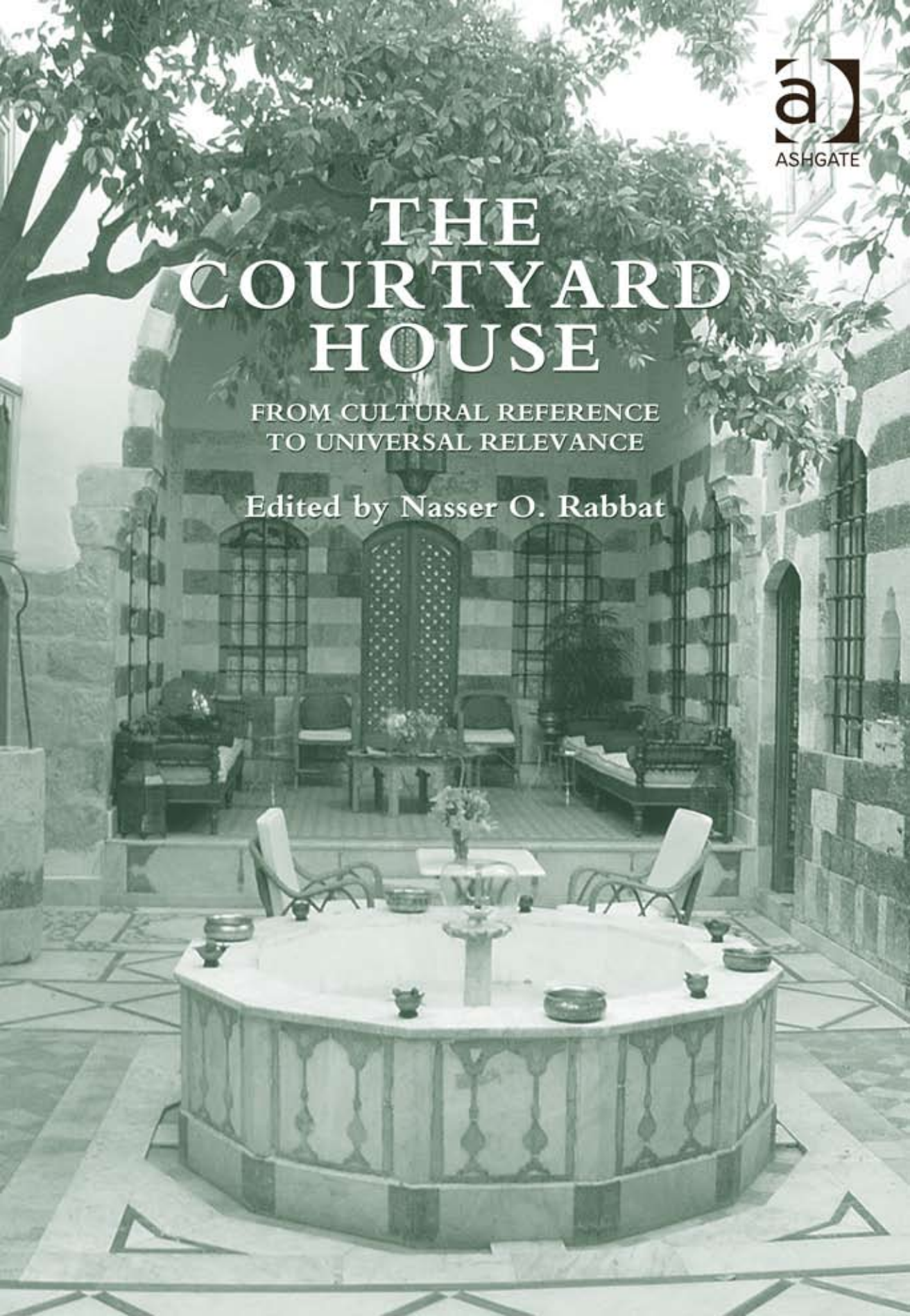


THE COURTYARD HOUSE

FROM CULTURAL REFERENCE
TO UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE

Edited by Nasser O. Rabbat



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A House Divided: The Harem Courtyards of the Topkapı Palace

Jateen Lad

The conviction that the introverted form of the courtyard house is synonymous with the harem, that space dedicated for women, finds perhaps its most eloquent expression in the words of Hassan Fathy. In his seminal *Architecture for the Poor*, two remarkably impassioned paragraphs overlay the formal qualities of the enclosed courtyard with an understanding of the harem:

The inward-looking Arab house, open to the calm of the sky, made beautiful by the feminine element of water, self-contained and peaceful, the deliberate antithesis of the harsh world of work, warfare, and commerce, is the domain of the woman. The Arabic name "*sakan*" to denote the house, is related to the word "*sakina*," peaceful and holy, while the word "*harim*," which means "woman" is related to "*haram*," sacred, which denotes the family living quarters in the Arab house.

