given to the local ruling elite. *Malikanes* proved to be a threat to the power of central administration and the state entered into a 'process of decentralisation of power'¹⁸. In the 18th century, local dynasties were even granted large tracts of land as private property. Foreign trade also contributed to their wealth¹⁹. Thus, with the decentralisation of the Ottoman Empire, a semi-feudal aristocratic class appeared in the provinces, following the social and economic transformations that took place at the end of the 16th century. These were wealthy and powerful provincial magnates (a kind of semi-feudal aristocracy, *âyan*, *eşraf*, *aga*) who eliminated the *timariots* (fief-holder), their cavalry, traditional land use and taxation system, and became influential agents between the common people and the Sublime Porte²⁰. The state depended on them – a 'civilian oligarchy' – for internal security²¹. Hence, the 18th century witnessed the emergence of a new class, which was mainly composed of Muslim high officials, merchants from non-Muslim minority groups, Levantines in the urban centres, and local dynasties in the provinces. Abou-El-Haj connects the diminished number of pious institutions founded by the members of the Sultan's household, and the number of similar foundations augmented by the new members of the ruling elite in the 17th and 18th

centuries, to the loss of the palace's power²². The aesthetic preferences and the choices of donors from the emerging new class engaged in the design of a now much more syncretic artistic milieu. This followed the previously-dominant era of classical Ottoman art and architecture, which had been conditioned primarily by the tastes of the uppermost ranks of the Sultan's household.

CULTURAL INTERACTION

In the 18th century, like almost all European nobilities, the Ottoman ruling class fell under the charm of the French palace. According to Max Beloff, in 18th-century Europe, ceremony and outward show were so essential for monarchy that to create a Versailles was the first step towards acting like its master (for example, Frederick the Great's palace of Sanssouci)²³. Turkish-French relations strengthened throughout the 18th century, as the French language gained in popularity in intellectual circles. A contemporary Ottoman intellectual, Seyyid Mustafa, says that he dedicated himself to learning French because he thought it more efficient and universal than other languages²⁴. Of course, French at this time was in any case the vehicle of international interaction, and in many countries it was the mode of expression of polite society. When, in 1774, the Russians and the Turks negotiated the important treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, both sides used French²⁵, as did the Ottoman state in its diplomatic correspondence with the West. From the 15th to the early 20th century, among the Western words in the Ottoman-Turkish language (6,930), words of French origin predominated (71 per cent)²⁶. The first Western experts who were invited to reform the Ottoman military were of French origin. These included De Bonneval (1675-1747) who established *Hendesehane* (a school of geometry) (1734) and trained Humbaracı (*bombardier*) corps (1734). Under Mustafa III, books on astronomy were ordered from the French Academy in Paris²⁷. During Louis XVI's reign, the French ambassador to Istanbul, the comte de Vergennes, became minister of international relations, and France supported the Ottoman Empire against Austrian and Russian expansion. France contributed to military reforms through De Vergennes' secretary, Baron de Tott (1734-35), who established a new rapid-fire artillery corps, supervised the rehabilitation efforts of the Ottoman Navy, and founded a naval mathematics school (1773) and an engineering school (1776). In 1784, the comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, a member of the French Academy, came to Istanbul as the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Choiseul-Gouffier brought a team of 30 military instructors and two artists to contribute to the modernisation of the Ottoman army and navy. French teachers taught students in the new military engineering school (opened in 1783) in the same way that J. Lafitte-Clavé, Monnier and Brune taught at the navigation school. From the middle of the 16th century, the French embassy in Istanbul provided a setting from which European perceptions of the Ottoman Empire were to some extent fashioned. Diplomats, travellers, artists, designers and writers found a safe haven under its roof, especially in the 18th century. They published their works mostly in Paris and shaped the image of the Turk in Europe. Books written in French on the Ottoman Empire were more numerous than those written on America

and Russia²⁸. On the other hand, the 18th century was also a time when France's eastern policy had a Janus face. Voltaire, for instance, was turning the French public against the Ottomans and the comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, and in the introduction of his travel account on Greece, advocated the liberation of Greece from Turkish dominion²⁹. At the end of the century, public mistrust originating from this western policy governed reactions on the part of Muslim subjects to the reforms introduced by the Ottoman elite.

