

THE COMPANION GUIDES

*It is the aim of these guides to provide a Companion
in the person of the author; who knows
intimately the places and people of whom he writes, and is able to
communicate this knowledge and affection to his readers.*

*It is hoped that the text and pictures will aid them
in their preparations and in their travels, and will
help them remember on their return.*

BURGUNDY · THE COUNTRY ROUND PARIS
DEVON · EDINBURGH AND THE BORDER COUNTRY
FLORENCE · GASCONY AND THE DORDOGNE
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THE COMPANION GUIDE TO

ISTANBUL

AND AROUND THE MARMARA

JOHN FREELY

COMPANION GUIDES

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Introduction

Much of the interest that Turkey has for travellers stems from the fact that it extends into two continents and is thus part of two worlds. Ninety-three percent of Turkey's land mass is in Asia, comprising the subcontinent called Anatolia, which in times past was more generally known as Asia Minor, while the remainder of the country is in Europe, forming the southeasternmost extremity of the Balkan peninsula.

Turkey in Europe, the eastern part of the region known in antiquity as Thrace, is separated from Anatolia by the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles. Istanbul, Turkey's largest and most historic city, known to the Greeks as Constantinople, stands astride the Bosphorus at the entrance to the strait from the Marmara, where it was founded more than twenty-six centuries ago as the Greek colony of Byzantium. This is the imperial city, capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire for more than a thousand years and then capital of the Muslim Ottoman Empire for nearly five centuries.

The Byzantine and Ottoman empires in their prime extended from southeastern Europe into western Asia and around the eastern Mediterranean into North Africa. The heartland of both empires was the land that now comprises the Republic of Turkey, which Atatürk and his followers created out of the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The Ottoman Empire had itself risen out of the ashes of the Byzantine Empire, the survival of the Roman Empire in its eastern dominions, principally Asia Minor. In Anatolia one finds the ruins and monuments of still earlier empires, kingdoms, city-states and distinctive cultures that stretch back some ten millennia to the Late Stone Age, a palimpsest of civilizations, with each successive one built on and from the ruins of those that have preceded it on this immemorial landscape.

The first two editions of this guide (1979, 1993) covered all of Turkey in a single volume. The present edition will be the first in a three-volume series on Turkey. This first volume describes Istanbul and the region extending around the Sea of Marmara. The second volume will cover the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts from the Dardanelles to the Syrian border, while the third will describe the interior of Anatolia and the Black Sea coast out to the eastern borders of Turkey.

This first volume is divided into two parts. The first part guides the traveller on a series of strolls through Istanbul. The second goes around the Sea of Marmara, first on the European side from Istanbul via Edirne to the Dardanelles, and then on the Asian shore from Çanakkale and Troy via Bursa and Iznik back to the Bosphorus.

A number of appendices are included, some of them of a practical nature and others in the form of background information, to aid the traveller in exploring Turkey and getting to know its people and their way of life, past and present. You could start by reading the first appendix, which explains the spelling and pronunciation of Turkish words, and perhaps before setting out on your journey you might find it useful to study a primer of modern Turkish, although these days most Turks you will come in contact with will know at least some English, particularly in Istanbul.

The present guide has basic maps to follow the strolls in Istanbul and the itineraries around the Sea of Marmara, as well as plans of the more important monuments and archaeological sites. For those who want more detailed maps I recommend the **Euro-City Istanbul** and the **Euro-Atlas Türkiye**.

Northwestern Turkey has a mild climate; the summers are dry and tempered by the prevailing northerly wind; the winters tend to be rainy and it seldom freezes or snows except for the occasional blizzard in Thrace. Late spring and early autumn are also ideal times for a visit to northwestern Turkey, but you can enjoy Istanbul even in the depths of winter, when the Byzantine churches, Ottoman mosques and museums are empty, while the cafes and restaurants are full of locals who will be more than willing to have you join them. 'Hoş geldiniz!' (Welcome) they will say to you in greeting, to which you respond 'Hoş bulduk!' (We are pleased to be here), which will be the truth. So 'İyi yolculuklar!' – Have a good journey!

Turkish Spelling and Pronunciation

Throughout this book, modern Turkish spelling has been used for Turkish proper names and for things that are specifically Turkish, with a few exceptions for Turkish words that have made their way into English. Modern Turkish is rigorously logical and phonetic, and the few letters that are pronounced differently from English are indicated below. All letters have but a single sound, and none is totally silent. Turkish is very slightly accented, most often on the last syllable, but all syllables should be clearly and almost evenly accented.

Vowels are accentuated as in French or German; i.e., **a** as in **father** (the rarely used **â** sounds rather like **ay**), **e** as in **met**, **i** as in **machine**, **o** as in **oh**, **u** as in **mute**. In addition there are three other vowels that do not occur in English; these are **î** (undotted), pronounced as the **u** in **but**; **ö** as in German or as the **oy** in **annoy**, **ü** as in German or as the **ui** in **suit**.

Consonants are pronounced as in English, except the following:

c as **j** in **jam**; e.g. **camî** (mosque) = **jahmy**

ç as **ch** in **chat**; e.g. **çorba** (soup) = **chorba**

g as in **get**; never as in **gem**

ğ is almost silent and tends to lengthen the previous vowel

ş as in **sugar**; e.g. **çeşme** (fountain) = **cheshme**

The Imperial City

ISTANBUL IS THE only city in the world that stands astride two continents, poised between Asia and Europe, torn between East and West. This is the imperial city – ancient Byzantium, Greek Constantinople, Ottoman Istanbul – now midway through the twenty-seventh century of its tumultuous existence.

The city is at the southern end of the Bosphorus, the 'strait that surpasses all straits', as the French antiquarian Petrus Gyllius wrote in the mid-sixteenth century. The strait is some thirty-five kilometres long, its waters flowing north-south from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, the opposing continental shores only seven hundred metres apart at the narrowest point, between Rumeli Hisarî in Europe and Anadolu Hisarî in Asia.

Near its southern end the Bosphorus is joined by the Golden Horn, a scimitar-shaped inlet fed by two streams once known as the Sweet Waters of Europe. The Golden Horn joins the Bosphorus as they flow together into the Marmara, thus forming what the Byzantine historian Procopius called 'the garland of waters' that entwines itself around the city.

The oldest part of the city, known familiarly as Stamboul, is on the European side of the Bosphorus, a roughly triangular peninsula bounded on the north by the Golden Horn, on the south by the Marmara, and on its western landward side by the late Roman walls of Byzantine Constantinople. It is a city of seven hills, six of them peaking in succession from the ridge that parallels the Golden Horn to the south, the seventh rising above the Marmara shore just inside the land walls.

The first of the seven hills, as numbered by Gyllius, rises above the apex of the triangle where the Golden Horn flows into the Bosphorus, a promontory known as Saray Burnu, or Palace Point. The promontory takes its name from Topkapî Sarayî, the great palace of the Ottoman sultans, which occupies the flat summit of the First Hill. This was the acropolis of ancient Byzantium, a Greek city-state founded by Byzas the Megarian c.658 BC. According to tradition, Byzas had been advised by the oracle at Delphi to settle

'opposite the land of the blind'. The oracle was referring to the residents of Chalcedon, a Greek colony that had been founded seventeen years earlier on the Asian shore of the Marmara. The implication is that the Chalcedonians must have been blind not to have seen the much greater advantages of the site on the European side of the Bosphorus.

One of the advantages offered by the site of Byzantium compared to that of Chalcedon was its greater defensibility, for the steep acropolis at the confluence of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus was protected by the sea on all sides except the west, where a defence wall could be erected. Another advantage was that the Golden Horn provided a superb natural harbour, shielded by the hills that enclose it on all sides except where it opens into the Bosphorus, and there the promontory below the First Hill curves around to shield the inner port. This promontory also acts as a barrier to divert the schools of tunny that swim down the Bosphorus from the Black Sea, forcing them into the port and creating an abundant fishery that became one of the principal sources of income for the people of Byzantium. Other important sources of income were the tolls and harbour fees paid by the ships that passed through the strait, for Byzantium controlled the Bosphorus from the beginning of its history, and this was the principal reason for its rise to greatness. As Gyllius pointed out, 'The Bosphorus is the first creator of Byzantium, greater and more important than Byzas, the first founder of Byzantium.'

The original city of Byzantium comprised only the First Hill, surrounded by a defence wall, with a fortified harbour on the Golden Horn. Byzantium's strategic position at the entrance to the Bosphorus soon made it the most important city in the region, as it acquired considerable territory in Thrace, on the European side of the Marmara, and also in Bithynia, on the Asian side.

Byzantium came under the control of the Persians in 512 BC, when King Darius crossed the Bosphorus on a bridge of boats in his campaign against the Scythians. During the Peloponnesian War the city was occupied first by the Spartans and then by the Athenians, who captured Byzantium in 409 BC after founding the colony of Chrysopolis on the Asian shore opposite the Golden Horn.

Byzantium succeeded in maintaining its independence throughout the Hellenistic period and on through the first two centuries of the Roman imperial era. But then in AD 196, after a two-year siege, Byzantium fell to the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, who

totally destroyed the city. A few years later the emperor rebuilt Byzantium, building a new defence wall between the Golden Horn and the Marmara, more than doubling the size of the city, which now extended as far as the Second Hill. The principal public structure that he erected at that time was the Hippodrome, a huge arena for chariot races on the Marmara slope of the First Hill, where its enormous retaining wall can still be seen.

Then in 324 Byzantium was taken by Constantine the Great (324–37) after his victory over Licinius, which made him sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Within two years of his victory Constantine decided to shift the capital of his empire from Rome to Byzantium, rebuilding the old Greek city on a much larger scale to suit its imperial role. The new capital was dedicated on 11 May 330 as *Nova Roma Constantinopolitana*, 'New Rome, the City of Constantine', but popularly it came to be called Constantinopolis, or in English Constantinople.

Constantinople was five times larger in area than the Byzantium of Septimius Severus. Constantine himself had traced out the boundaries of his new capital, enclosing it on the landward side with a line of defence walls that extended in a great arc of more than two miles from the Golden Horn to the Marmara. Among the public buildings that Constantine founded in Constantinople was the church of the Holy Apostles, a basilica that he erected on the summit of the Fourth Hill together with a huge mausoleum. Constantine was baptized as a Christian a few days before his death on 22 May 337, after which he was buried in the mausoleum of the Holy Apostles.

By then Constantine had taken the first steps toward establishing Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, a process that was completed during the following century by his successors. His son and successor Constantius (337–61) erected a basilica on the First Hill, dedicating it to Haghia Sophia, which in Greek means 'the Divine Wisdom', an attribute of Christ. He also restored the church of Haghia Eirene, dedicated to the Divine Peace, another attribute of Christ. Haghia Eirene had been the principal church of the Christians in Byzantium, but in the reign of Constantius it was supplanted by Haghia Sophia, which became the cathedral of Constantinople. Haghia Sophia also became the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who with the power of the Emperor behind him was the head of the Greek Orthodox Church and the spiritual leader of all other Christians in the empire.

Great changes took place in the Roman Empire during the two

centuries after Constantine. After the death of Theodosius I (379–95) the empire was divided between his two sons, with Honorius (395–423) ruling the West from Rome and Arcadius (395–408) reigning as Emperor of the East in Constantinople. The western part of the empire was overrun by barbarians during the following century, and in 476 the last Emperor of the West was deposed, leaving the Emperor of the East in Constantinople sole ruler of what was left of the Roman Empire. This brought about a profound change in the character of the Roman Empire, for it was now centred in lands populated principally by Greek-speaking Christians. Although Latin remained the official language up until the sixth century, the empire was becoming increasingly Greek and Christian in character, severing its connections with the pagan traditions of Athens and Rome. This gave rise to what in modern times came to be called the Byzantine Empire, the Christian Greek state that evolved from the old pagan Roman Empire during the medieval era, taking its name from the ancient city of Byzantium. As the great churchman Gennadius was to write in the mid-fifteenth century: 'Though I am a Hellene by speech yet I would never say that I was a Hellene, for I do not believe as Hellenes believed. I should like to take my name from my faith, and if anyone asks me what I am, I answer, "A Christian"'. Though my father dwelt in Thessaly I do not call myself a Thessalian, but a Byzantine, for I am of Byzantium.'

The city grew rapidly in the century after Constantine, spreading beyond the limits defined by its founder. Theodosius II (408–50) built a new line of fortifications nearly a mile farther out into Thrace than the walls of Constantine, which were then demolished. The Theodosian walls extended in a double arc of four miles from the Golden Horn to the Marmara, a powerful defence work that would protect Constantinople from its enemies for more than a thousand years. The new line of walls enclosed seven hills, the same as in Old Rome, a matter of great symbolic importance to the Byzantines. Theodosius organized Constantinople into fourteen regions, again the same as in Rome, with the thirteenth across the Golden Horn in what later came to be called Pera and later still Galata. Theodosius also rebuilt the church of Haghia Sophia, which had been destroyed by fire during the reign of Arcadius.

The Byzantine Empire reached its peak during the reign of Justinian I (527–65). Five years after his accession Justinian was very nearly overthrown in an insurrection of the factions in the Hippodrome, the famous Nika Revolt, which was finally crushed

with great loss of life after many of the public buildings on the First Hill had been destroyed, including the Theodosian church of Haghia Sophia. Immediately after the suppression of the revolt Justinian set out to rebuild the city, a task that he completed in five years. The crowning glory of the restored city was the resurrected church of Haghia Sophia, which rose from its ashes to become the symbol of Byzantine Constantinople.

During the course of Justinian's reign his generals succeeded in reconquering many of the lost dominions of the empire. But within half a century after his death the empire had collapsed, assaulted from without by the Lombards, Slavs, Avars and Persians, ravaged within by plague, anarchy and revolution. The empire was saved by Heraclius (610–41), who in a series of brilliant campaigns defeated the Persians, the Avars and the Slavs, and succeeded in regaining much of the territory that had been lost in the previous half-century.

Shortly after the death of Heraclius much of the eastern part of the Byzantine Empire was overrun by the Arabs, who on several occasions in the next two centuries besieged Constantinople. But the Byzantines stopped the Arabs and eventually drove them out of all but the southeastern part of Asia Minor. During the ninth and tenth centuries the empire was invaded by the Bulgars, who twice laid siege to Constantinople, but they were eventually crushed by Basil II (976–1025), who was known as Bulgaroctonus, the Bulgar-Slayer.