Now it is of great importance that this enclosed space with the trembling liquid femininity it contains should not be broken. If there is a gap in the enclosing building, this special atmosphere flows out and runs to waste in the desert sands. Such a fragile creation is this peace and holiness, this womanly inwardness, this atmosphere of a house for which "domesticity" is so inadequate a word, that the least rupture in the frail walls that guard it destroys it.¹

The enclosed courtyard is not only represented as the home's window to the sky but also the exclusive place of the woman, and by extension, the harem. Intertwining notions of femininity and sanctity are overlaid onto the same space, casting the courtyard as the physical and spiritual center of the house. However, the vulnerability of this inner sanctuary is clear, its preservation and purity seemingly dependent upon being hermetically sealed from the temporal and masculine world beyond its walls. The slightest crack, a fleeting glimpse, would prove destructive. Indeed, a recurring motif employed in Fathy's paintings of this period is the solid, pure white house, its buttressed walls holding firm in an endless desert. Isolated in the pastoral void, the desert

sands are a metaphor of the perpetual threat that could seep inside through the smallest of cracks.

This particular representation of the harem has been highly influential in shaping the subsequent discourse surrounding domestic architecture in Islamic cultures. The sanctity and femininity of the harem has come to be regarded as an essential, unquestionable truth—the original *sakan-haram* analogy having been lifted almost verbatim into several well-known essays.² With a prominent stance advocating “cultural continuity in the architectural and urban traditions of the Islamic world,” the harem continues to be upheld as the kernel of a Muslim home.³ Echoes of Fathy abound, as a recent publication seeking to lay down universal principles of Islamic domestic space notes: “[the] woman represents this sacred aspect of the house” and her space must be protected from “illicit intrusions.”⁴

But bestowing virtues upon the harem may cause one to overlook a critical perspective. By warning that the “womanly inwardness” of the courtyard be carefully contained, Fathy implies that the sanctity of a household was dependent not only upon keeping out the eyes of strangers but also ensuring that those women sequestered inside remained so. In this regard, personal meditations and evocations from within the harem provide a counter argument.⁵ For example, Fatima Mernissi’s rather affectionate childhood memoirs convey the harem as a space of incarceration. Throughout her tales, the voices of her mother, older sisters, cousins, and aunts try to fathom the purpose of the harem—the space in which they were either born or married into—only to resonate with frustration, at being “trapped,” “locked-up,” and “imprisoned behind walls,” sentiments that nurtured silent dreams of growing wings and taking flight. Even the amiable family doorkeeper remained bound by duty as the final, insurmountable threshold: “I have no instructions to let women out.”⁶

Given such sentiments, the prevailing consensus upholding the harem as the repository of domestic sanctity falls prey to an uncomfortable accusation. Why is the sanctity of the house—itself a questionable proposition in light of Islamic theology—defined by the strict seclusion of women?⁷ If the image of a woman sealed inside a courtyard is a symbol of domestic virtue, does this not seemingly advocate, even “sweeten” by sacred association, a practice often considered oppressive? Juan Campo’s conclusion that “a great part of a house’s sacrality depends on the reputation of its female occupants” is, sadly, an understatement: the sanctity of the house is apparently dependent upon the confinement of its women.⁸

Fathy’s exhortation, no matter how eloquently stated, is symptomatic of a simplified presentation of the terms *harim* and *haram*, and their interrelation. Both are indeed related. To Arabic speakers, however, *harim* does not connote a space defined exclusively by sexuality or gender, nor is *haram* a reference to a condition as unambiguous as, for example, the word “holy” in the English language. Their individual and shared range of meanings are far more nuanced and heavily invested with moral, legal, and spatial

implications, a consideration of which will help construct a richer spatial understanding of the harem.