At the end of the century, the sisters of Selim III were sympathetic to western ideas. Hatice Sultan hired an architect from Karlsruhe, Antoine Ignace Melling, who built a palace for her private use. Sultan Selim III ordered the calendars to be organised according to Cassini's Astronomical Tables. Mahmoud Râif Efendi wrote a book in French on the reforms introduced by the Sultan (*Tableau des nouveaux réglemens de l'Empire Ottoman*, 1797). He presents the new Ottoman system (*Nizam-i cedid*) to the West as a new civilisation. On 3 November 1839 an imperial script, read by Reşid Pasha at Gülhane, initiated the era of reform called Tanzimat, which was an end product of the 17th and 18th century transformations. It was in the Tanzimat period that Western institutional forms and administrative laws began to be adopted openly.

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE ENVOYS

Marquis de Bonnac, the ambassador of France to Istanbul (1716-1724), was one of the closest European friends of Sadrazam Damat Ibrahim Pasha, prime minister of Ahmed III³⁰. He was asked to bring the plans of French palaces and gardens to Istanbul for the construction of the Sadabad Palace complex³¹. This friendship bore fruit and Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi was sent to Paris as an envoy on 7 October 1720. Marquis de Bonnac arranged the itinerary and provided a galleon for the voyage of Çelebi, who had been given the mission of restoring French-Ottoman relations after a period of dissonance during the reign of Louis XIV. He landed at Toulon and went to Paris via Toulouse, Bordeaux and Orléans. He was warmly greeted by Louis XV who accompanied him in a hunting party. Çelebi stayed in France for nine months. He was given the task of signing a pact with the French king. However, from the beginning, Çelebi also intended to collect detailed information about French civil and courtly life³². This approach signals the beginning of a new era in which Ottoman intellectuals started to probe Western culture.

In Paris, Çelebi visited palaces, gardens, plants, a medical school, a botanical garden (le Jardin du Roi), the zoo and a printing house. He twice visited the famous Paris observatory and went to an opera performance³³. During his observatory visits, Çelebi discussed astronomical matters with Cassini, the director of the observatory, and examined the modern instruments. He received a written report from Cassini and communicated this report to Ottoman astronomers³⁴. The visits of Çelebi in Paris made a great impression on the Parisian nobles. He helped dispel the legendary suspicion of the 'cruel Turk' and stimulated a fashionable interest in *turquerie*³⁵. On his return home after almost a year, Çelebi brought back gifts for the Sultan that included wigs, commodes and bot-

bles of champagne. As was reported by the ambassador of Venice, Emo, he also brought pictures and plans of French palaces and gardens³⁶. Çelebi also presented an embassy letter (*sefaret takriri*) in the form of a travel account to Sultan Ahmed III and Sadrazam Nevsehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha³⁷.

Çelebi, for the first time in the genre of Ottoman embassy reports, gives a detailed description of the daily life of the French nobles, their palaces, gardens and the ceremonies that took place there. Shortly before him, İbrahim Pasha had been sent to Vienna in 1719. In the embassy letter (*Sefaretnâme*) written by a member of Pasha's entourage, the social and cultural life of the villages, towns and fortresses they visited was only superficially described with a few words like "prosperous, has stores, abandoned"³⁸. On the other hand, Çelebi describes Saint-Cloud, Meudon, Versailles, Trianon and Marly palaces, emphasising certain characteristics of the architectural complexes he had visited. His comments concern the systematic organisation and grandeur of the gardens, the specific role played by water, the type of royal architecture created for ceremonial settings and mere entertainment, and the splendour of the buildings and furniture. Çelebi remarked especially upon the cultivation of nature in architectural settings which were specifically created for aesthetic enjoyment and royal ceremonies³⁹. However, Çelebi's conceptual tools and terminology were not adequate to give every detail of the urban milieu, palaces and gardens that he visited in France. Said Efendi, the son of Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi, accompanied his father during the travels. When he returned home, he encouraged İbrahim Müteferrika (d. 1745) to open a printing house. In 1726, with the permission of Sultan Ahmed III, Muteferrika established the first printing house and started to print a series of books in Ottoman Turkish that included historical and geographical treatises, a monograph on governmental issues, a study on magnetism, chronological tables of the Ottoman sultans, an Arabic-Ottoman dictionary and a French-Ottoman grammar book⁴⁰. In his writings, Muteferrika advises learning from Western civilisation and military order to regain success⁴¹. Twenty years later, in 1742, Mehmed Çelebi's son, Said Pasha, made a second visit. Said Pasha's visit engendered a new wave of *turquerie* in France. Shortly after this visit, the parade organised in 1748 by the students of the French Academy in Rome, was named *La Caravane du Sultan à la Mecque*⁴².