Despite these numerous wars and serious internal disputes, Byzantium was still strong and basically sound until the middle of the eleventh century, controlling an empire that stretched from the Euphrates to the Adriatic and from the Danube to the southern Mediterranean. But then in 1071 the Byzantines were defeated by the Selcuk Turks at Manzikert, north of Lake Van, after which the victors overran most of Asia Minor. That same year the Normans captured Bari, the last Byzantine possession in Italy, beginning a series of Latin invasions of the empire.

The empire was almost destroyed in 1204, when Constantinople was captured and sacked by the Venetians and the army of the Fourth Crusade, who set up a Latin kingdom that held the city for fifty-seven years. Several fragments of the empire maintained their independence during these years, most notably at Nicaea (Iznik) in northwestern Asia Minor, where the Lascarid dynasty ruled brilliantly for more than half a century. The Lascarid dynasty ended in 1259 when the throne was usurped by Michael VIII Palaeologus (1259–82), who two years later recaptured Constantinople from the

Latins and restored the Byzantine Empire to its ancient capital. Under his successors in the Palaeologus dynasty, who ruled the empire for the last two centuries of its existence, Byzantine culture revived and shared in the early European renaissance.

But the restored empire was much reduced in extent from what it had been in earlier times. The Venetians and other Latins continued to control much of Greece and the Greek islands, including Cyprus and Crete. Most of Asia Minor was held by the Selcuks and various Türkmen tribes who after the battle of Manzikert had overrun Anatolia, or Anadolu, as the sub-continent was known to the Turks, establishing a mosaic of *beyliks*, or emirates. One such *beylik* was that of the Osmanlı Turks, later to be known in the West as the Ottomans, who had been settled by the Selcuks in a tiny emirate near Nicaea in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The Osmanlı were named for their first leader, Osman Gazi (c.1282–1326) (Gazi means Warrior for the Faith), who invaded the Byzantine domains. In 1326 his son and successor Orhan Gazi (1326–59) captured Prusa, known to the Turks as Bursa, which became the first Ottoman capital.

The Ottomans expanded rapidly, crossing the Dardanelles in the mid-fourteenth century and penetrating into southern Europe. Orhan's son and successor Murat I (1359–89) captured Adrianople, Turkish Edirne, which replaced Bursa as the Ottoman capital. The Byzantines gained a respite in 1402, when Tamerlane defeated Beyazit I (1389–1402) at the battle of Ankara. Beyazit died in captivity soon afterwards and for the next eleven years his sons fought a war of succession that was finally won by Mehmet I (1413–21). Mehmet's son and successor Murat II (1421–51) resumed the Turkish march of conquest. By the middle of the fifteenth century the Ottomans had conquered most of western Anatolia and had penetrated deep into southern Europe, defeating several allied Christian armies that had tried to stop them.

An important factor in the Ottoman success was their elite corps, the Janissaries, who were made up of Christian youths taken into the sultan's service in periodic levies known as the *devşirme*. After induction the recruits became Muslims and were trained for various positions in the army, many of them rising to the highest positions in the empire, including that of grand vezir.

In 1449 Constantine XI Dragases (1449–53) ascended the throne of Byzantium, and two years later the nineteen-year old Mehmet II (1451–81) succeeded his father Murat II as Sultan. The young sultan

immediately began preparations for the conquest of Constantinople, which was then entirely surrounded by the domains of the Ottomans. During the summer of 1452 Mehmet built the great fortress of Rumeli Hisarı on the European shore of the Bosphorus at its narrowest stretch, thus cutting off the Byzantines from their grain supplies on the Black Sea. Meanwhile Constantine did what he could to prepare the city for the long-awaited siege, which began early in April of 1453. The siege lasted for seven weeks, as Constantine and his greatly outnumbered forces held off the Turks from the Theodosian walls, which were constantly being battered by the Ottoman artillery. The Turks finally breached the walls early in the morning of Tuesday 29 May, and by noon they had taken full control of the city, with Constantine meeting death in the final moments of the battle. Early in the afternoon Mehmet made his triumphal entry into the city, acclaimed by his troops as Fatih, or the Conqueror. He then turned loose his soldiers to loot Constantinople for three days, as was customary in Islam when a city was taken by storm rather than surrendering, but Mehmet the Conqueror stopped them after a single day, distressed at the damage that was being done. According to his Greek biographer, Kritovoulos of Imbros, Mehmet the Conqueror murmured sadly, 'Allah! What a city have I given over to destruction!'

On that same day Mehmet the Conqueror ordered that Haghia Sophia be converted into a mosque, and the first Muslim service was held there that Friday. Soon afterwards he began to restore the city, which was known to the Turks as Istanbul, a corruption of the Greek *stin poli*, meaning 'in the city' or 'to the city'. Mehmet the Conqueror also repopled the city, which had lost much of its population in the half-century before the conquest, bringing in Turks, Greeks and Armenians from the provinces of the empire, with Sephardic Jews from Spain arriving in the last decade of the century. Within a year after the conquest Mehmet the Conqueror shifted the seat of his government from Edirne to Istanbul, which thenceforth was the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Soon after the conquest Mehmet the Conqueror built a palace on the Third Hill. Then a decade or so later he began building a new and much larger residence on the First Hill, the palace that came to be known as Topkapı Sarayı. He also erected on the Fourth Hill a huge edifice known as Fatih Camii, the Mosque of the Conqueror. Fatih Camii was the centre of a *külliye*, a complex of religious and philanthropic institutions, including several theological schools (*medrese*),

a public kitchen (*imaret*), a hospital (*daarişşifa*), a hospice (*tabhane*), an inn for travellers (*kervanserai*), and two tombs (*türbe*), one for Mehmet the Conqueror and the other for his wife Gülbahar, mother of his son and successor, Beyazıt II (1481–1512). Mehmet the Conqueror's example was followed by his successors and other notables of the court, who erected numerous mosques and other edifices in the new capital, some of them converting churches into mosques, transforming Byzantine Constantinople into Ottoman Istanbul.

During the century after the conquest, Ottoman armies swept victoriously through the Near East and the Balkans, while the Turkish navy conquered the Aegean islands and the Mediterranean coast of Africa. Selim I (1512–20) conquered eastern Anatolia, Persia, Syria and Egypt, adding the title of Caliph to that of Sultan after his capture of Cairo in 1517.

The Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66). Süleyman personally led his armies in a dozen victorious campaigns, failing only in his attempt to take Vienna, which thereafter marked the limit of Turkish expansion into Europe. By the end of his reign the Ottoman Empire stretched from Baghdad in the east to Algiers in the west, extending from Egypt to the southern borders of Russia, comparable in extent to the Byzantine Empire in the days of Justinian. The loot from these campaigns, along with the tribute and taxes from the conquered territory, enormously enriched the Ottoman treasury, and much of this wealth was used by Süleyman and his successors to adorn Istanbul and the other cities of the empire with palaces, mosques and other public buildings. The grandest of the edifices erected in Istanbul was the Süleymaniye, the imperial mosque complex built for Süleyman on the Third Hill in the years 1550–57 by his Chief Architect, the great Sinan. Sinan would continue as Chief Architect under Süleyman's immediate successors, his son Selim II (1566–74) and his grandson Murat III (1574–95). He built a magnificent mosque for Selim in Edirne, and for Murat he splendidly restored several rooms in Topkapı Sarayı. Sinan was the architect of the Ottoman golden age, building a total of 321 structures all over the empire in a career that spanned half a century, with 84 of his buildings still standing in Istanbul alone.

The Ottoman sultans succeeded one another father and son for thirteen generations from Osman Gazi through Ahmet I (1603–17), the great-great grandson of Süleyman the Magnificent. During the

two generations after Süleyman the successions were followed by mass fratricide, with the new sultan killing off all of his brothers to prevent them from contesting the throne. This Ottoman code of fratricide, which had been practiced occasionally in earlier times by the Osmanlı, was sanctioned by a statement in Islamic tradition that 'death is better than disquiet'. The law of succession was changed after the death in 1617 of Ahmet I, who was succeeded by his brother Mustafa I (1617–18, 1622–23). Thenceforth the succession was to the oldest male in the royal line, and when a new sultan came to the throne his brothers, instead of being killed, were confined to an apartment in Topkapı Sarayı known as the Kafes, or Cage. The consequence was that many of those who succeeded to the throne in the latter Ottoman period had been confined to the Cage for most of their life, fifty-one years in the case of Osman III (1754–57), leaving them ill-prepared to rule, one of the causes of the decline of the empire that became increasingly evident in the century after Süleyman.

Many of Süleyman's successors were weak and ineffective rulers, some of them dissolute and a few of them insane, namely Mustafa I, Murat IV (1623–40), and his brother Ibrahim (1640–48), who was deposed and executed. Süleyman's immediate successors were dominated by their women, the power behind the throne usually being the Valide Sultan, or Queen Mother, or in a few cases the Birinci Kadın, or First Wife, the mother of the heir apparent. The most powerful of these women was the Valide Sultan Kösem, wife of Ahmet I and mother of Murat IV and Ibrahim, who dominated the Harem until she was murdered in 1651 on the orders of her rival Turhan Hadice, mother of Mehmet IV (1648–87).

Another factor in the decline of the empire was the decadence of the Janissary Corps, which ceased to be an effective military force after the time of Süleyman, frequently rebelling against the sultans, two of whom they murdered, namely Osman II (1618–22) and Selim III (1789–1808). The Janissaries were finally put down by Mahmut II (1808–39), who had all of them killed on a single day, 16 June 1826, an historic occasion that contemporary Ottoman chroniclers referred to as Vakayı Hayriye, the Auspicious Incident.

By the mid-nineteenth century the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire had declined to the point where Tsar Nicholas I referred to it as the 'Sick Old Man of Europe'. By that time a reform movement known as the Tanzimat had begun in Turkey, culminating in 1877 with the creation of the first Ottoman parliament. But this apparent

triumph of reform was short-lived, for the following year the parliament was dissolved by Abdül Hamit II (1876–1909), who thereafter ruled as a dictator. Abdül Hamit's long and oppressive reign finally ended in 1909, when he was deposed by a liberal party known as the Young Turks, led by Cavit Pasha, Talaat Pasha and Enver Pasha. Abdül Hamit's successor, Mehmet V Reşat (1909–18), was merely a puppet in the hands of the Young Turks, who brought Turkey into the First World War on the side of Germany, which resulted in the final destruction of the Ottoman Empire. Mehmet V died just before the war ended, to be succeeded by his brother Mehmet VI Vahidettin, who became a puppet of the Allies when they occupied Istanbul on 13 October 1918.

After the war, when the victorious Allies prepared to divide up the Ottoman Empire, a movement of national liberation started in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, later to be known as Atatürk. Atatürk and his followers defeated an invading Greek army after a three-year war that ended in 1922, by which time the Turkish nationalists had created their own government in Ankara, convening a parliament known as the Grand National Assembly (GNA). On 1 November 1922 the GNA enacted legislation separating the sultanate and the caliphate, the former being abolished and the latter reduced to a purely religious role. Sixteen days later Mehmet VI, the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire, left Istanbul aboard a British warship, never to return, dying in exile in Italy four years later. He was succeeded by his cousin Abdül Mecit Efendi, who held only the title of Caliph, a purely ceremonial office with no political power.

The final articles of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, established the present boundaries of Turkey, except for the province of Hatay in southeastern Anatolia, acquired after a plebiscite in 1939. The Allied occupation of Istanbul came to an end on 2 October 1923 of that same year, and four days later a division of the Turkish Nationalist army marched into the city and took control. On 13 October the GNA passed a law making Ankara the capital of Turkey. Then on 29 October the assembly adopted a new constitution that created the Republic of Turkey, with Atatürk as its first president.

On 3 March 1924 the GNA passed a law abolishing the caliphate, thus severing the last tenuous bond that linked the new Republic of Turkey with the old Ottoman Empire. This same law deposed Abdül Mecit Efendi, who was forced to leave Turkey the following day, to

die an exile in Paris in 1944. Thus the Ottoman Empire came to an end after an existence of more than six centuries, and for the first time in nearly sixteen centuries the ancient city at the confluence of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn was no longer an imperial capital.

Istanbul has undergone a dramatic transformation since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, as has the rest of Turkey. Much of this change came about through reforms instituted by Atatürk, most notably the disenfranchisement of Islam, as well as the adoption of western dress, the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar, measures intended to make Turkey a more modern and European nation. The more superficial westernizing reforms were lasting, but in recent years Islam has made a dramatic comeback in Turkey, which to a large extent has been caused by the mass migration of poorer Anatolian people into Istanbul and the other major cities. The population of Istanbul, which was somewhat more than a million in 1924, was counted as nearly ten million in the 1998 census, though it is generally believed to be considerably higher. The city now extends for miles along both the European and Asian shores of the Marmara and up the Bosphorus to within sight of the Black Sea. The European and Asian parts of the city were first linked by a bridge across the Bosphorus between Ortaköy and Beylerbey that opened on 29 October 1973, on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic. A second bridge, crossing between Rumeli Hisarı and Anadolu Hisarı, opened in the summer of 1988, exactly 2500 years after Darius built his bridge of boats across the strait at the same place. Such is the antiquity of the imperial city.

The population explosion in recent years has destroyed most of the old wooden houses of Istanbul, which have been replaced by high-rise apartment blocks and commercial buildings, turning picturesque Ottoman neighbourhoods into squalid slums, traffic jamming the streets and poisoning the air, the Golden Horn an open sewer and the once vernal shores of the Bosphorus now part of the urban sprawl of a modern metropolis that is apparently out of control, though those who love Istanbul are doing their utmost to preserve its fading beauty.

The longest-standing renewal programme is that of the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club (TTOK), headed by Çelik Gülersoy. Çelik Bey has restored a number of late Ottoman buildings and converted them into hotels, restaurants, cafés and craft markets, thus preserving and giving new life to venerable edifices that might

otherwise have been lost to the city. Atatürk himself instituted a government policy of restoring the Byzantine and Ottoman monuments of the city, most notably Hagia Sophia and Topkapı Sarayı, both of which were converted into museums. Many of the restored Turkish monuments are once again serving the people of Istanbul as they did in times past, with *medreses* housing students; Ottoman libraries open as research centres; the hospitals of imperial mosques serving as clinics; and their *mekteps*, or primary schools, converted into children's libraries.