Reconsidering *Harim* and *Haram*

Both *harim* (حريم) and *haram* (حرم) (as they are correctly transliterated) stem from the Arabic root *h-r-m*, which, through all its derivations, conveys notions of forbiddenness, unlawfulness, inviolability, and sanctity. For example, *muhtaram* is one who is honored and venerated; *ihitiram* or *hurma* is the quality that inspires respect and honor. At the same time, the worst transgressions and forbidden acts are referred to as *haram* (as in unclean food) as opposed to *halal*, that which is permissible. The thief who has violated one of God's boundaries is termed *harami*. Thus, when considered spatially, both *harim* and *haram* define an exclusive sanctuary to which general access is forbidden and within which certain individuals and modes of behavior are deemed unlawful.⁹ The two most revered and venerated sites in Islam, the sacred precincts of Mecca and Medina, are together referred to as *al-haramayn*, with each *haram* forbidden to non-Muslims. In a residential context, *harim* (harem, in Turkish) is not polygamy by another name, but a non-gendered space referring to those quarters forbidden to all except the rightful owner, and this includes the deeply private apartments of the household's women but is not defined exclusively by them. Indeed, according to certain classical Arabic lexicons, "the *harim* of a house is what is contained within it once its door has been shut" — there is no specific reference to either women or any sacred qualities.¹⁰

By inscribing boundaries around a place or person deemed *haram*, forbidden, the harem is actually a principle of segregating and configuring space, the division between *haram* and *halal*, the forbidden and the permissible, providing a moral framework for the inside–outside dichotomy common to most societies. However, through its association with a deep sense of inviolability, the harem transcends notions of domestic privacy and the common saying that "a man's home is his castle." Thus, it is easy to identify the harem as an exclusive inner sanctuary, a site representative of status, power, and honor. It has been observed that power relationships in Islamic societies are imagined in a horizontal rather than vertical progression. Instead of moving *up*, one moves *in* towards greater authority, often literally towards an interior space protected by a succession of guarded boundaries, in other words, a harem.¹¹ Likewise, in terms of social status, the degree of seclusion from the common gaze served as an indicator of status for the man of standing as well as a woman of means. It was the poor, after all, who were forced to rub shoulders in the streets.

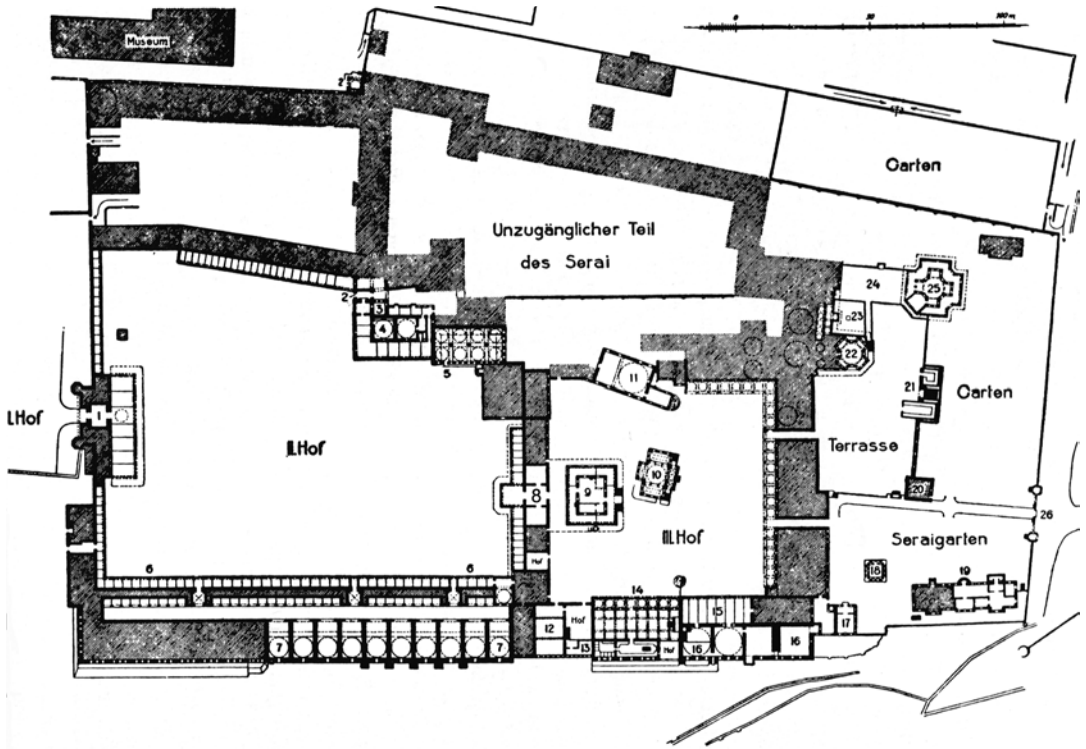
In light of this broader range of meanings, the space of the harem, and its relationship to the courtyard, is worthy of reconsideration. With the majority of architectural references approaching the harem from the perspective of an outsider, there is a tendency to define the site from beyond its walls alone.