Although French customs and traditions occupy a minor place in the *Travels*, Çelebi Mehmed Efendi's text was the first and only reliable source written on contemporary life in Western Europe⁴³. Before Mehmed Efendi, traveller and romancer Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682?), had written a *Seyahatnâme* (book of travels) that included chapters dedicated to some European countries. However, Evliya never attempted to authenticate his sources of information. In 1655, the Ottoman geographer and polymath, Kâtip Celebi, wrote a book on the history of the Greeks, the Romans and the Christians. However, he relied on *Atlas Minor* and other Western sources and gives very limited historical and geographical information. The other two notable historians, Hüseyin Hezarfen (d. 1691) and Münejjimbaşî (d. 1702), like Kâtip Çelebi, based their knowledge of Europe on the same sources⁴⁴. Mehmed Efendi can therefore be regarded as the

first modern Ottoman envoy and traveller who related his knowledge on Europe from personal experience, and demonstrated control over the biases and stereotypes which limited his predecessors.

German lands such as Austria and Prussia also aroused the interest of Ottoman administrative circles. Following the death of Osman III, Ahmed Resmi Efendi was sent to Vienna in 1757-58 to announce the coronation of Mustafa III. Ahmed Resmi Efendi wrote an embassy letter on his mission to Vienna. This letter includes information on political factions in the Habsburg Empire, Maria Theresa, Frederick the Great and the city of Vienna. Later, Ahmed Resmi Efendi wrote another embassy letter during his ambassadorship in Berlin (1763-64). This report, which fastidiously gives details of the towns visited and Frederick's policies, was widely read among the upper segments of the Ottoman governing class. Virginia Aksan has studied Resmi Efendi's encounter with West-European culture. According to Aksan, Resmi Efendi's impartial observations, and occasional admiration regarding the customs of the infidels, characterises his narrative. This distinguishes the style of the report from its precursors which include insulting and despising reflections on European culture. At the end of the century, Ottoman statesmen were advising imitation of the victorious infidels in order to secure the stability of the state. However, Ahmed Resmi was still sarcastic about European society, traditions and customs⁴⁵.

In the era of Selim III (1789-1807), Ebu Bekir Ratib (1749-1799) was sent to Vienna in 1791 as an envoy of the Sultan. He brought back a detailed report not only on military and administrative establishments but also on technology and social advances, which noticeably expresses this new trend⁴⁶. He had a clear vision to observe Austrian institutions and to collect information on them. Ratib Efendi gives a detailed account of the military institutions, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the Habsburg Empire in his five-hundred-page ambassadorial report (*Layihâ*). The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the Austrian military system. It is so detailed that it even provides tables of officers' wages. The second chapter includes administrative, fiscal, economic and social institutions in Austria. He not only systematically gives detailed information on institutions, but also interprets the philosophy behind European civilisation and institutions⁴⁷. In this book, Ratib Efendi criticises the Ottoman system and praises Europe in sections on military technology, the military status of the king, taxation policy, proper customs duties, consumption habits, protectionist policies aimed at domestic industry, the power and fame enjoyed by the nobility, the material well-being of the people, employment, the idea of citizenship, art and trades, agricultural conditions, and liberty in the areas of speech, diet, drink, dress and belief⁴⁸. According to Fatih Bayram, Ratib Afendi showed an admiration for Western customs, but was proud of his own identity. He did not question the truth of the Ottoman world-view, but criticised the prevailing practices and corruption in the Ottoman state. Ratib Efendi held that Europe's material standards were high but its moral aspects were poor⁴⁹. On the whole, Ratib Efendi held a positive image of the West. In his critics of secularism and freedom of women, he was not a captive of bigotry. He regarded these latter as a way of

life and praised the freedom of citizens in general⁵⁰. In his letter (*nâme-i hümayûn*) to Leopold II, Ratib Efendi depicts Austria as a land of merits (*vasıf ve haslet*) and marvels (*harikulade*)⁵¹.