But beyond all these programmes of restoration, Istanbul refuses to let itself be destroyed, and today it is flourishing in an astonishing renaissance that has given rise to novels and poetry, theatre and music, bars and bookshops, restaurants and cafes, enterprises catering to every intellectual, social and economic level, the city positively throbbing with energy, both creative and destructive, making it a more exciting place to live or visit than it has been in living memory. Istanbul has indeed changed since the days when it was the capital of a great empire, but those who know it best feel that its essential character and spirit have survived the transformation, almost as if it had an immortal soul. Petrus Gyllius sensed this when he wrote his encomium to the imperial city more than four centuries ago: 'It seems to me that while other cities are mortal, this one will remain as long as there are men on earth.'

2

To the Summit of the First Hill

WE WILL BEGIN our first itinerary at the place where the city itself began, on the promontory at **Saray Burnu**, where the waters of the Bosphorus join those of the Golden Horn to flow together into the Sea of Marmara. This is where Byzas the Megarian and his followers would have landed c.658 BC to found the Greek city of Byzantium. Directly across the strait from the Golden Horn is Üsküdar, ancient Chrysopolis, founded in 409 BC by Athenians. Across the strait farther down along the Asian shore is Kadıköy, ancient Chalcedon, the place that the Delphic oracle was referring to when he told Byzas to settle 'opposite the Land of the Blind'. Üsküdar and Kadıköy are now within the city limits of Istanbul, as is the former Genoese town of Galata on the northern side of the Golden Horn.

The area around Saray Burnu is now a park, where one can sit and enjoy a view of the Bosphorus surging between the continents. The view extends all the way up the strait to the first Bosphorus bridge, and up the Golden Horn to the Galata Bridge. The principal landmark on the northern side of the Golden Horn is the Galata Tower, the stronghold of Genoese Galata. At the centre of the park there is a fine bronze statue of Atatürk, founder and first President of the Turkish Republic, done by the Austrian sculptor Krippel in 1926.

Across the shore highway from Saray Burnu a road leads through Gülhane Park, which occupies what were once the lower gardens of Topkapı Sarayı. On the wooded hillside to the east stands one of the city's oldest monuments, now enclosed within the garden of an outdoor cafe. This is the **Goth's Column**, a granite monolith 15 metres high surmounted by a Corinthian capital. The name of the column comes from the laconic inscription in Latin on its base; FORTUNAE REDUCI OB DEVICTOS GOTHOS, which means: 'To Fortune, who returns by reason of the defeat of the Goths.' The column has been ascribed to Claudius II Gothicus (268–70) and also to Constantine the Great, both of whom won notable victories over the Goths, but there is no firm evidence either way. According to the

Haghia Sophia

THE SUMMIT OF the First Hill is dominated by **Haghia Sophia**, known to the Byzantines as *Megali Ekklesia*, the Great Church, which some consider to be the grandest edifice ever built by the hand of man. Haghia Sophia was erected by the emperor Justinian I, under whom the Byzantine Empire reached its greatest extent and power. Procopius, Justinian's court chronicler, describes the grandeur of the Great Church in his *Edifices*.

The church presents a most glorious spectacle, extraordinary to those who behold it and altogether incredible to those who are told of it. In height it rises to the very heavens and overtops the neighbouring houses like a ship anchored among them, appearing above the city which it adorns and forms a part of. It is distinguished by indescribable beauty, excelling both in its size and the harmonies of its measures.

The present edifice of Haghia Sophia is the third church of that name to stand upon this site. The first church was opened on 15 February 360 by the emperor Constantius. It was destroyed by fire on 9 June 404 in a riot by the supporters of John Chrysostomos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had been deposed by the empress Eudoxia, wife of the emperor Arcadius. A new church was built on the same site by Theodosius II, son and successor of Arcadius, who rededicated it on 10 October 415. This edifice, known to archaeologists as the Theodosian church, was destroyed by fire on 15 January 532 during the Nika Revolt.

Shortly after the revolt was crushed Justinian set out to rebuild the church on an even grander scale, bringing in workers and artisans from all over his vast empire. As chief architect he appointed Anthemius of Tralles, the greatest mathematical physicist of late antiquity, and as assistant builder he named Isidorus of Miletus, a renowned geometer who had been director of the Platonic Academy in Athens before it was closed by Justinian in 529. Anthemius died during the first months of the project, whereupon Isidorus was placed in charge, completing the building within five years. The new church was formally opened on 26 December 537, St Stephen's



Eminönü ferry piers, with Topkapı Sarayı in background

Haghia Sophia, the former Church of the Divine Wisdom



Day, when Justinian and Theodora rededicated it to Haghia Sophia.

During the construction a number of structural crises had occurred, due to the rapidity with which the building had been erected, and also because of the enormous stresses caused by the vast and shallow dome. The structure was then weakened by a series of earthquakes that shook the city between 553 and 557, and on 7 May 558 the eastern part of the dome collapsed, along with the arch and semidome on that side of the building. Isidorus of Miletus was no longer alive, and so Justinian entrusted the task of rebuilding the church to the architect's nephew, Isidorus the Younger. Isidorus decided to change the design of the dome, making it less shallow so as to reduce the lateral stresses. The reconstruction project was completed in five years. The church was rededicated on Christmas Eve 563 by Justinian, who was then eighty-one years old, with less than two years to live, Theodora having passed on twenty-five years before.

Another series of earthquakes in the ninth and tenth centuries damaged the building and caused cracks to appear in the dome. Then in 989 part of the dome and the eastern arch collapsed, so that the church had to be closed. Basil II entrusted the restoration to Trdat, the renowned Armenian architect, and on 13 May 996 the church was reopened.

The church suffered grievously during the Latin occupation of 1204-61, when it was stripped of all of its sacred relics and other valuable objects. During those years it was a Roman Catholic church served by the Venetian clergy, who erected a campanile near the southwest corner of the building.

When the Greeks recaptured Constantinople in 1261 they reconsecrated Haghia Sophia as a Greek Orthodox church, demolishing the campanile and restoring the building. The dome suffered another partial collapse on 19 May 1346, and the church was closed until reconstruction was completed in 1355. During the last century of Byzantine rule the church fell into serious disrepair, sharing in the general decay of the dying city.

On the eve of the day on which Constantinople fell to the Turks, 29 May 1453, the populace of the city flocked to Haghia Sophia, praying to God for deliverance. The Emperor Constantine appeared in the Great Church shortly before midnight, accompanied by his Greek and Italian knights, and he prostrated himself before the high altar. He remained there for some time in silence before he departed

to take up his post on the Theodosian walls, where he died fighting against the Turks the following morning. The congregation in Haghia Sophia barred the doors of the church, but later in the morning Turkish soldiers broke in, killing those who resisted them and enslaving the others.

Sultan Mehmet II, now known to the Turks as Mehmet the Conqueror, rode to Haghia Sophia directly after his triumphal entry into the city early in the afternoon of that same day. He dismounted at the door of the church and bent down to take a handful of earth, which he sprinkled over his turban as an act of humility before God. After surveying the church he ordered that it be immediately converted into a mosque, whereupon his engineers hastily erected a wooden minaret outside the building and a *mihrap* and *mimber* within. Three days later, at the time of the Friday noon prayer, Mehmet the Conqueror dedicated the building as Aya Sofya Camii Kabir, the Great Mosque of Haghia Sophia, assisted by his two chief clerics, Akşemsettin and Karaşemsettin. Evliya Çelebi tells the story of Haghia Sophia's conversion into a mosque in his *Seyahatname*:

Sultan Mehmet II, on surveying more closely the church of Aya Sofya, was astonished at the solidity of its construction, the strength of its foundations, the height of its cupola, and the skill of its builder. He caused the ancient building to be cleared of its idolatrous objects and purified of the blood of the slain, and having refreshed the brains of the victorious Muslims by fumigating it with amber and lion-aloes, converted it that very hour into a mosque.

On the following Friday, the faithful were summoned to prayer by the *muëzzins*, who proclaimed with a loud voice this text of the Koran: 'Verily, God and his angels bless the Prophet.' Akşemsettin and Karaşemsettin then arose, and placing themselves on either side of the sultan, supporting him under his arms; the former placed his turban on the head of the Conqueror, fixing in it the black and white feather of a crane, and putting into his hand a naked sword. Thus conducted to the *mimber* he ascended it, and cried out with a voice as loud as David's, 'Praise be to God, the Lord of all the world', on which the victorious Muslims lifted up their hands and uttered a shout of joy.

Mehmet the Conqueror and his successors continued to keep Haghia Sophia in good repair throughout the Ottoman period, for it held pride of place among the imperial mosques and was always held in great veneration. The last and most thorough restoration in

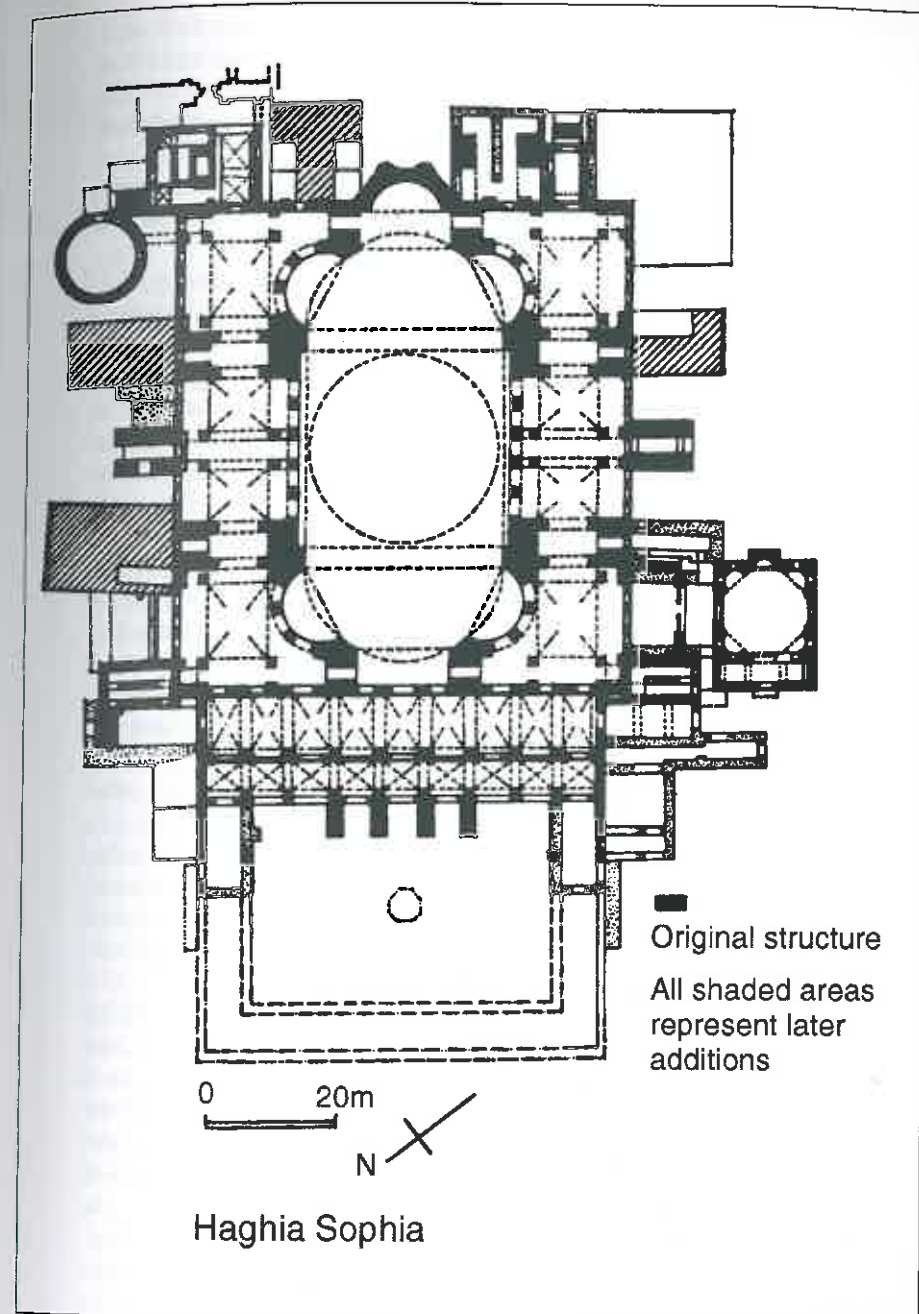
the Ottoman era was commissioned by Sultan Abdul Mecit (1839–61), and was carried out in 1847–49 by the Swiss architects Gaspare and Giuseppe Fossati. During the course of this restoration the surviving figurative mosaics of the church were cleared of the whitewash and plaster with which they had been covered earlier in the Ottoman period. When the restoration was complete the mosaics were covered over once again, in order to protect them from further damage.

Hagia Sophia continued to serve as a mosque until 1932, when it was closed and converted into a museum, which opened two years later. In April 1932 Thomas Whittemore and other members of the Byzantine Institute of America began the task of uncovering and restoring the mosaics, a number of which had disappeared since the Fossati restoration. Restoration of the mosaics was not completed until 1964, when the galleries of Hagia Sophia were for the first time opened to the public.

The entrance to the museum is in the garden to the west of Hagia Sophia, the area that was once the *avli*, or outer courtyard of the church. This was a porticoed arcade that enclosed an area 47.7 metres wide and 32.3 metres deep. The portico has disappeared and what remains of the atrium is roughly its eastern half. The west side and rear of the garden are filled with ancient columns and other architectural fragments, all of which were unearthed in various excavations around the city, most of them on the First Hill.

As we approach the entrance to the museum we see the excavated porch of the **Theodosian church**, discovered in 1935 by the German archaeologist Alfons Maria Schneider. Some blocks of the reliefs remain in the pit, along with part of the front steps of the porch, while other huge architectural fragments have been arrayed farther to the north just beyond the garden cafe. The remaining fragments of the Theodosian basilica show that this was an edifice of monumental proportions, comparable in size and grandeur to Justinian's church. An architectural drawing beside the excavation site shows Schneider's reconstruction of the porch of the Theodosian church.