Rarely is the harem understood from within. This chapter explores the spatial qualities of the harem, as projected to the outer world of permissible space and as constructed within its enclosing walls, through an architectural analysis of its most representative and quintessential example inside the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul.¹² With voices from within the harem having escaped the historian's net thus far, the walls of the Topkapı will be used as the principal document, offering, as they do, an unrivalled quantity of unique material. For the purposes of this chapter, the discussion shall maintain a focus upon the numerous courtyards, with the intention of showing how the powerful notions of the forbidden, the protected, and the inviolate are embodied architecturally. The first section of the chapter considers the concealment of the harem from the outer permissible courtyards, with a discussion surrounding the articulation of two principal thresholds. In the second section, the thresholds are crossed and the harem entered, revealing that concerns for segregation, exclusivity, and the forbidden were not the preserve of the harem's outer margins alone.

The Outer Margins of the Topkapı Harem

According to Ottoman legend, the Topkapı Palace was built after some sound advice on imperial propriety offered by an estranged prince from a rival dynasty. Having built a palace in the center of his newly conquered city, Sultan Mehmet II (also known as *Fatih*, "the Conqueror") was purportedly told by Uğurlu Mehmet that it was no longer fitting for a ruler to live amidst his subjects.¹³ Taking heed, the new palace was constructed between 1459 and 1479 on a strategic and more inaccessible site where, most notably, the acropolis of the vanquished Byzantines had previously stood. But the shift to the Topkapı was not merely a change of address. With the conquest of Constantinople and the growth of empire, an absolute image of sovereignty was cultivated which further distanced the sultan from his subjects. New imperial protocol demanded that the sultan remain secluded deep inside his palace; he would no longer appear in public (except for two annual religious holidays) and accept visits only from select audiences in private. Consequently, the Topkapı Palace was conceived to display this remoteness through a ceremonial sequence of courtyards, which converged upon the *porta regia*, the Bab üs-Saade (commonly known as the Gate of Felicity), the stage dramatizing the sultan's rare and codified appearances (Fig. 1.1).¹⁴

But as both the imperial residence and the seat of power, the Topkapı had to balance courtly display with guarded privacy, hospitality with calculated closure. Aside from the staging of ceremonies, the layout sought to preserve the seclusion not only of the sultan but also his large family residing within the harem. In this regard, the Topkapı, despite the trappings of power and elaborate scale, may be likened to a traditional dwelling—its



outer countenance being oriented toward the reception of guests, while the innermost quarters housed the family harem. The large outermost courtyard, shaped as a loose public garden, was open to all. Indeed, the Qur'anic inscription surmounting the outermost gateway, the Bab-i Humayun, extended a warm welcome: "Enter you then, in peace and security!"¹⁵ Further on, the second courtyard was the semi-public arena of government, where ordinary subjects petitioned the Divan council, and visiting dignitaries were received. But having been welcomed thus far, the processional journey towards the heart of the palace was abruptly thwarted. From hereon, the architectural imperative was to ensure that the harem remained elusive, a forbidden and inaccessible realm yielding no more than a distant silhouette. As the heart of the empire, the imperial harem existed beyond the bounds of permitted space, a defiant blind spot concealed by stark windowless walls. It was essential that the harem embody an architecture that was built to remain unseen. The slightest crack allowing a voyeuristic glimpse would prove unforgivable.

However, the harem was not entirely impermeable. To borrow a figure of speech from Fathy, the presence of two gateways presented potential points of "rupture." Despite their contrasting expressions—one being ceremonial and opulently adorned, while the other remained relatively unassuming and more domestic in scale—both represented a conscious program of deception, guarding the harem from unlawful eyes. The first and most conspicuous

1.1 A layout plan of the principal courtyards of the Topkapı Palace as surveyed by Cornelius Gurlitt (1910) is notable for the blank, uncharted section of the harem. Note the location of the Gate of Felicity (numbered 8), between the second and third courtyards.



1.2 Strategic thresholds. The fabled Gate of Felicity (left) held the “monopoly of the gaze” over the true entrance to the harem, the Arabalar Kapısı, or the Carriage Gate. A seemingly identical door is located in the corner.

was the Gate of Felicity (Fig. 1.2), the celebrated *porta regia* whose promise of fabulous and limitless possibilities had captivated outsiders for centuries. Yet, its magnificence served to deceive. Rather than yield opportune glimpses into the harem courtyard beyond, its rare staged openings served only to reveal, in a moment of high drama, the enthroned figure of the sultan within a private audience hall that was purposefully positioned to obstruct any meaningful views into the harem.¹⁶ Thus, the intertwining of architecture and ceremony at the threshold helped preserve the harem as a forbidden and inviolate inner sanctuary, withheld from the public gaze.