All envoys sent to Europe in the 18th century emphasised the superiority of the Ottoman Empire, either overtly or by implication. Ottoman diplomats in this age still regarded themselves as representatives of a world power. A traditional Ottoman viewpoint dominates observations made by the envoys. According to them, if the Ottomans applied the military methods used in Europe, it would again become the most powerful state. Arrogance and some distaste for the West continued to prevail, but scientific and technological developments dazzled their eyes. However, the high esteem felt by envoys of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century is not to be found in their reports⁵². According to Hasan Korkut, the envoys shared a holistic approach to the Other (Europe). They were mainly interested in the differences, and not in the scientific inventions and ideologies of Europe. According to them, the Ottoman Empire with its traditional moral system, cultural accumulation, statecraft and resources was still self-sufficient, great and unique and only needed a series of reforms. They focused mainly on moral standards, but not on religious life. Women's different status from men and the non-separation between the harem and the man's section of the house were concerns of all the envoys. This, and other striking contrasts with Ottoman habits, plus the culture of eating and drinking and of entertainment, were especially emphasised. However, the tone of the observations on social life could and did alter in accordance with the state of political affairs between the visited country and the sublime Porte. Art and architecture and the urban characteristics of European cities were points of intense concern for the envoys. They admired the order but were bewildered by their pomp and organisation⁵³. Even in a century when the power of the Empire was severely eroded, educated members of the Ottoman administration asserted the superiority of their cultural background and, at the end of the century, recommended reforms so as to remedy corrosion in the administration. Again, they mainly emphasised cultural differences rather than similarities, partly because of their own amazement, and partly because they felt themselves to belong to an entirely different cultural realm. On the other hand, the curiosity and interest in Europe that they felt – an aspect of 18th century culture – is evident in the detailed accounts they gave of daily life, the customs, and the towns and cities of the countries they visited.

NOVELTIES IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The appearance of the first Baroque-Rococo decorative elements coincided with the dissemination of new ideas in the decade when Çelebi was sent to France as an envoy. The Ottoman palace pioneered the circulation of the Rococo style by ordering innovative decorations for architectural works like fountains and *sebils*. They were acclaimed by Sultan Ahmed III, his vizier and their entourage. It was a period of tulips, symbols of luxury and prestige⁵⁴. The Great-Vizir Damat İbrahim Pasha organised tulip festi-

vals (Lale Çırağanı, illumination of tulips) for Sultan Ahmed III at his waterside villa (Çırağan Yalısı) on the Bosphorus. Gardens were decorated with crystal lamps which were illuminated tulips arranged in the form of pyramids, towers and arches⁵⁵. Minorities, Levantines and provincial Muslim magnates were vigorous in the dissemination of Rococo, which invaded their houses and mansions from the middle of the century onwards. These residential units in Istanbul and provincial towns and villages reflected the modified living habits and material culture of the elite. It is significant that Western-style mural paintings according to the rules of perspective first appeared in these 18th-century houses⁵⁶.

According to Tülay Artan, at the same time the role of the Sultan was transformed, and his vigorous image as a war leader on horseback faded. As a result, his authority and strength was pronounced by the erection of new waterside palaces and ceremonies attached to their use. They provided the Sultan with a screen of magnificence⁵⁷. The banks of the Bosphorus and Golden Horn never saw such a proliferation of royal châteaux. A similar development had taken place earlier in Europe, when the development of the city-palace and villa meant a loss of importance for the feudal seat, the castle, and the need for a substitute within the city⁵⁸. The shift of the royal centre from Topkapı to the city followed a similar socio-political change in the Ottoman Empire. This challenge to the authority of the Sultan in the provinces was probably one of the motives that led to an announcement of might and grandeur in the capital. Seashore palaces served this purpose⁵⁹.

Rococo was associated with femininity and private life in Paris. This was not surprising when the shared nature of private life in Eastern houses and new French domestic spaces is taken into consideration. Rococo ornamentation spread in the Ottoman realm, in the halls and *boudoir*-like private rooms functioning as bedrooms and guestrooms in the Topkapı Palace Harem, and mansions (*yalı* and *kiosk*) of the elite. The Ottoman harem adopted French Rococo, perhaps because of the underlying commonality in the creation of a feminine style in the West. Ottoman princesses (*sultaneferdi*) liked Rococo probably for the reason that it was more domestic and feminine, and therefore closer to the spirit of their life, than the Baroque of the preceding century, which did not find the slightest echo in Ottoman interiors. However in the 18th century, we may talk about an 'Ottoman Occidental mode' in art and architecture⁶⁰. It is well-documented that in the second half of the 18th century, *sultaneferdi* built Rococo-decorated seaside mansions in Istanbul for their own use⁶¹. In a similar way to the reallocation of châteaux in France, princesses moved from the ancient inner city, Topkapı Palace, to seaside mansions on the shores of the Bosphorus and Golden Horn. Tülay Artan points out that in the 18th century, moments of privacy from the life of the thriving rich and elites were for the first time expressed in miniatures and 'representation of the private realm' became possible; hence, intimate (*mabrem*) prevailed over formal and 'public' (*kamu*) was given emphasis as an autonomous realm⁶². Redefinition of the 'private realm' in the Ottoman capital facilitated new aesthetic appeals, which led to artistic renovations. Ottoman Rococo was one of these trends introduced by the upper middle classes, but historicism still reigned among the learned (*ulema*) and bureaucrats⁶³.