Before entering the museum we might pause to examine the structure of the building. The main ground plan of Hagia Sophia is a rectangle, some 70 by 75 metres. At the centre of the east wall there is a projecting apse, semicircular within and three-sided on the exterior, while to the west the church is preceded by an inner and outer vestibule, known in Greek as the *narthex* and *exonarthex*. The central part of the rectangular area is covered by the great dome, one of the



wonders of architecture, with smaller semidomes to east and west and conches over the apse and the four corners. These spherical surfaces cover the central area of the nave, which is flanked by side aisles with galleries above that extend around the sides of the church and also the narthex.

This was the basic form of Justinian's church, but structural crises during the construction and subsequent damage due to earthquakes necessitated the addition of buttresses on all sides of the building. The oldest of these are the two pairs of very tall buttresses against the north and south walls of the church. These were built during Justinian's reign, either in the latter part of the reconstruction of the building or in the rebuilding of the dome in 558–63. The pillar-like outer parts of these buttresses were added in 1317 by Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282–1328) to provide additional support for the building. The four massive flying buttresses against the west gallery were added in the second half of the ninth century. The arch buttresses and retaining walls at the east side of the church were erected by Mehmet the Conqueror soon after the conquest.

Mehmet the Conqueror also built the brick buttress at the southeast corner of the building; this replaced a temporary wooden minaret which had been erected over the southeast buttress when Haghia Sophia was converted into a mosque. Selim II built the stone minaret at the northeast corner in 1574, and the two stone minarets at the northwest and southwest corners were added a year or two later by Murat III. All of these stone minarets are works of Sinan, who also restored the buttresses and the fabric of the building.

In addition, a number of subsidiary structures were erected in the precincts of Haghia Sophia during both the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, most notably the baptistry and the imperial Turkish tombs on the south side of the building; these will be examined after our tour of the museum.

The present entrance to the church is through the central door of the **exonarthex**, which is flanked by the two middle buttresses on the west side of the building. This outer vestibule has nine cross-vaulted bays separated by arches, as does the narthex. Within the bays of the narthex to the right of the entrance there are a number of huge rectangular slabs of mosaic pavements stacked against the walls. These are from the Great Palace of Byzantium, on the Marmara slope of the First Hill. These mosaics were discovered during excavations in the 1930s below the mosque of Ahmet I, where some of the most interesting examples are preserved *in situ* in the Mosaic Museum.

In the last bay on the right there is a huge Byzantine sarcophagus in verd antique. This contained the remains of the empress Eirene, wife of John II Comnenus (1118–43), whose mosaic portrait is preserved in the southeast gallery of Haghia Sophia. Eirene's sarcophagus was originally in the church of the Pantocrator, which she and John erected on the Fourth Hill. The sarcophagus was broken into and looted by the knights of the Fourth Crusade in 1204; in the 1950s it was brought to Haghia Sophia for protection.

Five doors in alternate bays lead from the exonarthex into the **narthex**, which is about twice as wide and high as the outer vestibule. The piers and walls of the narthex are revetted with superb **marble panels**. According to Paul the Silentiary, who wrote a long poem celebrating the rededication of Haghia Sophia by Justinian in 565, these and other marbles within the church came from all over the empire. In order to obtain the elaborate symmetrical patterns of each panel, thin blocks of marble were cut in two, sometimes in four, and opened out like a book so that the natural veining of the stone was duplicated and quadruplicated, giving the unique natural designs that add so much to the beauty of the interior.

Beneath the Turkish painted decoration on the vaults of the narthex we can see here and there portions of the original **mosaic decoration**. A great deal of the Justinianic mosaic decoration survives in the vaults of the narthex and the side aisles of the nave, as well as in the thirteen ribs of the original dome that have never fallen. According to the Silentiary, this mosaic decoration originally covered the great dome, the semidomes, the north and south typanum walls, and the vaults of the narthex, aisles, vestibules and galleries, a total area of more than one and one-half hectares. This decoration, much of which has survived, consists of large areas of plain gold ground adorned around the edges of architectural forms with bands of geometrical and floral designs in various colours. Simple crosses in outline on the vaults and soffits of arches are constantly repeated, and, according to the Silentiary, there was a cross of this kind on the crown of the great dome. It is clear from the Silentiary's description that in Justinian's time there were no figural mosaics in the church. The figurative mosaics that have survived in Haghia Sophia are all from after the Iconoclastic period (730–843), when icons were banned throughout the Byzantine Empire.

Doors open off from each bay of the narthex into the nave, with the largest one at the centre. This was known as the **Imperial Gate**, since it was reserved for the use of the emperor and his entourage.

One of the surviving figurative mosaics is in the lunette above the Imperial Gate. Here Christ is depicted seated upon a jewelled throne, his feet resting upon a stool. He raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing, and in his left hand he holds a book with this inscription in Greek: 'Peace be with you, I am the Light of the World.' At the left a crowned figure prostrates himself before the throne, his hands upraised in supplication. Above, on either side of the throne, there are two roundels, the one on the left containing a bust of the Blessed Virgin and the other an angel carrying a staff or wand. It is believed that the imperial figure is Leo VI (886–912) and thus the mosaic is dated to the period of his reign. If so, it is probable that the emperor is pleading with Christ to forgive him for what Gibbon so aptly called 'the frequency of his nuptials'. The emperor had lost his first three wives without producing a male heir to the throne, and wished to take a fourth wife, ordinarily forbidden by the Orthodox Church. After a long and bitter dispute, the famous scandal of the Tetragamy, Leo finally obtained permission to marry his mistress, Zoe, and legitimized his bastard son, the future Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59).

Constantine was one of the great chroniclers of medieval Byzantium, his works including the *Book of Ceremonies*, a record of court ritual that is one of the most important sources for Byzantine topography. The *Book of Ceremonies* describes the entry of the emperor and his party through the Imperial Gate: 'The princes remove their crowns, greet the patriarch and proceed to the Imperial Gate. Bearing the candles and bowing thrice, they enter the church after a prayer is pronounced by the patriarch.'

We now pass through the Imperial Gate into the **nave**, an immense contained space pierced by oblique shafts of mottled sunlight falling from the circlet of forty windows at the base of the dome. Walking forward, we can now see the whole of the immense interior at once and appreciate its beauty and its grandeur: the fabled dome, which the ancients pictured as being suspended from heaven by a golden chain; its central area flanked by a graceful two-tiered colonnade which Procopius likened to a line of dancers in a chorus, all elements of the vast edifice interrelated in perfect harmony.

The central area of the nave is defined by four enormous and irregularly shaped piers, built of ashlar stone bound together with lead, standing in a square measuring approximately 31 metres on each side. Four great arches rise from the piers, with four pendentives making the transition to the slightly elliptical cornice of the

dome, whose diameter measures about 31 metres north-south and 33 metres east-west. The crown of the majestic **dome** is 56 metres above the floor, about the height of a fifteen storey building. The dome has forty ribs which radiate out from the crown, separated at the base by forty windows, of which four toward the west were blocked up during repairs in the tenth century.

Pairs of subsidiary piers to east and west support the main semi-domes, which give the nave its great length, about 80 metres. The central arches to north and south are filled with tympanum walls each pierced by twelve windows, seven in the lower row, five in the upper, of which the three central openings formed a kind of triple arcade. All these windows have in Turkish times been considerably reduced in size, probably by the architect Sinan in the mid-sixteenth century. Between each of the great piers on the north and south four monoliths of verd antique support the galleries, while above six similar columns support the tympana. At the eastern and western ends, to north and south, semicircular exedrae prolong the nave, with two massive columns of porphyry below and six of verd antique above, on which rest smaller semidomes. At the east, beyond the subsidiary piers, a semicircular apse projects beyond the east wall, covered by a conch. Finally, four great buttresses projecting from the north and south walls opposite the central piers help to consolidate the whole fabric.

If the plan is to all intents and purposes that of a basilica, the originality consists in covering it with a dome and two semidomes. For in addition to lengthening the nave, the semidomes make it possible to appreciate from the very threshold the soaring, hovering height, allowing the dome to play its full part in the total effect. Contrast the relative ineffectiveness of the dome of St Peter's in Rome, from which radiate barrel-vaults along the axes of the building. That dome, though higher and somewhat greater in diameter than Haghia Sophia's, is less impressive, for it can only be seen when you are very nearly underneath it, so that you have to crane back your neck to see its crown. How very different here, where from every point of view the dome dominates the whole interior!

Much has been written about the provenance of the various **columns** in the church. The Anonymous of Banduri, the Baron Munchausen among Byzantine writers, is the principal source of various legends that are still repeated about where the great columns of the nave came from: the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, some

buildings at Rome, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, or one of those at Baalbec – the tales differ with the teller. But there seems to be no foundation for these stories and there is every reason to believe that most of the columns, if not all, were specially quarried for Haghia Sophia. From the Silentiary's description, there can be little doubt that the eight monolithic columns of the aisles, the forty columns of the gallery arcade, and all the other verd antique of the building were expressly hewn for Haghia Sophia from the famous quarries in Thessaly near Molossis. But there is a problem about the eight porphyry columns in the exedrae, for there is some evidence that the porphyry mountain at Djebel Dochan near Thebes had ceased to be quarried in the fifth century. If this is true, the eight exedra columns – which, by the way, differ from one another appreciably in height and diameter – must have been taken from some older building. But there is no evidence to connect them to any particular ancient edifice; we simply do not know where they came from.

The only other kind of marble used for columns in the church is that from the island of Proconnesus in the Marmara, known in Turkish as Marmara Adası. It is a soft white, streaked with grey or black, and is used for the twenty-four aisle columns of the gallery and the eight rectangular pillars at the ends of the ground-floor aisles. The floor of the church, too, the frames of doors and windows, and parts of the wall surfaces are also made of this marble.

A great variety of rare and beautiful marbles was used for the superb revetment of the walls. Besides those already discussed, the Silentiary mentions at least eight different varieties: the deep green porphyry from Mount Taygetus near Sparta, a 'fresh green' from Carystus in the Aegean island of Euboea; the rose-coloured Phrygian marble from Synnada and a variegated one from Hierapolis in Asia Minor; 'Iassian, with slanting veins of blood red on livid white', probably from Lacedaemon; a marble 'of crocus yellow glittering like gold', from Simittu Colonia near Tunis; and one from the Pyrenees, 'the product of the Celtic crags, like milk poured on a flesh of glistening black'; and finally the precious onyx, like alabaster honey-coloured and translucent.

Other types of decorations in rare marbles are also found in the church. The square of *opus Alexandrinum* pavement toward the southeast of the nave has always attracted attention. It is chiefly composed of circles of granite, red and green porphyry, and verd antique. According to Antony, Archbishop of Novgorod, who visited

the church in 1200, the Emperor's throne stood upon this square, surrounded by a bronze enclosure.

There are some equally interesting panels above the Imperial Gate: slabs of verd antique alternate with inlaid panels of various marbles. At the top is an elaborate ciborium with drawn curtains revealing a cross on an altar; lower down are other panels with ovals of porphyry, those at the bottom surrounded by pairs of stylized dolphins with foliate tails gobbling up tiny squid with waving tentacles. Finally in the spandrels above the nave and gallery arcades there is a rich and magnificent frieze of sectile work with scrolls of leaves and flowers, and birds 'perched on the twigs'.

The **capitals** of the columns and piers are famous and splendid. There are several different types, but all are alike in having the surface decoration of acanthus and palm foliage deeply undercut so that they produce an effect of white lace on a dark ground; it is possible that they were once gilded. The most common of the capitals – those of the nave and gallery arcades – are generally known as the bowl type: Ionic volutes support a decorated abacus beneath which the bowl-shaped body of the capital is adorned with stylized acanthus leaves, in the centre of which in front and back is a medallion containing a monogram. These monograms are extremely tricky to read, but when deciphered they give the names Justinian and Theodora and the imperial titles Basileus and Augusta. The capitals of the sixteen verd antique columns of the aisles are of similar type but smaller in scale. Those of the eight rectangular pillars at the ends of the aisles are closely related, only here the bowl, instead of becoming circular towards its base, remains square throughout, since the column itself is a square.

The **northwest pillar** in the north aisle is associated by legend with St Gregory the Miracle-Worker, who is supposed to have appeared here in the early days of the church and endowed the stone with his healing power. The pillar was encased in brass to protect the stone, but credulous pilgrims have punctured the metal and worn a hole into the pillar itself, for the moisture contained in the cavity has always been considered a cure for eye diseases and a nostrum for fertility.

There are a number of structures in the interior that were added after Haghia Sophia was converted into a mosque, most notably the *mihrap* and *mimber* and the royal loge against the northeast pier, all of which date from the Fossati restorations of 1847–49. The Fossatis were also responsible for the six huge *levhas*, or painted wooden

medallions, that hang from the piers at gallery level. These were done by the calligrapher Mustafa Izzet Efendi and record in golden Arabic letters the Sacred Islamic Names, those of Allah, the Prophet Mohammed, and the first four Caliphs: Abu Bekr, Umar, Othman, and Ali. The huge inscription in the dome is also by Mustafa Izzet Efendi; this replaces an earlier inscription with the same text, Surah 24:35 from the Koran: 'In the name of God the Merciful and Pitiful; God is the light of Heaven and Earth. His light is himself, not that which shines through glass or gleams in the morning star or glows in the firebrand.'

Haghia Sophia retains a number of other objects dating from the Ottoman period, all of them gifts of various sultans. Some of these imperial benefactions are described by Evliya Çelebi, who served as a *müezzin* in Aya Sofya Camii during the reign of Murat IV:

Murat III brought from the island of Marmara two princely basins of white marble, each of them resembling the cupola of a bath. They stand inside the mosque, full of living water, for all the congregation to perform their ablutions and quench their thirst. The same sultan caused the walls of the mosque to be cleaned and smoothed; he increased the number of lamps and built four raised stone platforms for the readers of the Koran, and a lofty pulpit on slender columns for the muezzins. Sultan Murat IV, the Conqueror of Baghdad, raised upon four marble columns a marble throne for the preacher . . . Sultan Murat, who took great delight in this incomparable mosque, erected a wooden enclosure within it near the southern door, and when he went to prayer on Friday he had his attendants hang there cages containing a great number of singing birds, particularly nightingales, so that their sweet notes, mingled with those of the muezzins' voices, filled the mosque with a harmony approaching to that of paradise . . .