The seductive pull of the Gate of Felicity proved enduring for many centuries, providing as it did a tangible and suitably lavish symbol of a harem whose precise whereabouts remained obscure. Undoubtedly, this threshold granted the palace a ceremonial focus, but in the context of the harem, it may be considered no more than a foil, holding what Grosrichard has termed “the monopoly of the gaze” from the true entrance to the harem, which remained largely inconspicuous.¹⁷ In a shaded corner of the second courtyard, two unassuming iron gates escaped attention. Both appear identical except in small details; however, one may be considered a decoy.¹⁸ The other, the Arabalar Kapısı (or the Carriage Gate), silently announced itself through gilt inscriptions as the true entrance into the harem, or more precisely as “... *harim-i cennet-i ‘alide bab-i sultani*,” that is, the “Sultanic Gate in the Harem of the Sublime Paradise.”¹⁹ This guarded treatment of the harem’s thresholds can be considered to have successfully deceived many European visitors to the palace. For example, the influential pictorial albums of Lambert Wyts and d’Ohsson’s *Tableau général de l’empire Othoman* remain oblivious of the Carriage Gate as they continue the long tradition of lauding the Gate of Felicity as the metaphoric Highest Threshold.²⁰

Centuries later, long after the palace had been vacated, the play of these gates continued to thwart curious outsiders.²¹ In 1910 Cornelius Gurlitt, the German architectural historian, was granted unprecedented permission to produce a layout plan of the palace (Fig. 1.1). But having meticulously charted the two outermost courtyards, he was denied access into the harem,

despite its long deserted state. Unlike those before him, however, he did observe and record the Carriage Gate and, judging by some brief detail, was probably granted a fleeting glimpse beyond its iron doors. Similarly, it appears as if the Gate of Felicity was opened but he was forbidden to step inside, having to contend with the limited oblique views either side of the audience hall. As a consequence, the large area of the harem remained blank in his published drawings, the incomplete nature of the plan explained by an honest label simply stating “Unzugänglicher Teil des Serai.”²²

This astute and considered treatment of the principal thresholds provides an introduction to the sensitivities surrounding the harem and its outermost boundaries. To the Ottoman subject, and to a wider extent all traditional Muslims, this inscribed a moral, legal, and spatial boundary redolent with respect, family honor, and social propriety. As discussed earlier, the harem was a family sanctuary, a place to be revered, kept inviolate. It was one’s duty to honor and protect the harem, just as it was unlawful for outsiders to enter or even gaze upon it. This range of meanings, loaded with their deep sense of taboo and shame, would have existed in the cultural vocabulary of Muslims who cautiously averted their gaze from the harem rather than steal a glimpse inside. Such sensitivities are evident in the architectonic miniatures produced by the Ottoman court, such as Lokman’s illustrations for the *Hünername* (c.1584–85), which consistently acknowledged both gates but ensured that they remained graphically anonymous at the margins of the ceremonial court.²³ The harem beyond was respectfully left a void, unknown to the artist and too inviolate to be imagined, let alone depicted. Similar discretion was observed in other contemporary fields of expression, such as literature. For example, in Mustafa ‘Ali’s famed treatise on lifestyle and taste, each rank of Ottoman male was prescribed a detailed list of possessions considered necessary accoutrements of his social status. Irrevocably, an appropriately sized house was of great importance, with major bureaucratic chiefs expected to occupy extensive mansions. The author leads the reader through each ideal house, following sequential spaces of hospitality, service, and audience, until “finally, there would be the Paradise-like chamber referred to as the innermost refuge, the abode of chastity dutifully hidden.”²⁴ Thus, having revealed the entire house, Mustafa ‘Ali stops at the threshold of the harem. To take a glimpse into the harem belonging to another gentleman, even in an idealized literary setting, was *haram*, a forbidden act. A simple allusion to its proximity was sufficient notice to stop.