When we compare these houses with Parisian *hôtels*, we might say that both were expressions of the thriving bourgeoisie in their own domains. While Rococo invaded interiors, classical orders still governed the design principles of royal and public buildings in France and the Ottoman lands alike. There was nothing new that we might call Rococo applied in the planning of the town houses which still followed the academic canons formed by Jules-Hardouin Mansard (1646-1708) and Louis le Vau (1612-1670)⁶⁴. Rococo was basically a style of ornamentation. In Ottoman architecture it also remained as a decorative elaboration, and proposed no change in the design and planning standards of the Classical Age, shaped by Sinan, architect of Süleyman the Magnificent. Rather than being the result of attempted Westernisation, Rococo decoration reveals the openness of the Ottoman ruling class to the West⁶⁵. Western European art now reached the Ottoman ruling class through increased trade relations facilitated by a stronger bourgeois class.

OTTOMAN EXOTICISM

The exotic basically denotes the non-European. As Barnard Smith puts it, “[exoticism] was a category of accommodation by means of which the European perceived and interpreted the Other”⁶⁶. Christa Knellwolf writes similarly that the “exotic describes fantasies as well as historical responses to otherness”⁶⁷. The exotic object is signified in a historical perspective, derived from geography and cultures outside of the Greco-Roman and Christian worlds. This use appeared in the 18th century, when medieval cosmography was still conditioning approaches to the outsider. Western perception was conditioned by imaginative pictorial representations of the other continents and vice versa. This created a distance between the exotic object and the Western subject. We know that the Ottomans were equated with Muslims in the 18th century and considered as iconic of the Other. On the other side of the divide, as evidenced through the writings of the envoys sent to Europe by the Sultans, the Ottomans also placed a distance between themselves and non-Muslims. For them, Christian and Jewish subjects, Levantines and Europeans were dissimilar, hence the Other. Until the 17th century, the theme of Ottoman superiority was central to literature on Europe. As Bernard Lewis has demonstrated, the first Ottoman writer who broke away from the traditional pattern of uninformed contempt was Evliya Çelebi. Çelebi does not overtly state points of difference or superiority of the West: he implies them. Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi likewise makes implicit comparisons⁶⁸. While visiting the gardens of Marly, Mehmed Efendi makes a witty remark and recites a saying that ‘the world is the prison of the Muslims, heaven of the infidels’⁶⁹. In this sentence, there is a sharp distinction made between the Muslim ‘we’ and the infidel ‘Other’. Çelebi implies his compassion for the ‘poor’ Muslims who suffer, while the Others find pleasure in the world.

The reforms of Mahmut II and Tanzimat followed the now institutionalised ‘imitation paradigm’ at the beginning of the 19th century. The 18th century is then a critical stage in the transformation of the Ottoman intellectual from unconcerned to susceptible.

However, this was a lengthy process, and the outlook of the average Muslim did not alter greatly until the end of the 19th century. For him, Europe was still an exotic land.