Aya Sofya is, in itself, peculiarly the place of God. It is always full of holy men who pass the day there in fasting and the night in prayer. Seventy lectures well pleasing to God are given there daily, so that to the student it is a mine of knowledge, and it never fails to be frequented by multitudes every day.

Except for the wooden enclosure for the nightingales, all of these objects can still be seen in the nave of Haghia Sophia, along with the gifts of later sultans. The two **lustration urns** that Evliya mentions are located in the western exedrae. They are late Hellenistic or early Byzantine urns to which have been added Turkish lids. An English traveller in the seventeenth century reported that they were always kept full of water 'to cool the Mohammedans overheated by their

pious gesticulations'. The 'lofty pulpit' for the *müezzins* stands in the north arcade; this is of marble, as are the 'raised platforms' for the readers of the Koran, which stand against the four main piers. The most noteworthy of the later Ottoman additions is the very elegant library, built beyond the south aisle by Mahmut I in 1739. The **library**, endowed by the sultan with the revenues of the Cağaloğlu Hamamî, consists of several domed rooms enclosed with metal grilles. These rooms, housing some five thousand Ottoman books and manuscripts, are revetted with superb Iznik tiles of the sixteenth century, which the sultan found stored in Topkapı Sarayı.

Little now remains of the mosaics that once adorned the nave of Haghia Sophia. The largest and most beautiful of those that have survived is in the conch of the apse. The **mosaic** depicts the **Mother of God with the Christ-Child** on her knees; she is dressed in flowing robes of blue with a small cross on the fold of the mantle over her head and one on each shoulder; her right hand rests on Christ's shoulder and her left upon his knee. The Child is dressed in gold and wears sandals on his feet; his right hand is raised in blessing while his left holds a scroll. The Virgin sits on a simple bench-like throne adorned with jewels; under her are two cushions, the lower green, the upper embroidered with clubs like those on playing cards; beneath her feet is a plinth-like footstool, also bejeweled. At the bottom of the arch that frames the apse we see a colossal figure of the Archangel Gabriel; he wears a *divitision*, or undergarment, over which is thrown a *chlamys*, or cloak of white silk; his great wings, reaching nearly to his feet, are of highly-coloured feathers, chiefly blue, green and white. In his right hand he holds a staff, in his left a crystal globe through which can be seen his thumb. Although the upper part of his left side and the top of his wings are lost, he remains a fine and striking figure. Opposite, on the north side of the arch, there are only a few tesserae remaining from a mosaic portrait of the Archangel Michael, the only recognizable fragments being the tips of his great wings.

On the face of the apse conch we see the first three and the last nine letters of an inscription in Greek, of which the whole of the middle part is now missing. The inscription was an iambich distich which once read in full: 'These icons the deceivers once cast down/ the pious emperors have again restored.' The apse mosaic was unveiled by the Patriarch Photius on Easter Sunday 867, a most momentous occasion, for it signified the final triumph of the Orthodox party over the Iconoclasts, marking the permanent

restoration of sacred images to the churches of Byzantium. The two pious emperors referred to here are Michael III, the Sot (842–67), and his protégé Basil I, the Macedonian (867–86), who had been made co-emperor on 26 May 866. On the night of 23–24 September 867, after a drunken banquet, Basil had Michael murdered and usurped the throne. Thus began the Macedonian dynasty, which was to rule Byzantium for nearly two centuries.

Three other **mosaic portraits** are located in niches at the base of the north tympanum wall and are visible from the nave. In the first niche on the left is **St Ignatius the Younger**, who was Patriarch of Constantinople from 847–58 and again from 867–77; in the central niche is **St John Chrysostomos**, Patriarch of Constantinople from 398–404; and in the fifth niche **St Ignatius Theophoros** of Antioch. All three of these mosaics are dated to the last quarter of the ninth century.

The only other **mosaics** that are visible from the nave are the **six-winged angels** in the east pendentives. (Those in the west pendentives are imitations in paint done by the Fossatis.) These are the only figurative mosaics that were not covered over during the Ottoman period, although during their restorations the Fossatis did cover the faces of the angels with gold-starred medallions, which are still in place. These mosaics are dated to the mid-fourteenth century, when the east pendentives were restored after the collapse of that side of the dome in 1346. Evliya Çelebi believed that these figures were talismans, albeit moribund ones, as he writes in the *Seyahatname*: 'Before the birth of the Prophet these angels used to speak, and gave notice of all the dangers which threatened the Empire and the city of Istanbul, but since his highness [Mohammed] appeared all talismans have ceased to act.'

All of the other extant figurative mosaics are in the **galleries**, which are approached via a labyrinth leading up from the northern end of the narthex.

Byzantine sources write that the galleries served as the *gynacaeum*, or women's quarters, though the two eastern bays of the south gallery seem to have been reserved for the use of the royal family, and, on occasion, for synods of the Greek Orthodox Church. The throne of the empress stood behind the balustrade at the centre of the west gallery; the spot is marked by a disc of green Thessalian marble set into the pavement, framed by a pair of coupled columns of green marble.

Three of the four surviving mosaics in the galleries are located at the far end of the south aisle, beyond the first bay. That part of the

south gallery is partially screened off by two false doors of marble with elaborately ornamented panels, the so-called **Gates of Heaven and Hell**. Between them is the actual doorway, surmounted by a slab of translucent Phrygian marble, above which a wooden beam carved with floral designs in low relief forms a cornice to the whole gateway. This gateway is certainly not an original part of Justinian's church, and seems to have been added to close off the far end of the south gallery as a royal loge and as a meeting-place for church synods.

Turning to the right once inside this portal, we see the most beautiful of all the surviving mosaics in Haghia Sophia, on the east wall of the lateral pier. This is the *Deisis*, an iconographic type in which Christ is shown flanked by the Blessed Virgin and St John the Baptist, who in Greek is known as Prodomos, or the Forerunner. Here John is shown to the right and the Virgin to the left, the opposite of their usual positions in the typical *Deisis*; they lean toward Christ in suppliant attitudes, pleading, so the iconographers tell us, for the salvation of mankind. Christ, holding up his right hand in a gesture of benediction, looks off into space with an expression of sadness in his eyes, appearing here as if he partook more of the nature of man than of God, whatever the medieval theologians may have decided about him. Although two-thirds of the mosaic is now lost, the features of the three figures in the *Deisis* are completely unmarred and it remains a work of great power and beauty. This superb mosaic is dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, when Byzantium was flowering in a renaissance under the Palaeologues, the last dynasty to rule the Empire.

Directly opposite the *Deisis*, below the west face of the next lateral pier, we see set into the floor a **sarcophagus lid** inscribed with the illustrious name of Enrico Dandolo, Doge of Venice. Dandolo, who was almost blind, led the allied force of Venetians and Crusaders that captured Constantinople in 1204. After the conquest of the city he ruled over the Venetian share of Byzantium, which he termed 'a half and a quarter of the Roman Empire', until his death in Constantinople on 16 June 1205, when he was in his ninetieth year. The Venetian clergy buried him here in the gallery of Haghia Sophia, but after the Turkish conquest his tomb was broken open, his armour taken by Mehmet the Conqueror, and his bones thrown to the dogs, or so the story goes.

The two other mosaics in the south gallery, both of them imperial portraits, are on the east wall of the building at the far end of the last

bay, flanking a window beside the apse. The **mosaic** to the left of the window depicts a royal couple kneeling on either side of **Christ** enthroned. On the right is the notorious **Empress Zoe**, one of the few women ever to rule Byzantium in her own right, reigning together with her sister Theodora in 1042. On the left is Zoe's third husband, **Constantine IX Monomachus** (1042–55). At the centre of the composition is the enthroned figure of Christ, his right hand raised in a gesture of benediction, his left holding the book of Gospels. On Christ's right stands the emperor holding in his hands the offering of a money-bag, and to his left is the empress holding an inscribed scroll. Above the emperor's head an inscription reads: 'Constantine in Christ the Lord Autocrat, faithful Emperor of the Romans, Monomachus.' Above the head of the empress the inscription reads: 'Zoe, the most pious Augusta.' The scroll in her hand has the same legend as that over the emperor's head, save that the words Autocrat and Monomachus are omitted for want of space.

The curious thing about this mosaic is that all three heads and the two inscriptions concerning Constantine have been altered. A possible explanation for this is furnished by a review of the life and loves of Zoe, daughter of Constantine VIII (1025–28). Zoe and her sister Theodora, a nun, were the last of the Macedonian dynasty, since their father had died without a male heir to the throne. Four emperors in turn ruled after Constantine VIII through their association with Zoe: her first husband Romanus III Argyros (1028–34), her second husband Michael IV (1034–41), her adopted son Michael V (1041–42), and her third husband Constantine IX. The portrait was probably completed in its final form after Zoe's marriage in 1042 to Constantine, whose head and inscription in the mosaic portrait replaced those of one or both of her former husbands. Zoe died at the age of 72 in 1050, mourned by the common people of Constantinople, who called their beloved empress 'Mama'. The court chamberlain Michael Psellus, writing affectionately of Zoe in his *Chronographica*, says that even in her last years, though her hand trembled and her back was bent with age, 'her face had a beauty altogether fresh'.

The **mosaic** to the right of the window shows a royal couple presenting gifts to the **Virgin and Christ Child**, while on the narrow panel of side wall the composition continues to include the portrait of a young prince. These are the figures of **John II Comnenus** and his wife Eirene, daughter of King Ladislaus of Hungary, and their eldest son Alexius, who died in 1122, soon after this portrait was

completed. The emperor was known in his time as Kalo Yanis, or John the Good, and Nicetas Choniates wrote of him that 'He was the best of all the emperors, from the family of the Comneni, who ever sat upon the Roman throne.' John and Eirene were full of good works; together they founded the monastery of the Pantocrator, the triple church of which is still one of the principal monuments on the Fourth Hill of the city.

There is another imperial portrait in the main bay of the northern gallery, located high on the east face of the northwest pier. This panel represents the emperor Alexander, who came to the throne in May 912, succeeding his elder brother Leo VI. 'Here comes the man of thirteen months,' said Leo with his dying breath, as he saw his despised brother coming to pay his last respects. This cynical prophecy was fulfilled in June of the following year, when Alexander died of apoplexy during a drunken game of polo. Alexander's portrait, the last figurative mosaic to be uncovered during the restoration of 1932–64, is dated to the brief period of his reign, 912–13. The portrait shows him standing full-length in the gorgeous ceremonial costume of a Byzantine emperor. He is crowned with a *camelaucum*, a conical helmet-shaped coronet of gold with pendant pearls; draped in a *loros*, a long, gold-embroidered scarf set with jewels; and shod in gem-studded crimson boots. Four medallions flanking the imperial figure bear this legend: 'Lord help thy servant, the orthodox and faithful Emperor Alexander.'

Before leaving the gallery we should proceed to the last bay on this side, for the balcony there commands a close-up view of the mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the apse and the Archangel Gabriel on the south side of the arch.

We leave the church via the door at the southern end of the narthex. This leads into a hallway known in Byzantine times as the **Vestibule of the Warriors**, since the troops of the imperial bodyguard waited here while the emperor attended services in the church. Looking back here, we see another mosaic portrait in the lunette above the doorway leading from the vestibule into the narthex. The mosaic depicts the Blessed Virgin enthroned in an hieratic pose, holding the Christ-Child in her lap, as she receives two crowned and haloed figures. The figure on the right, identified by an inscription as 'Constantine, the great Emperor among the Saints', offers the Virgin a model of a walled town representing Constantinople. The figure on the left, identified as 'Justinian, the illustrious Emperor', offers her a model church symbolising Haghia Sophia. The mosaic is dated to the

last quarter of the tenth century, probably commissioned by Basil II.

There are a number of Ottoman structures in the courtyard of Haghia Sophia, all of them part of the *küllîye* of Aya Sofya Camii. In the centre of the courtyard is the *adîrvan* built in the Turkish rococo style for Mahmut I c.1740. The building on the right of the gateway to Ayasofya Meydanî is the *mektep*, a primary school for the children of the mosque's staff, built by Mahmut I in 1740. The little domed structure to the left of the gate is the *muvağithane*, the house and workshop of the mosque astronomer, whose sundial can still be seen on the facade of Haghia Sophia near the southwest corner of the building. The *muvağithane* was built for Abdül Mecit in 1847–49 by the Fossatis.

The four domed buildings in the garden just to the south of Haghia Sophia are all imperial **Ottoman tombs**. The oldest of them is the structure that we pass on the left as we leave the south end of the narthex. This is the former baptistry of Haghia Sophia, an octagonal building with a low dome. The Turks converted it into a mausoleum to bury the mad sultan Mustafa I on 20 January 1639, sixteen years after he had been deposed for the second time. The equally mad sultan Ibrahim was interred here too following his execution on 18 September 1648, ten days after he had been deposed. Evliya Çelebi says that Ibrahim's tomb was much visited by women, 'because he was much addicted to them'.

The three other imperial tombs are in the eastern end of the garden. The earliest in date of these is the one in the centre, that of Selim II, which was completed in 1577. This is a work of Sinan and is one of the finest Ottoman tombs in the city, both the entrance facade and the whole of the interior covered with superb Iznik tiles. The building is square, with an outer dome resting on the exterior walls; within a circlet of columns supports an inner dome. The largest of the catafalques in the tomb covers the grave of Selim II, son and successor of Süleyman the Magnificent. As Evliya Çelebi wrote of him: 'He was an amiable monarch, took much delight in the conversations of poets and learned men, and indulged in wine and gaiety. He was a sweet-natured sovereign but much given to women and wine.' Selim died on 15 December 1574 at the age of fifty-four, after having fallen in his bath in a drunken stupor. Beside Selim's catafalque is that of his favourite wife Nurbanu. Arrayed around them are the tiny catafalques containing the graves of five of Selim's sons, three of his daughters, and thirty-two children of his son and successor, Murat III. Selim's sons were murdered on the night of his

death, assassinated according to Ottoman law in order to ensure the peaceful succession of Murat, his eldest son.