Precisely what was the nature of this boundary? The presence of carefully placed gateways makes it evidently clear that the harem was not, contrary to Fathy’s impassioned interpretation, kept completely sealed. Nor was the segregation of spaces cast along lines of gender alone—the harem was not, as will be explained, an exclusively female space. A more accurate interpretation would recognize that adult men and women are permitted to share the same moral and physical space if they are referred to as *mahram*, that is, forbidden from marrying each other by virtue of consanguinity.²⁵ At the same time, it is

haram, forbidden, for men to enter a space occupied by women other than their kin. In this regard, the spatial arrangement presented by the Topkapı harem to the outside world was, in principle, similar to that existing in less elaborate households—the harem would only be accessible to immediate male kin, who were permitted to visit their mother, wives, sisters, aunts, and daughters, who for the most part were kept confined inside but, on occasions, were permitted outside, albeit under the symbolic harem of the veil. Thus, whilst to many the harem was impermeable and strictly off-limits, its boundary was not necessarily mutually exclusive. More precisely, it was defined by the careful regulation of movement and the exclusive privileges of access, which in the Topkapı, as in all residences of note, was verified by a guard of eunuchs. In order to explore the architectural nature of this boundary and the guarded sanctuary beyond, it will be necessary to cross the threshold and enter the harem.

Segregation and Mediation within the Harem

Even a momentary glance at the plan of the harem evokes the labyrinth alluded to with such compulsion in the European fantasies of the Seraglio (Fig. 1.3). Two very distinct portions are visible. The first, laid out axially behind the Gate of Felicity, was an expansive courtyard which, upon initial readings, appears consistent with the outer public courts. To one side of this, and behind the Carriage Gate, lay the second, more distinct section of the harem. By contrast, this grew as a tangled, claustrophobic knot comprising over 300 chambers perched over miserly courtyards and a web of narrow twisting passages, all compressed within the corner of the palace grounds to which it was originally confined.²⁶ Its cryptic plan charts no more than a moment in time, namely, its final state of rest when abandoned and finally thrust open to be pored over by the eyes of strangers. This was a site in perpetual flux as the needs of successive sultans and their families were fulfilled. Centuries of incremental alterations, rebuilding, extensions, and new decorative skins (either to suit functional requirements or mere whims of taste) ensured a palimpsest-like layering upon the one foundation. Yet, this crowded arrangement of rooms and passages was not an arbitrary affair.

Upon closer examination, the harem is seen to be composed of five tightly arranged courtyards of varying size. Aside from certain ceremonial spaces, the rooms enclosing each courtyard were predominantly residential and domestic in scale. The most spacious of these courtyards, situated behind the Gate of Felicity, housed the large corps of male pages (Fig. 1.3: 3). The Valide Taşlığı, or Courtyard of the Valide Sultan (the mother of the reigning sultan), was the most centrally located (Fig. 1.3: 4), while a partially enclosed terrace immediately to its north was set aside for the sultan and his favorite concubines (known as *ikbal*) (Fig. 1.3: 5). Between the Court of the Valide Sultan



1.3 Ground floor plan of the harem showing the arrangement of key courtyards.

(1) Second or Divan Court, (2) Arabalar Kapısı/Carriage Gate, (3) Court of the Male Pages, (4) Courtyard of the Valide Sultan/Valide Taşlığı, (5) Favourites' Courtyard/Ikballer Taşlığı, (6) Concubines Courtyard/Cariyeler Taşlığı, (7) Courtyard of the Black Eunuchs Karaağalar Taşlığı, (8) Main Harem Gate/Cümle Kapısı, (9) Kafes, (10) Sultan's Bedchamber, (11) Hünkâr Sofası



1.4 The layered sequence of spaces and thresholds as the dimly lit Sadirvanli Taslik opens into the long, narrow Courtyard of the Black Eunuchs.

and the Carriage Gate lay the two smallest and most cramped courtyards, each offering a narrow sliver of sky to the most populous sections of the harem. The first of these, Cariyeler Taşlığı, or the Court of the Concubines (Fig. 1.3: 6), housed the concubines, senior wives, and the remainder of the household women including a large number of slave girls. Adjacent and strategically positioned at the margins of the semi-public Divan Court was the Karaağalar Taşlığı, the Courtyard of the Black Eunuchs (Fig. 1.3: 7), an ingeniously laid out space that was central to preserving the entire harem as a forbidden, inviolate sanctuary.