NOTES

- ¹ C. Pick (ed.), *Embassy to Constantinople: The Travels of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, D. Murphy intro., London 1988, p. 199.
- ² A. Evin, *1600-1700 Arası Batılılar'ın Türkiye'yi Görüşlerinde Olan Değişim*, in O. Okyar - H.Ü. Nalbantoğlu (eds.), *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri, Metinler/Tartışmalar (8-10 Haziran, 1973)*, Proceedings of a Seminar on the Economic History of Turkey, Texts/Discussions [June, 8-10, 1973], Ankara 1975, p. 173.
- ³ R. Hatton, *Europe in the Age of Louis XIV*, London 1969, p. 98; İ. Ortaylı, *The Problem of Nationalities in the Ottoman Empire Following the Second Siege of Vienna*, in G. Heissund - G. Klingenstein (eds.), *Das Osmanische Reich und Europa 1683 bis 1789: Konflikt, Entspannung und Austausch*, Vienna 1983, p. 230.
- ⁴ R. Mantran, *XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul: Kurumsal, İktisadi, Toplumsal Tarih Denemesi*, vol. 2, translated by M.A. Kılıçbay - E. Özcan, Ankara 1986, p. 172 [org. *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, Paris 1962].
- ⁵ A. Arel, *Onsekizinci Yüzyıl İstanbul Mimarisinde Batılılaşma Süreci*, İstanbul 1975, p. 10.
- ⁶ M. Genç, *18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Sanayii*, "Toplum ve Ekonomi", 2, 1991, pp. 107-108.
- ⁷ I.M. D'Ohsson, *18. Yüzyıl Türkiyesinde Örf ve Adetler*, Z. Yüksel trans., İstanbul, p. 115 [org. I.M. D'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire Othoman*, Paris 1787].
- ⁸ D'Ohsson, *18. Yüzyıl* cit., p. 152.
- ⁹ Mantran, *XVII. Yüzyılın* cit., p. 219.
- ¹⁰ İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 4/1, Ankara 1988, p. 250.
- ¹¹ B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York-London 1982, p. 45.
- ¹² Evin, *1600-1700 Arası* cit., pp. 173, 181.
- ¹³ W.H. McNeill, *Hypothesis Concerning Possible Ethnic Role Changes in the Ottoman Empire in the Seventeenth Century*, in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, Papers Presented to the First International Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey [July 11-13, 1977], Ankara 1980, p. 129.
- ¹⁴ Muslim subjects were denied this privilege until the middle of the 18th century.
- ¹⁵ D'Ohsson, *18. Yüzyıl* cit., p. 135.
- ¹⁶ F.M. Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, New York-Oxford 1996, pp. 96, 138; H. İnalçık, *Political Modernization in Turkey*, in *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History*, İstanbul 1995, p. 134.
- ¹⁷ H. İnalçık, *Some Remarks on the Ottoman Turkey's Modernization Process*, in E. İhsanoğlu (ed.), *Transfer of Modern Science and Technology to the Muslim World*, İstanbul 1992, p. 51.
- ¹⁸ R.A. Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, New York 1991, p. 12, pp. 53-54.
- ¹⁹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation* cit., pp. 64-65.
- ²⁰ Halil İnalçık, *Political* cit., p. 125.
- ²¹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation* cit., pp. 17, 41; For this social change and emergence of the new groups see Göçek's work (above) and B. McGowan, *The Age of the Ayns, 1699-1812*, in H. İnalçık - D. Quataert (ed.), *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 639-757;