The westernmost of the three tombs is that of Murat III. This *türbe* was completed in 1599 by Davut Ağa, who succeeded Sinan as Chief of the Imperial Architects. It is hexagonal in plan, also with a double dome and is adorned with Iznik tiles comparable in quality to those in Selim's *türbe*. The *türbe* contains the remains of Murat III as well as those of his favourite wife, Safiye, four of his lesser concubines, twenty-three of his sons and twenty-five of his daughters. The sultan died on 16 January 1595, in his forty-ninth year. Murat's *türbe* was not finished at the time of his death and so his coffin was temporarily placed under a tent in the garden of Haghia Sophia. The following morning nineteen more coffins were placed there around him, for that night all but one of his surviving sons were executed to ensure the succession of his eldest son, Mehmet III. Most of the other twenty-nine children of Murat III buried here died young, victims of the many epidemics that ravaged the Harem. This was the last use of what Evliya called 'the bloody code of the Ottomans'; thenceforth the younger brothers of a succeeding sultan were spared and instead confined in a prison in Topkapî Sarayî known as the Kafes, or Cage. Built up against Murat's tomb is the little building called the *Türbe of the Princes*, burial-place of five infant sons of Murat IV who died of the plague.

The tomb at the eastern end of the garden is that of Mehmet III, completed in 1603 by Dalgîç Ahmet Ağa, who succeeded Davut Ağa as Chief Architect. The *türbe* is octagonal in plan and, like the others, is covered with the finest Iznik tiles. Mehmet died on 22 December 1603 at the age of thirty-six. Nine of Mehmet's children are buried with him, as his favourite wife Handan. Also buried in the *türbe* are sixteen daughters of Murat III, all of whom died of the plague in 1598.

We now walk around the south and east sides of Haghia Sophia to approach the Imperial Gate of Topkapî Sarayî. As we do so we come on our right to the grandest of all the Ottoman **street-fountains** in the city; this was built in 1728 for Ahmet III, and is a particularly fine example of Turkish rococo architecture. It is a square structure with an overhanging roof surmounted by five small domes. On each of the four sides there is a *çeşme*, or fountain, and at each of the four corners a *sebil*. Each of the fountains is set into a niche framed in an ogival archway. The voussoirs of the arches are in alternating red and pink marble and the facade is richly decorated with floral designs in

low relief. The corner *sebils* are semicircular in form, each having three windows framed by engaged marble columns and enclosed with ornate bronze grilles. The curved wall above and below each *sebil* is delicately carved and elaborately decorated with relieved designs and calligraphic inscriptions. Above each of the four *çeşmes* there is a long and beautiful inscription in gold letters on a blue-green ground; the text is by the celebrated poet Seyit Vehbi, who praises the fountain and compares its waters with those of the holy spring Zemzem and of the sacred *selsebils*, or cascade fountains, of Paradise.

On our left, diagonally opposite the Imperial Gate at the upper end of Soğuk Çeşme Sokağı, a large Turkish portal in the rococo style leads to the northeast corner of Hagia Sophia's precincts. The domed structure inside the gate was part of Justinian's church, its *skeuphylakion*, or treasury. All of the precious objects used in the liturgies of Hagia Sophia were stored here, as well as such sacred relics as the Crown of Thorns of Christ's Passion and fragments of the True Cross, which Constantine's mother Helena had brought back from her pilgrimage to Jerusalem. All of these treasures were looted by the knights of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetians when they sacked Constantinople in 1204. The treasury is not open to the public.

Here we might pause to look back on Hagia Sophia, for this is one of the best vantage points for viewing the Great Church, the object of admiration of travellers for more than fourteen centuries. One such encomium was written more than a thousand years ago by an envoy of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, who reported thus after his pilgrimage to Hagia Sophia: 'We know not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.'

Topkapî Sarayî

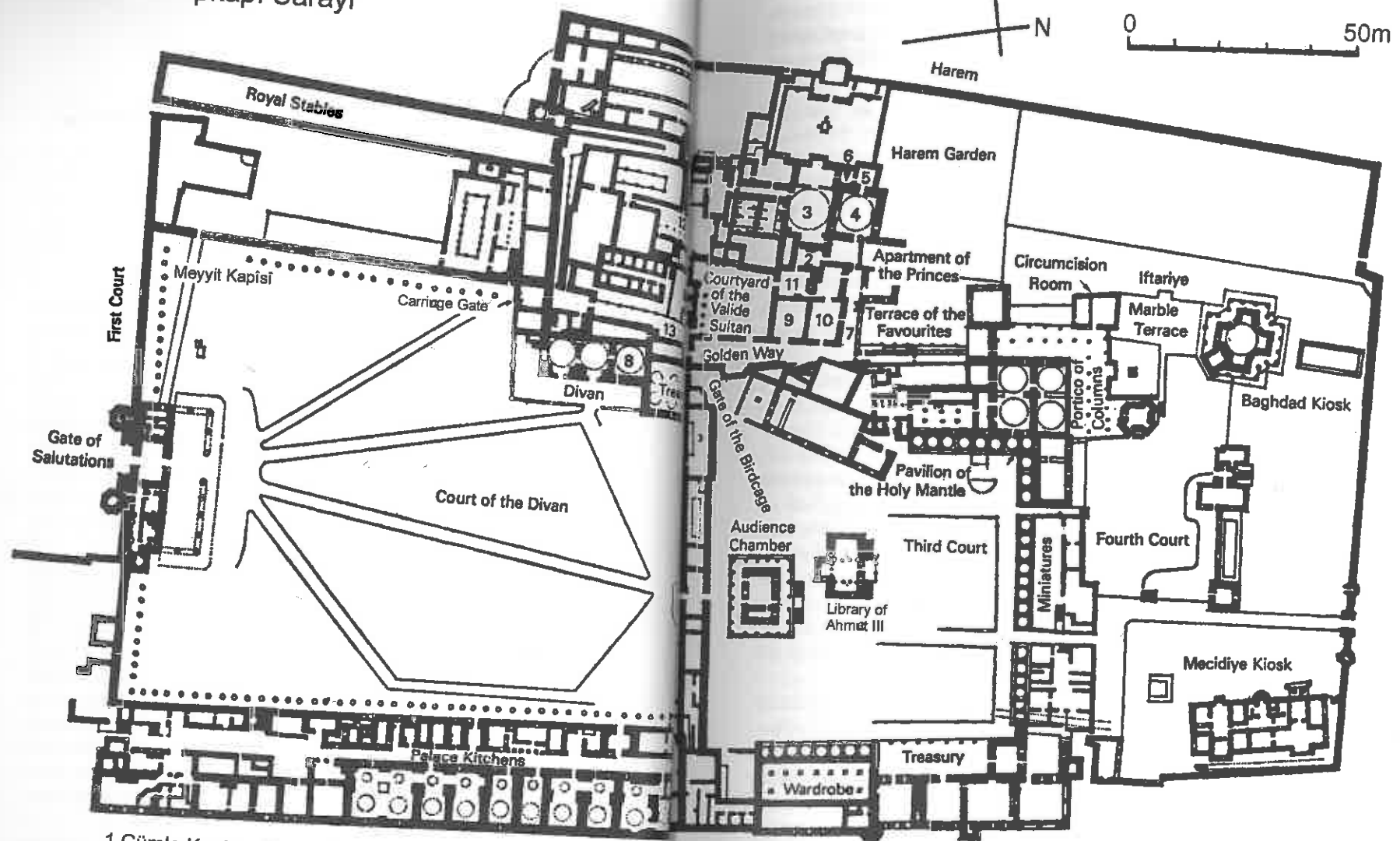
WE NOW APPROACH Topkapî Sarayî, the great palace of the Ottoman sultans, whose main entrance is beyond the northeast corner of Hagia Sophia.

After his conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmet the Conqueror found that the former palaces of the Byzantine emperors were in ruins, and so he built a palatial complex for himself on the Third Hill. About six years later he began to create a new and more secluded residence on the acropolis of the First Hill, with gardens laid out on the slopes leading down to the shore. The palace grounds were enclosed on their landward side by a massive defence wall studded with towers, which extended from the Golden Horn to the Marmara, linking up with the ancient Byzantine sea-walls. The main sea-gate in these walls was at Saray Burnu, a portal called Topkapî, the Cannon Gate, because it was flanked by a battery of artillery. The gate, now vanished, soon gave its name to Topkapî Sarayî, the Palace of the Cannon Gate. Mehmet the Conqueror himself called it Dar-ı Saadet, the House of Felicity. As Evliya Çelebi wrote in his *Seyahatname* describing Topkapî Sarayî: 'Never hath a more delightful residence been erected by the art of man.'

The first phase in the creation of Topkapî Sarayî was completed by about 1465, after which Mehmet the Conqueror made it his principal residence and the centre of his government. His original residence on the Third Hill then came to be called Eski Saray, the Old Palace, which thenceforth was used to house the wives of departed sultans, while the main harem, or women's quarters, was gradually moved to Topkapî Sarayî. The shift was completed and became permanent during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, who moved his wife Roxelana into the Harem of Topkapî Sarayî. The women were originally housed in wooden pavilions, with the first brick and stone structures there apparently dating from the reign of Murat III.

Almost the entire plan of the palace as we see it today, with the exception of the Harem and the Fourth Court, belongs largely to the time of Murat III, with extensive reconstructions and additions chiefly under Mehmet IV and Osman III, while the isolated pavilions

Topkapı Sarayı



- 1 Cümle Kapısı 3 Hall of the Emperor 5 Library of Ahmet I
2 Çeşmeli Oda 4 Salon of Murat III 6 Fruit Room

- 7 Place of Consultation of the Jinns
8 Grand Vezir's Office
9, 10 Suites of the First and Second Kadins

- 11 Ocaklı Oda
12 Courtyard of the Cariyeler (Women Slaves)
13 Hall of Black Eunuchs

of the Fourth Court date from various periods. On three occasions, in 1574, 1665 and 1856, very serious fires devastated large sections of the palace, so that while the three main courts have preserved essentially the arrangement given them by Mehmet the Conqueror, many of the buildings have either disappeared or have been reconstructed in later periods.

Topkapı remained the imperial residence up until 1856, when Abdül Mecit abandoned it in favour of the new palace of Dolmabahçe on the Bosphorus. Thereafter Topkapı Sarayı was used to house the women of departed sultans and their servants. Then, in 1909, when Abdül Hamit II was deposed, the imperial harem was officially disbanded, and most of those who were still living in Topkapı Sarayı were forced to leave. After that the old palace on the First Hill remained virtually unused until 1924, when Atatürk decided to convert it into a museum. Since then Topkapı has undergone a continuous process of restoration, with additional rooms being opened to the public from time to time.

The main entrance to Topkapı Sarayı is **Bab-ı Hümayün**, the **Imperial Gate**. The monumental gatehouse dates from the last years of Mehmet the Conqueror's reign; originally there was a second storey, but this was demolished in 1867 when Abdül Aziz (1861–76) revetted the gate in marble. The rooms in the gateway housed the *Kapıcı*s, or guards, of whom as many as fifty were on watch at all hours of the day and night. The older part of the arch contains four beautiful calligraphic inscriptions, one recording the erection of the gate by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1478 and the other three quoting passages from the Koran. The *tuğra*, or imperial monogram, is that of Mahmut II, the last sultan to live out his reign in Topkapı Sarayı, and other calligraphic inscriptions record the reconstruction of the gateway by Abdül Aziz.

Passing through the Imperial Gate, we enter the **First Court** of the Saray. This was also known as the Courtyard of the Janissaries, for the elite corps of the Ottoman army mustered here when they were on duty in the Saray, up until their annihilation in 1826 by Mahmut II. The First Court, which was open to the public, was the service area of the palace. It contained a hospital, a bakery, an arsenal, the Mint and Outer Treasury, storehouses for firewood and other things, and dormitories for guards and domestics of the Outer Services of the Saray, those whose duties did not ordinarily bring them into Inner Palace, the private residential area inhabited by the sultan and his court. All of the buildings that housed these services

have vanished except for the **Darphane**, or **Mint**, the complex of building on the left side of the courtyard. The road beside it leads down to Gülhane Park and the museums on the terrace below the First Court, which we will visit after our tour of the palace. The road on the right side of the courtyard leads down to the parking area, which originally was used for the palace menagerie, while below that was the area where the palace pages played *cirit*, a game in which horsemen hurled darts at one another.

As we walk through the First Court we come on our left to the Byzantine church of **Haghia Eirene**, which we will also visit on our next tour.

At the far end of the First Court we come to **Bab-üs-Selam**, the **Gate of Salutations**, better known as **Orta Kapı**, the **Middle Gate**. This was the entrance to the Inner Palace where everyone had to dismount, for no one but the Sultan was allowed to ride beyond this point. This impressive entryway, flanked by a pair of conical-capped octagonal towers connected by a crenellated parapet, also dates from Mehmet the Conqueror's time. The double-arched doorway is closed by two pairs of splendid doors, the outer one of which bears the date 1524/25. Above the gateway is the *tuğra* of Süleyman the Magnificent and a calligraphic inscription of the Islamic creed: 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his Prophet.'

The gateway is now the entrance to the **Topkapı Sarayı Museum**. The suite of rooms to the right of the gateway was formerly the residence of the Chief Gatekeeper of the Saray. The watchmen of lower rank lived in rooms to the left of the central chamber, where there was a small suite of rooms that housed the Chief Executioner of the Saray, a post that was held by the Chief Gardener. One of the chambers also served as a waiting-room for foreign ambassadors who had an audience with the Grand Vezier or the Sultan, the latter being a very rare occurrence.

The inner side of Bab-üs Selam has an elaborate but oddly irregular portico of ten columns with a widely-overhanging roof, unfortunately badly repainted in the nineteenth century. To the right of the gate there are two display cases with topographical models, one showing the entire area of Topkapı Sarayı and the other the Inner Palace.

We now enter the **Second Court of the Saray**, a vast area 130 metres long and 110 metres wide. The courtyard, still very much as it was when Mehmet the Conqueror laid it out, is a tranquil cloister of imposing proportions, planted with venerable cypress trees; several fountains once adorned it and mild-eyed gazelles pastured on

the glebe.