Despite its diminutive scale, the Karaağalar Taşlığı was arguably the most significant of the palace's inner courtyards.²⁷ Situated at the margins of the second court, it defined the boundary of the harem, preserving the remainder of the inner palace as a forbidden and inviolate sanctuary. No more than five meters wide, the space is less a traditional courtyard than a broad cobbled passage, facing as it does onto the towering blank rear wall of the Divan chambers. As such, the courtyard is defined by the two thresholds marking its extremities. At one end, the courtyard extends back to the aforementioned Carriage Gate. When considered from inside, this gate is merely the outermost threshold to a complex sequence of spaces passing through light and dark courtyards, symbolic thresholds, twisting passages, and staggered openings. In order to enter or leave the harem, these spaces had to be negotiated (Fig. 1.4).

For those select visitors, doctors, peddlers, and delivery boys allowed to step inside, the Carriage Gate opened onto the Dolaplı Kubbe, a dark and somber antechamber, a place of waiting, preparation, and the taking of instructions.²⁸ There followed a small covered court, the Şadırvanlı Taşlığı (or the Court of the Fountain), where further stone portals and sentry points remained to be crossed. The silent presence of the small eunuchs' mosque to one side charged the whole act of entry with a forewarning; any spatial transgression was deemed unlawful, while the ablution fountain demanded a symbolic cleansing before passing deeper.

Emerging into daylight, the eunuchs' courtyard presented a dazzling introduction to the inner palace. By contrast with the stark stone surfaces of the Divan Court, the high walls of this narrow court were richly embellished with decorative tilework flowering with cypresses, hyacinths,

and tulips. Intricate arabesque designs framing invocative medallions surmounted jewel-encrusted doors, and bands of Qur'anic inscriptions capped a row of grilled windows. The grandeur of the single marble portico—a function of the chasm-like space of the court—was further heightened by the fine bronze lanterns hanging overhead. Amidst this surface display, it was an ornamental gateway standing at the opposite extremity of the court, the Cümle Kapısı (Figs. 1.3: 8 and 1.5), or the Main Gate, that was most significant in developing an architectural understanding of the harem as an actual space.

In an echo of the Carriage Gate, a framed gilt inscription identifies this threshold specifically as “the true entrance of the imperial harem,” followed by the apt Qur'anic verse: “Do not enter the house of the Prophet except when you are allowed.”²⁹

Thus, in spite of its location beyond the exclusive Carriage Gate, the courtyard of the black eunuchs court was considered to lie outside the harem. Rather, it defined the beginning of the inner palace, a transitional space where permission to enter the harem could be granted or denied. In this regard, the Topkapı Palace draws further parallels to a traditional courtyard house, whereby a plain exterior gives way to an ornate and decorative vestibule displaying the status of the household beyond.³⁰ More so, this courtyard may be interpreted as a space of mediation, the boundary defining the furthest extent of both the harem and the public courts, a point reinforced by the extension of the eunuchs' quarters across the Gate of Felicity. The living quarters of the imperial family beyond were segregated from the outer civic courts, the forbidden separated from the permitted, with the eunuchs occupying a space as ambiguous as their very person—familiar to both and yet exclusively belonging to neither. The precise articulation of this courtyard, and the necessity of crossing its layered thresholds, served to emphasize the highly revered and forbidden quality of the courtyards beyond, irrespective of their gendered realms.

The largest of these courtyards, centered upon the Gate of Felicity, was peripheral in one sense, but at the same time crucial to understanding the space of the harem in non-gendered terms. Housed within were a large number of male pages, young boys of Christian origin who were regularly collected under the *devşirme* system.³¹ In spite of being torn from their families, the boys may be understood as having been the symbolic sons of the sultan, housed, raised, and trained for prestigious posts in imperial service across the



1.5 All paths inside the harem converged upon the Cümle Kapısı. The latticed windows of the chief black eunuch are strategically stationed to the left.

provinces. Their modest barrack-like dormitories, baths, and classrooms lined sections of the court. However, a number of ornate pavilions and clusters of sumptuous domes and chambers conveyed a sense of grandeur and opulence.³² After all, this court housed the sultan's private apartments until Suleyman I (r. 1520–66) shifted them to the more secluded half of the harem. The glimpse of impressive airy porticoes facing onto the spacious garden courtyard led the sixteenth-century chronicler Kivami to exclaim: "Whoever stepped inside it would immediately think he entered paradise."³³