- H. İnalçık, *Osmanlı Toplumsal Yapısının Evrimi*, "Türkiye Günlüğü", 11, 1990, pp. 30-41; H. İnalçık, *Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration*, in T. Naff - R. Owen (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, Carbondale-Edwardsville 1977, pp. 27-52; Y. Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, Ankara 1977; K. Karpat, *The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908*, "International Journal of Middle East Studies", 3, 1972, pp. 243-81.
- ²² Abou-El-Haj, *Formation* cit., p. 58.
- ²³ M. Beloff, *The Age of Absolutism 1660-1815*, New York 1962, p. 47.
- ²⁴ S. Mustafa, *Diatribes de l'ingénieur sur l'état actuel de l'art militaire, du génie et des sciences à Constantinople*, Scutari 1803 [2. (ed.), Paris, 1910], p. 17 quoted by Arel, *Onsekizinci* cit, 1975, p. 85.
- ²⁵ Beloff, *The Age* cit., p. 47.
- ²⁶ Göçek, *Rise* cit., p. 121.
- ²⁷ E. İhsanoğlu, *Tanzimat Öncesi ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Bilim ve Eğitim Anlayışı*, in *150. Yılında Tanzimat*, Ankara 1992, p. 348; Recent studies have demonstrated that 18th-century Ottoman science was in a stage of transformation like social-political life. For the contributions of Ali Münşi's (d. 1733) *Bidaatü'l-Mübtedi* (1731) to the field of iatrochemistry (medical science based on chemistry) see A. Koç-Aydın, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğundaki Bilimsel Faaliyetler Işığında Kimya Çalışmalarının Değerlendirilmesi*, unpublished Ph D. Dissertation, Ankara 2002.
- ²⁸ P. Mansel, *Tableau Générale de L'Empire Othoman as Symbol of the Franco-Ottoman, Franco-Swedish and Swedish-Ottoman Alliances*, in S. Theolin et. al. (eds.), *The Torch of the Empire: Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson and the Tableau Général of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, Istanbul 2002, pp. 78-79; For Ottoman-France relations also see C.D. Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature (1520-1660)*, Paris 1940.
- ²⁹ M. Le Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage Pittoresque dans l'Empire Ottoman, en Grèce, dans la Troade, les Iles de l'Archipel et sur les Côtes de l'Asie-Mineure*, Paris 1842.
- ³⁰ F.R. Unat, *Osmanlı Seyirleri ve Seyahatnameleri*, Ankara 1987, p. 54.
- ³¹ S. Eyice, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Türk Sanatı ve Türk Mimarisinde Avrupa Neo-Klasik Üslubu*, "Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı" [Art History Yearbook], 9-10, 1981, p. 168 [org. *L'architettura Turca del secolo XVIII e lo stile Neoclassico nell'arte Turca*, in *Celebrazioni Vanvitelline MCMLXXIII - Luigi Vanvitelli e il '700 in Europa*, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi, Naples - Caserta, 5-10 Novembre 1973, Naples 1979, 2, pp. 421-432].
- ³² G. Veinstein, *İlk Osmanlı Sefiri 28 Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Anıları: 'Kafirlerin Cenneti'*, translated by M.A. Erginöz, Istanbul 2002, p. 26 [Or. Mehmed efendi, *Le paradis des infidèles: Un ambassadeur ottoman en France sous la Régence*, Paris 1981].
- ³³ Unat, *Osmanlı* cit., p. 56.
- ³⁴ E. İhsanoğlu, *Introduction of Western Science to the Ottoman World: A Case Study of Modern Astronomy (1660-1860)*, in E. İhsanoğlu (ed.), *Transfer of Modern Science and Technology to the Muslim World*, Istanbul 1992, p. 107.
- ³⁵ A. Palmer, *The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire*, New York 1992, p. 34.
- ³⁶ M. Aktepe, *Patrona İsyamı (1730)*, Istanbul 1958, p. 50.
- ³⁷ Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi, *Fransa Seyahatnamesi*, edited and translated by Ş. Rado, Istanbul 1970, pp. 5-6; This text was translated from Turkish into French and published in France in the eighteenth century as *Relation de l'Ambassadeur de Mehmed Efendi a la Cour de France en 1721 écrite par lui meme et traduite du turc*, Paris 1757.
- ³⁸ H. Korkut, *Osmanlı Elçileri Gözüyle Avrupa (1719-1807)*, unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Marmara University, Istanbul 2003, p. 19.
- ³⁹ Arel, *Onsekizinci* cit., p. 25.