This was known as the **Court of the Divan**. It took its name from the **Divan**, or **Imperial Council**, which met in the domed chambers at the far left corner of the courtyard. On the first four days of every week the Grand Vizier and other high officials of the realm met here to settle all of the civil affairs of the Ottoman state. Mehmet the Conqueror presided over meetings of the Divan in the early years after the conquest, but later in his reign he ceased to attend directly, merely looking on from his adjacent loge through a grilled window over the Grand Vizier's seat, a practice followed by his successors. On the days of Divan meetings the whole courtyard was filled with a vast throng of officials along with the corps of palace guards and Janissaries, at least 5,000 people on ordinary days, but more than twice that number on special occasions.

From the Middle Gate paths radiate to various parts of the courtyard. The diagonal path on the left leads to the Divan and its associated chambers, dominated by the conical-roofed tower that is the principal landmark of the Saray when viewed from the Golden Horn. This complex dates in its essentials from Mehmet the Conqueror's time, though much altered in later periods. The tower was lower in Mehmet the Conqueror's day and had a pyramidal roof, the present structure with its Corinthian columns having been added by Mahmut II in 1820.

The Divan complex consists of three domed chambers that project from the northwest corner of the courtyard under the tower, their outer periphery shaded by a colonnaded portico with overhanging eaves. The first room on the left is the Divan proper, the meeting place of the Imperial Council; the one in the centre was the Public Records Office, and the one on the right was the Office of the Grand Vizier. The first two rooms, both of which are square and covered by a dome, open widely into one another under a great arch. The lower walls are revetted with Iznik tiles of the best period; the upper parts of the walls, as well as the vaults and the domes, have been redecorated in recent years. Around three sides of the first room there is a low couch covered with Turkish carpets, the divan from which the Council took its name. Here sat the members of the Council, the Grand Vizier in the centre opposite the door, the other viziers on either side of him in strict order of rank. Over the Grand Vizier's seat there is a grilled window known as the Eye of the Sultan, used by Mehmet the Conqueror and his successors whenever they wanted to observe the proceedings in the Divan.

Adjacent to the three rooms of the Divan complex is the **Inner Treasury**, a long chamber with eight domes in four pairs supported internally by three massive piers. This building dates from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Here, and in the vaults below, were stored the tax receipts and tribute money as they arrived from all over the Empire. These funds were kept here until the quarterly pay days for the use of the Council in meeting the expenses of government, and at the end of each quarter what remained unspent was transferred to the Imperial Treasury in the Third Court. The Inner Treasury is now used to display the Saray's **Collection of Arms and Armour**, most of it Turkish, including many objects that belonged to the sultans.

Around the corner from the Divan, under the south side of the **Divan Tower**, is the **Carriage Gate**, the main entrance to the Harem. Guided tours of the Harem start here, but we will delay our visit until we have seen the rest of the palace.

The remainder of the west side of the Second Court is occupied by a long portico, at the south end of which there is a portal known as **Meyyit Kapısı**, the **Gate of the Dead**, because those who died in the palace were carried through it for burial outside. This gateway leads down to the area of the Royal Stables, where the imperial carriages and harnesses are preserved, though these buildings are now temporarily closed. Some of the ornate carriages from the stables are occasionally on view under the portico to the right of the Middle Gate as you enter.

Returning to the Middle Gate, we now take the right-hand diagonal path towards the kitchens. On the way we pass an enormous Byzantine capital unearthed here in the mid-1960s, along with a similar one that is now inside the kitchen area. Both capitals appear to date from the fifth or sixth century, and probably bore statues.

Most of the east side of the Second Court is taken up with the **palace kitchens** and the quarters of the culinary department of the Inner Service, those who served in the Inner Palace. The kitchens themselves comprise a series of ten spacious chambers along the sheer eastern wall of the Inner Palace, their lofty domes and tall conical chimneys making them distinctive landmarks when seen from the Marmara shore. The two southernmost domes date back to Mehmet the Conqueror's time, the other eight to that of Beyazıt II, while the chimneys in front of them are additions by Sinan, who reconstructed much of this part of the Saray after a fire in 1574. Parallel to the kitchens and facing them across a narrow alley are the

domed chambers that once housed the kitchen staff. Today the kitchens and staff chambers are used to display the Saray's incomparable **collection of Chinese porcelain** and other china, glassware and silverware. The collection of Chinese porcelain is said to be the third richest and most varied in the world, surpassed only by those at Taipei (formerly at Beijing) and Dresden. Begun by Beyazıt II, augmented by Selim I and above all by Süleyman the Magnificent, the pieces date from the wonderful celadons of the Sung and Yuan collections (960–1368) to the later Ming of the seventeenth century. The European specimens, Limoges, Sèvres, Meissen, and others, are less impressive. There is also an interesting display of the utensils that were once used in the Saray kitchens, most notably the great *kazans*, or bronze cauldrons. The rooms at the north end of the courtyard are used to display the Saray's collection of **Istanbul glass and porcelain**, while the chambers on the west side are used to exhibit **silver objects** that once belonged to the sultans, along with a display of European porcelain.

At the far end of the Second Court we come to **Bab-üs-Saadet**, the **Gate of Felicity**. This is the entryway to the **Third Court**, the central area of the **Inner Palace**, the actual **House of Felicity**, the strictly private and residential area of the Saray. The gateway itself dates from Mehmet the Conqueror's time, though it was reconstructed in the sixteenth century and thoroughly redecorated in the rococo style in the eighteenth century. When a new sultan began his reign he sat before the Gate of Felicity in his gold and emerald Bayram Throne, receiving the homage of all the dignitaries in the civil and religious hierarchies of the Empire in turn, beginning with the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed. The Sultan also received his subjects here on the eve of the two most festive Moslem holidays, Şeker Bayramı and Kurban Bayramı.

Immediately inside the Gate of Felicity is the **Arz Odası**, or **Audience Chamber**. Although in the Third Court, it belongs by function rather to the Second, for it was the setting for the last act of the ceremonies connected with meetings of the Divan. Here, at the end of each session of the council, the Grand Vizier and the other high functionaries waited on the Sultan and reported to him upon the business transacted and the decisions taken, which could not be considered final until they had received the royal assent. Here also the ambassadors of foreign powers were presented at their arrival and leave-taking.

The Audience Chamber occupies a small building with wide-spreading eaves supported by an arcade of ancient marble columns.

The foundation and plan are from Mehmet the Conqueror's time, but most of the building dates from the reign of Selim I, with inscriptions recording restorations by Ahmet III and Mahmut II. The room was restored again after a fire in 1856, which destroyed most of its furnishings and decorations. The building is divided into a small anteroom on the right and the audience chamber proper on the left, where the Sultan sat enthroned. The magnificent canopy of the throne, dated by an inscription to 1596, and the gilt-bronze *ocak*, or chimney-piece, are the only parts of the decoration that survived the fire.

The Third Court was the centre of the Inner Service of the Saray, which included the royal pages, the students in the **Palace School**, and the servants and officials in the various departments of the Sultan's household staff. The Palace School was designed to train young men for important positions in the civil, religious and military hierarchies of the Empire. The pages who attended the school entered at various ages from twelve to eighteen, most of them taken in the *devşirme*, the annual levy of Christian youths in the provinces of the Empire. The school was organized in six divisions, or Halls, which were housed around the periphery of the Third Court. Here also were housed the White Eunuchs and their Ağas, who were in charge of the administration and discipline at the school. The large building jutting out into the courtyard to the left is **Ağalar Camii**, the **Mosque of the Ağas**, which was used by the pages, the students and faculty at the school, and the White Eunuchs. Ağalar Camii now serves as one of the libraries of the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, along with the building in the middle of the court, a library founded by Ahmet III in 1719. The latter is an elegant little building of Proconnesian marble consisting of a domed area flanked by three loggias with sofas and cupboards for books.

The structure at the beginning of the right side of the court is the former **Campaign Hall**, the branch of the Palace School that trained pages who would accompany the Sultan on campaign. This is preceded by a domed colonnade supported by a row of very handsome Byzantine columns in verd-antique. The hall is one of the largest chambers in the Saray, a long room divided into three aisles by two rows of pillars supporting barrel vaults. This is now used to house the **Imperial Wardrobe**, a fascinating collection of costumes of the sultans. All of the older ones are of the *kaftan* type, a long robe reaching to the feet made of silk, satin or velvet brocade in brilliant colours and bold design, often lined or trimmed with fur; many are

of outstanding beauty and nearly all are in perfect condition.

The rest of the east side of the Court beyond the Campaign Hall is taken up with the **Treasury**. This was a pavilion originally built by Mehmet the Conqueror as the **Selamlık**, a suite of reception rooms used by the Sultan, the royal princes, and the palace pages. The vaults below were used as the Privy Treasury, and gradually the chambers above became storehouses for precious objects, so that in later times the Selamlık was shifted to another part of the Saray. These rooms have now been restored as the Treasury of the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, an astonishing collection of precious objects formerly owned by the sultans. The most prominent exhibits are four great thrones encrusted with precious stones, of which the huge golden one studded with chrysolites was used on *bayrams* and other state occasions right down to the end of the empire. Other exhibits include bejeweled swords and daggers, objects of jade and other semi-precious stones often mounted in gold, caskets overflowing with uncut emeralds and rubies, and hundreds of other precious objects of gold and jewels, altogether an astonishing collection, admirably mounted and displayed.

The two buildings on the north side of the court formerly housed the **Hall of the Treasury** (left) and the **Hall of the Commissariat** (right). The Hall of the Commissariat now serves as offices for the director of the museum. The Hall of the Treasury houses the Saray's collections of **calligraphy** and of **Turkish and Persian miniatures**. From an artistic point of view the collection of miniatures is perhaps the supreme treasure of the Saray, a total of some thirteen thousand pictures, most of them in albums, of which only a very few can be exhibited at any time. The oldest miniatures in the collection are in the so-called Mehmet the Conqueror Album; tentatively ascribed to Mohammed Siyah Kalem ('of the black pen'), they are from Iran and have been dated variously from earlier than the thirteenth century to the second half of the fifteenth century. The oldest Ottoman works are by Matrakci Nasuh, court-painter of Süleyman the Magnificent, the most interesting of which is a detailed map of Istanbul, including Galata. Other miniatures are in three albums commissioned by Murat III, one of the books illustrating a procession of the guilds held in 1583 to celebrate the circumcision of the future Mehmet III, which lasted for fifty-seven days. The latest in date of the imperial albums was composed in 1720 to commemorate the circumcision of four sons of Ahmet III; here the miniatures are by Levni, one of the two greatest Ottoman painters. The other is Nigari, whose finest

work is a portrait of Süleyman in his last years. The gallery at the rear is now used to display the Saray's wonderful collection of Karagöz figures, the Turkish shadow puppets. The gallery on the upper floor is hung with portraits of all the sultans of the Ottoman dynasty, known in Turkish as the Osmanlı.

In the last building on the north side of the courtyard there is a chamber known as the **Treasury of the Sword-Bearer**, which is now used to exhibit some of the Saray's **Clock Collection**.

At the northwest corner of the courtyard is **Hırka-i-Saadet Dairesi**, the chambers where the relics of the Prophet Mohammed are kept. These relics, of which the Prophet's mantle is the most sacred, were brought from Egypt by Selim I following his capture of Cairo in 1517, after which he and his successors assumed the title of Caliph. The pavilion itself consists of four domed rooms forming a square, with a fifth opening off to the left of the southwest chamber. The foundation and plan of these rooms date to Mehmet the Conqueror's reign, though they were partly reconstructed and refurnished by Murat III.

One enters the pavilion into a room with a pretty fountain under the dome, which opens by a huge arch into the second room. Here are displayed the bow of the Prophet Mohammed and the swords of the first four Caliphs; farther on is one of the doors of the great mosque at Mecca. In the room to the left are some beautiful ancient Korans; the solid gold covering for the Hacer-i Esved, the meteoritic stone which is built into the Kaaba at Mecca; also water-gutters from Mecca of chased and moulded silver-gilt, and other precious objects. Returning to the room with the fountain, we pass into another chamber where are preserved the more precious relics of the Prophet: hairs from his beard, one of his teeth, his footprint, his seal, and so on. (Many of these objects were brought to Istanbul after the victorious campaign of Selim I in 1517.) Through an opening here one looks into (one cannot enter) the room where the Holy Mantle of the Prophet is preserved in a golden coffer under a magnificent golden baldachino, and in another coffer is the Holy Standard, which in times past was unfurled when a holy war was proclaimed against the infidel. An *imam* now kneels in this room and chants the Koran throughout the day, the sound of his voice resonating throughout the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle.

We continue on into the **Fourth Court**, which is really a garden on several levels with a number of pavilions. We begin at the highest level in the southwest corner of the court, where a flight of steps

leads up to the Portico of Columns, an L-shaped colonnaded area that borders the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle. Here we come to a marble pool flanked by two handsome imperial kiosks. The one at the northeast corner of the portico is the **Rivan Köşkü**, built by Murat IV in 1636 to commemorate his capture of Rivan (modern Erivan) in the Caucasus. It is a cruciform room entirely revetted in beautiful Iznik tiles, while the outside has a polychrome revetment of marble.

During the latter years of his reign Murat was hopelessly addicted to drink, and when he was drunk he became a homicidal maniac. Demetrius Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia, describes Murat's insane behaviour in his history of the Ottoman Empire.

Very often at midnight he stole out of the women's quarters through the private gate of the palace with his drawn sword, and running through the streets barefooted with only a loose gown around him, like a madman, killed whoever came his way. Frequently from the windows of the higher rooms, where he used to drink and divert himself, he shot with arrows such as accidentally passed by. In the day time he ran up and down in disguise, and did not return until he had killed some unfortunate wretch for little or no cause.

The kiosk at the northwest corner is the **Sünnet Odası**, or **Circumcision Room**. This was built for Sultan Ibrahim in 1642 to celebrate the circumcision rites of his first son, the future Mehmet IV. The kiosk is rectangular in plan and is entirely revetted in Iznik tiles, both inside and out. The Sünnet Odası stands at the south end of a broad marble terrace, which on its west side is bordered by a white marble balustrade looking out over the lower gardens of the palace to the Golden Horn. At the centre of the balustrade there is a charming little balcony covered by a domed canopy in gilded bronze carried on four slim bronze pillars. An inscription on the canopy records that the balcony is called **Iftariye** and that it was made for Sultan Ibrahim in 1640, the first year of his reign. The balcony takes its name from Iftar, the festive meal taken just after sunset in the holy month of Ramadan, ending the daily fast. According to palace tradition, Ibrahim always took his Iftar on this balcony, and miniatures in the Saray's collection depict him seated there, throwing handfuls of coins to his pages.

When Ibrahim succeeded to the throne, after having been locked up in the Cage throughout the reign of his brother Murat IV, it was thought at first that he was impotent. Since Ibrahim was the only

male left in the Ottoman line his mother Kösem did what she could to remedy this, having a quacksalver dose him with aphrodisiacs while she supplied him with beautiful women from the Istanbul slave market. Her treatment worked, and on 6 January Ibrahim's concubine Turhan Hadice bore him a son, the future Mehmet IV, and in the next fourteen months he sired two more sons, the future sultans Süleyman II (1687–91) and Ahmet II (1691–95). By that time he had developed a prodigious sexual appetite, as Cantemir writes, contrasting Ibrahim's lust with Murat's alcoholism.

As Murat was wholly addicted to wine, so was Ibrahim to lust. They say he spent all his time in sensual pleasure, and when nature was exhausted with the frequent repetition of venereal delights he endeavoured to restore it with potions or commanded a beautiful virgin richly habited to be brought to him by his mother. . . . In the palace gardens he frequently assembled all the virgins, made them strip themselves naked, and neighing like a stallion ran amongst them and as it were ravished one or the other, kicking or struggling by his order. Happening once to see the private parts of a wild heifer, he sent the shape of them in gold all over the empire with orders to make enquiry whether a woman made in just that manner could be found for his lust. At last such a one was found and received into the women's quarters. [She was an Armenian girl named Şeker Para, or Piece of Sugar, a giantess who apparently weighed more than three hundred pounds.] He made a collection of great and voluminous books expressing the various ways of coition, whence he even invented some new and previously unknown postures.

A third pavilion stands at the north end of the terrace. This is the **Bagdat Köşkü**, built by Murat IV in 1638 to commemorate his capture of Baghdad. The kiosk is cruciform in plan and its wide overhanging eaves are carried by an arcade of marble columns. The columns are crowned with lotus capitals, and the voussiors of the arches are in alternating white and coloured marble with serrated edges. The walls inside and out are sheathed in ceramic tiles, chiefly blue and white, and the interior is beautifully furnished, its dome decorated with elaborate arabesques on a crimson ground, painted on leather.

At the centre of the garden in the main area of the Fourth Court there is a charming pavilion known as the **Sofa Köşkü**. This was built early in the eighteenth century for Ahmet III, probably as a kiosk for his use during the famous tulip festivals that he held here in

the gardens of the Fourth Court. He was known in the West as the Tulip King, and in Turkish the period of his reign is called *Lale Devri*, the Tulip Period. In 1752 the building was redecorated in the rococo style by Mahmut I. At the far end of the court is the **Mecidiye Köşkü**, an ornate pavilion of European appearance standing on a marble terrace at the northeastern corner of the acropolis-hill. The pavilion takes its name from Abdül Mecit, for whom it was built c.1840. The kiosk now houses an excellent restaurant named *Konyalı*, which commands a panoramic view of the lower Bosphorus.

We now return to the Carriage Gate in the Second Court to begin a tour of the **Harem**. The gate took its name from the fact that the Harem ladies entered their carriages here when they went on an outing. Above the gateway is an inscription giving the date of its construction, 1588.

The gateway opens into a vestibule called **Dolaplı Kubbe**, the **Domed Cupboard**, and from there we go on into a guardroom revetted with fine tiles. The Black Eunuchs were stationed here, guarding the approach to **Altın Yolu**, the Golden Way, a walkway paved with pebble mosaics extending along the eastern side of the Harem.

At the beginning of the Golden Way on its left we pass a portico bordered by ten marble columns with lotus capitals, surmounted by wrought-iron lamps that once lighted the way to the Carriage Gate. The tiled building to the rear of the porch was the **dormitory of the Black Eunuchs**, dated to 1668–69. A passageway leads to the central courtyard of the dormitory, which has about a dozen little rooms on each side of its three floors. We cannot enter the courtyard, but we can look into the rooms on its east side through the windows under the portico. The last room on the north has been restored with two wax figures representing Black Eunuchs dressed in their characteristic costumes.

Since there were several hundred Black Eunuchs in the palace, they must have served in watches and slept here in relays when they were not on duty. Generally, the Black Eunuchs guarded the Harem, while the older ones dominated the Inner Service under their Chief, whose title was *Kızlar Ağası*, *Ağa of the Girls*. The **apartment of the Kızlar Ağası** was the building at the left side of the Golden Way just beyond the portico. The young princes in the Harem received their primary education from the Chief Black Eunuch on the second floor of his apartment; after they reached the age of puberty they moved to the *selamlık* and attended the Palace School along with the pages.

The apartment of the Chief Black Eunuch commanded the approach to **Cümle Kapısı**, the main entrance to the Harem proper. Beyond **Cümle Kapısı** is another guardroom, strategically situated at the Harem's main intersection. On the right a corridor leads to **Kuşhane Kapısı**, the **Aviary Gate**, which gives access to the Third Court; on the left a long and narrow passageway leads down to the **Courtyard of the Cariyeler**, the women servants in the Harem. On the east side of this courtyard there are three suites of rooms for the chief women officials of the Harem: the Head Stewardess, the Treasure, and the Head Laundress. The domed and tiled rooms are very attractive, particularly as they overlook the lower gardens of the Saray. The long staircase just beyond the three suites leads down to a large courtyard on a much lower level, once the site of the Harem hospital.

Returning to **Cümle Kapısı**, we now pass through a portal and turn left off the Golden Way into the **Courtyard of the Valide Sultan**. The apartments of the Valide Sultan occupy most of the west side of the courtyard on two levels, while those of the First and Second Kadıns, the highest-ranking of the Sultan's four official wives, were on the north side.

At the northwest corner of the courtyard there is a mounting block used by the Sultan when he rode to and from the Inner Palace along the Golden Way; behind it a portal leads into **Ocaklı Oda**, the **Room with a Hearth**, a beautifully tiled chamber dominated by a splendid bronze chimney-piece. On the right a door leads to the suites of the First and Second Kadıns. On the left a door opens into a smaller chamber called **Çeşmeli Oda**, the **Room with a Fountain**, whose pretty fountain bears the date 1665/66, as does the inscription on the door leading to the next room. These rooms served as antechambers between the Harem and the Sultan's suite.

A passageway at the southwest corner of the courtyard leads into the **Salon of the Valide Sultan**. The Valide's chambers also included an adjoining reception room, an interior court, a sitting-room, a prayer-room, and a smaller suite on the upper floor, altogether a vast apartment considering the cramped confines of the Harem, where even the First and Second Kadıns had just two rooms each. At the far end of the salon there is an alcove that has been restored with wax figures representing the Valide and her ladies in waiting, all dressed in the costumes they would have worn in the Harem.

We leave the Valide's apartment along a corridor paved in marble. A doorway on the left, now closed, leads into what were once the **apartments of Sultan Abdül Hamit I**. Farther along on the right a

door leads into the **private baths of the Sultan**, where he bathed after visiting his favourites in the Harem. Selim II died in these baths on 15 December 1574, after falling while in a drunken stupor and hitting his head on the marble pavement.

Evliya Çelebi, who served Murat IV as a page in the mid 1630s, writes in his *Seyahatname* of a dizzying encounter that he had with the sultan outside these baths.

One day the Sultan came out covered with perspiration from his *hamam* near the throne room, saluted those present and said, 'Now I have had my bath.' 'May it be to your health,' was the general reply. I said, 'My Sultan, you are now clean and comfortable, do not therefore oil yourself for wrestling today, especially since you have already exercised with others and your strength must be considerably reduced.' 'Now have I no strength left?' said he. 'Let me see,' upon which he seized me like an eagle, raised me over his head and whirled me about as children do a top. I exclaimed, 'Do not let me fall, my Sultan, hold me fast!' He said, 'Hold fast yourself!' and continued to swing me about, until I cried out, 'For God's sake, my Sultan, cease, for I am quite giddy!' He then began to laugh, released me, and gave me forty-eight pieces of gold for the amusement which I had offered him.

At the end of the corridor beyond the baths we come to the largest chamber of the Inner Palace – **Hünkâr Odası** – the **Hall of the Emperor**. The room is divided by a great arch into two unequal sections; the larger part is domed, the smaller, slightly raised, has a balcony where the women musicians of the Harem played. This splendid hall is believed to date from the reign of Murat III, and is almost certainly a work of Sinan. The upper part of the room – domes, pendentives and arches – has been restored to its original appearance, but the lower zone retains the baroque decorations, including the blue and white Dutch tiles, added by Osman III. At the southeastern corner there is a small chamber that was used by the Sultan as a private sitting-room.

Evliya Çelebi writes of the weekly schedule of audiences that Murat IV held in this room, during the time that he himself was serving the Sultan as a page.

During the winter he regulated his audiences as follows: On Friday he assembled all the divines, sheikhs and the readers of the Koran, and with them he disputed till morning on scientific subjects. Saturday morning was devoted to the singers who sang the *Ilahi*, the *Na't*, and other spiritual tunes. Sunday evening was ap-

propriated to poets and reciters of romances. On Monday evening he had the dancing boys and the Egyptian musicians. The assembly sat until daybreak and resembled the musical feast of Hüseyin Bukhara. On Tuesday evening he received the old experienced men who were upwards of seventy and with them he used to converse in the most familiar manner. On Wednesday he gave audience to the pious saints, and on Thursday to the dervishes. In such a manner did he watch over the affairs of the Ottoman state, that not even a bird could fly over it without his knowledge. But were we to describe all of his excellent qualities we could fill another volume.

Through the windows on the outer side of the room we see the **courtyard and kiosk of Osman III**, a large pavilion in the baroque style that projects over the retaining wall of Topkapı Sarayı above Gülhane Park.

A door at the northeast corner of Hünkâr Odası opens into a small but lavishly tiled **anteroom** that was probably built by Sinan. We then enter the **Salon of Murat III**, a magnificent chamber only slightly smaller than Hünkâr Odası but far more beautiful since it has retained the whole of its original decoration. The walls are sheathed in beautiful Iznik tiles; the panel of plum blossoms surrounding the elegant bronze chimney-piece being among the most noteworthy, along with the calligraphic frieze that extends around the room. Opposite the fireplace there is a pretty three-tiered *selsebil*, a cascade fountain of carved polychrome marble set in a marble embrasure. The beauty of the decoration and the perfect and harmonious form of the room identify it as a work of Sinan.

Murat III was the most prolific of the Ottoman sultans. The palace archives credit him with having fathered fifty-six children, including twenty-four sons and thirty-two daughters, a record for the Osmanlı dynasty. The record is all the more impressive in that fifty-four of these children were born in the last twelve years of Murat's life, when he greatly expanded his harem, whereas in the first nine years of his reign he had remained faithful to his wife Safiye, mother of his son and successor Mehmet III. Gianfrancesco Morosini, Venetian ambassador to the Sublime Porte during the reign of Mehmet III, writes in one of his reports of the sultan's heightened sexual activity and of the increased bathing that this required.

He tried out many beautiful young girls, whom everyone brought to him, and in this way began the life he now leads. This is very different from his old ways; he is now not satisfied with one or

two but has relations with more than twenty. Every night he sleeps with two, and often with three. Since their religious laws require a man who has been with one woman to wash before going to another, he often bathes two or three times a night. This is a real danger to his life because his health is weak, and he suffers from epilepsy; he could easily drop dead without warning.

Opening off the west side of the salon there is a small chamber that Ahmet I converted into a **library and sitting-room** in 1608. This is one of the most delightful rooms in the Saray, with carved marble bookshelves and cabinets inlaid with sea-tortoise shell and mother-of-pearl, its walls revetted with green and blue tiles almost as beautiful as those in the salon. The library is lighted by windows on both its north and south sides, with views of the Marmara, the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn. A marble door in the south wall of the library leads into another delightful chamber, the **Dining Room of Ahmet III**, created for the Tulip King in 1705. This is also known as *Yemiş Odası*, the Fruit Room, because of the bowls of fruit and vases of flowers depicted on the brightly-painted panels of lacquered wood with which its walls are decorated. These decorations are characteristic of the Tulip Period, the first half of the eighteenth century, when European rococo art and architecture made their first appearance in Istanbul.

Returning through the Salon of Murat III and its anteroom, we now come to a pair of beautiful rooms known as the **Apartments of the Princes**. Up until recently this was thought to be the infamous *Kafes*, or Cage, the place where the younger brothers of the Sultan were confined to prevent them from contesting the throne. But the *Kafes* has now been identified as a congeries of small and dark rooms farther down the corridor that leads past the Apartments of the Princes, a hallway known for some forgotten reason as the **Consultation Place of the Jinns**. The Apartments of the Princes have been dated to the late sixteenth century or the early seventeenth; this is principally because of their very beautiful Iznik tiles, which are of the greatest period. The first room has a dome magnificently painted on canvas; the ceiling of the inner room is flat but also superbly painted. The inner chamber has a splendid brass-gilt chimney-piece, on each side of which, above, are two of the most gorgeous tile panels in existence.

The Consultation Place of the Jinns leads to **Gözdeler Taşlığı**, the **Terrace of the Favourites**, a large courtyard overlooking the lower gardens of the Saray and a large swimming-pool once used by the

women in the Harem. This is named for the long building in two storeys that forms the eastern side of the courtyard, a dormitory that once housed the Sultan's favourite women, who were known as *Gözde*, or 'in the eye'. The Sultan had a suite of rooms on the ground floor of the dormitory at its northeast corner. Sultan Ibrahim the Mad was confined to this apartment after he was deposed on 8 September 1668, and ten days later he was strangled there by the Chief Executioner, Black Ali.

Guided tours of the Harem end here, and one is led back along the Golden Way to the exit from the Harem. Enroute we pass on our left the stairway to the upper level of the Harem, where in 1808 the future Mahmut II fled from the assassins who had been sent to kill him by his brother Mustafa IV. Then at the end of the corridor we come to the Aviary Gate, where in 1651 the Chief Black Eunuch and his men murdered the Valide Sultan Kösem, mother of sultans Murat IV and Ibrahim, who was making a desperate effort to flee from the Harem. Here we leave the Harem and enter the Third Court, having completed our tour of the House of Felicity.

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