- ⁴⁰ G. Toderini, *İbrahim Müteferrika Matbaası ve Türk Matbaacılığı*, translated by Rikkat Kunt, edited by Şevket Rado, Istanbul 1990, pp. 25 ff. [org. L'Abbé Toderini, *De la littérature des Turcs*, l'Abbé de Gournand (trans.), Paris 1789].
- ⁴¹ Veinstein, *Fransa* cit., p. 202.
- ⁴² A. Boppe, *Boğaziçi Ressamları*, translated by Nevin Yücel-Celbiş, Istanbul 1988, pp. 96-97 [org. *Les Peintres du Bosphore au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris 1911].
- ⁴³ Çelebi was much more interested in scientific, technological and artistic inventions. As Marquis de Bonnac, ambassador of France in Istanbul, remarked, Çelebi's boldness in praising the beauties of France and splendours of the French Palace in an embassy letter which could have been read by Sultan himself, was regarded as exceptional and astonishing by the Turks (Veinstein, *Fransa* cit., pp. 40-41, 197). For a comprehensive study of Çelebi's observations see F.M. Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1987.
- ⁴⁴ Lewis, *The Muslim* cit., pp. 112-113, 135-136, 158.
- ⁴⁵ V. Aksan, *Abmed Resmî Efendi (1700-1783)*, translated by Ö. Arıkan, Istanbul 1997, pp. 66, 100-101, 201 [orig. *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmî Efendi (1700-1783)*, Leiden 1995].
- ⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Muslim* cit., p. 117.
- ⁴⁷ Korkut, *Osmanlı* cit., pp. 32-33.
- ⁴⁸ F. Bayram, *Abubekir Ratib Efendi as an Ottoman Envoy of Knowledge Between East and West*, unpublished M.A.D. Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, pp. 22, 74.
- ⁴⁹ Bayram, *Abubekir* cit., p. 108.
- ⁵⁰ C. Bilim, *Ebubekir Ratib Efendi Nemçe Sefaretnamesi*, "Belleten", 54/209, 1990, pp. 275, 293.
- ⁵¹ H. Tuncer, *Osmanlı Elçisi Ebubekir Ratib Efendi'nin Viyana Mektupları (1792)*, "Belleten", 48/169-172, 1979, p. 80.
- ⁵² Korkut, *Osmanlı* cit., pp. 64, 152-153.
- ⁵³ Korkut, *Osmanlı* cit., pp. 153 ff. Envoys were meticulous in their descriptions; for Ratib Efendi's accurate description of a ball in his smaller sized embassy letter (*Sefaretnâme*) see A. Uçman (ed.) *Ebubekir Râtib Efendi'nin Nemçe Sefâretnâmesi*, Istanbul 1999, p. 19.
- ⁵⁴ For this age see A. Refik, *Lale Devri [Tulip Period]*, Istanbul 1997.
- ⁵⁵ Aktepe, *Patrona* cit., pp. 60 ff.; F. Yenişehirlioğlu, *Western Influences on Ottoman Architecture in the 18th Century*, in G. Heiss - G. Klingenstein (eds.), *Das Osmanische Reich und Europa 1683 bis 1789: Konflikt, Entspannung und Austausch*, Vienna 1983, p. 165.
- ⁵⁶ For such innovations in 18th-century painting see G. Renda, *Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı 1700-1850*, Ankara 1977.
- ⁵⁷ T. Artan, *Boğaziçi'nin Çehresini Değiştiren Soylu Kadınlar ve Sultanefendi Sarayları*, "İstanbul", 3, 1992, p. 112.
- ⁵⁸ C. Norberg-Schulz, *Baroque Architecture*, London 1986, p.16.
- ⁵⁹ A.U. Peker, *Western Influences on the Ottoman Empire and Occidentalism in the Architecture of Istanbul, "Eighteenth Century Life"*, 26:3, 2002, p. 148.
- ⁶⁰ Peker, *Western* cit., p. 157.
- ⁶¹ Artan, *Boğaziçi'nin* cit., pp. 110-111. Rococo designs applied in the rooms of these palaces can be seen in the engravings of artist-architect A.I. Melling, who was entertained in Hatice Sultan's palace, and himself designed buildings and interiors for Sultan Selim III's family. For the drawings of these palaces and their interiors see Meeling's album: MM. Treuttel - Würtz (eds.), *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore, d'après les dessins de M. Melling, architect de l'Empereur Selim III, et dessinateur de la Sultane Hadidgé sa soeur*, Paris 1819; for the life and deeds of Melling in Turkey see C.

- Boschma - J. Perot (eds.), *Antoine-Ignace Melling (1763-1831), artiste-voyageur*, Paris 1991.
- ⁶² T. Artan, *Mabremiyet: Mabrumiyetin Resmi*, "Defter", 20, 1993, pp. 107, 109, 111.
- ⁶³ According to Evin, "[...] until the Young Ottomans, the modernising bureaucrat remained loyal to Near Eastern ideals of government" (A. Evin, *The Tulip Age and Definitions of Westernization*, in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, Papers Presented to the First International Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey, Ankara: Hacettepe University, July 11-13, 1977, Ankara 1980, p. 132. For the historicist trends in Ottoman architecture see M. M. Cerasi, *Historicism and Inventive Innovation in Ottoman Architecture 1720-1820*, in *VII Centuries of Ottoman Architecture, A Supra-National Heritage*, Istanbul 1999, pp. 34-42.
- ⁶⁴ A. Blunt (ed.), *Baroque and Rococo: Architecture and Decoration*, New York 1978, pp. 135, 141.
- ⁶⁵ As Ahmet Evin states, 'wide-ranging social implications of the term 'Westernization', are inapplicable to Turkish society at large in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (Evin, *The Tulip* cit., p. 133); S. Hamadeh recently questioned the 'Westernization' paradigm in the studies on 18th-century art and architecture in *Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization*, "Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians", 63/1, March 2004, pp. 32-51.
- ⁶⁶ B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne 1992, p. 10 quoted by C. Knellwolf, *The Exotic Frontier of the Imperial Imagination*, "Eighteenth Century Life", 26:3, 2002, p. 10.
- ⁶⁷ Knellwolf, *The Exotic* cit., p. 11.
- ⁶⁸ Lewis, *The Muslim* cit., pp. 113-115; Göçek, *East* cit., p. 26.
- ⁶⁹ Çelebi, *Fransa* cit., p. 64.

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