On account of its male population, generous scale, and axial location, this courtyard is often referred to as the *selâmlık*—a term denoting the traditional male reception space of the Turkish home. Such an interpretation is largely the consequence of interpreting the harem as an exclusively female space. But, as this chapter argues, the harem was more defined by notions of unlawfulness and exclusivity than by mere gender. Few were privileged enough to cross the Gate of Felicity, and all male guests entering the palace—be they ambassadors or petitioning subjects—were received in the outer Divan Court by the sultan's appointed delegates. The Courtyard of the Male Pages was *haram*, forbidden, inviolate, and, through the presence of the sultan, projected a revered site to which access was denied. As the sultan's future administrative servants, the male pages, like the female members of his household, were forbidden to others, at least until they were dispatched to their imperial posts upon graduating. Thus, the entire inner realm of the Topkapı, irrespective of gender, constituted a harem, an exclusive sanctuary, the locus of persons and property that were forbidden to others. It is for this reason that the buildings of the Imperial Treasury, the rich collections of the sultan's private library, and the splendid tranquil gardens, amongst other highly prized assets, were also housed within the sanctuary of the harem and not elsewhere in the palace grounds.

There were, of course, a substantial number of women in the imperial household whose private quarters were *included* within the boundaries of the harem (as opposed to exclusively defining it). Archives of the Privy Purse Register, for example, indicate a harem population of 275 at the end of the sixteenth century—a number that rose above 400 during the following century.³⁴ Given their large numbers, the women were organized hierarchically along the same lines as men. In a manner not too dissimilar to other elite Ottoman households, the family structure was less defined by age than by generational distinctions (in which juniors were subordinate to both male and female elders), blood relationships to the head of household, ties of concubinage and marriage, and the level of sexual maturity in question—whether the woman was a young virgin or a sexually mature adult, a mother or beyond the age of child-bearing. For the imperial family, power and the politics of dynastic reproduction were additional considerations.³⁵

Thus, the harem hierarchy was headed by the family matriarch, the *valide sultan*, the sole representative of the family's most senior generation. Her supreme authority was a consequence of her son's position on the throne as

the sultan. The *haseki*, or favorite concubine, enjoyed the next highest status.³⁶ Despite being a slave with no blood ties to the sultan, as the mother of a potential future sultan, her position was elevated above the sultan's own sisters and aunts (about whom there is a great deal of silence). Although several concubines were granted the title *haseki*, variations in their position meant those bearing daughters were considered distinctly inferior. Amongst the other higher ranking women were the *ikbal*, selected young women who were groomed for concubinage. Inevitably, the lower ranking women and girls, known collectively as *cariye*, constituted more than half the harem population. In addition to performing the more routine household tasks of cooking, cleaning, and maintenance, many were trained for the personal service of the wives, concubines, and the *valide sultan*.

Symptomatic of such family structures, the disposition of space within the harem was entirely asymmetric. The translation of the family hierarchy into architecture allowed the formation of a distinct spatial structure, diminishing the representation of the harem as a monolithic female space. Dominating the center was the large Courtyard of the Valide Sultan, its pivotal location reflective of her position as the cornerstone of the family. The large paved courtyard, reputedly one of the oldest inside the palace, was originally surrounded by porticoes on all four sides, which were later walled in to meet the increasing demands for space (Fig. 1.6).

Her extensive suite of rooms included numerous private apartments, a large dining hall, and a bedchamber. But of greater significance in understanding the space of the harem was the presence of several reception rooms, centered around finely tiled fireplaces, and a small domed throne room, located beyond further thresholds and antechambers. By contrast to many other rooms surrounding the courtyard, these chambers were lavishly embellished and rivalled any within the harem for splendor. Walls lined with intricate tilework and rich marble panels, finely crafted cabinetry inlaid with mother-of-pearl, lavish plaster carvings, and giltwork, presented a paradox within the harem. This was an architecture intent on spectatorship and display, which suggests that the *valide sultan* not only received "visitors" but also granted formal audience. In light of her generational seniority, it is not difficult to imagine the steady stream of family members seeking her counsel. But, at the same time, it is not inconceivable, given the seclusion of the sultan and the political



1.6 The central courtyard of the harem belonging to the *valide sultan*.



1.7 The narrow Cariyeler Taşlığı, showing the arched apartments of the *hasekis* (right) and the dormitories at the back of the courtyard.

influence wielded by the *valide sultan* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that select officials and dignitaries from beyond the harem walls, as well as notable women from other aristocratic households, were occasionally permitted to cross its guarded thresholds. Its location a few steps from the eunuch court ensured that the remainder of the harem remained forbidden and concealed, as access to the space of the *valide sultan* became permitted, if only for a moment. As the family matriarch, she was, after all, freed from many of the spatial restrictions imposed upon the younger generations.

The younger ladies, however, were subject to an often uncompromising seclusion. As a reflection of their status, their assigned courtyards were more peripheral and yet, as the most *haram* women of the family, the most protected, embedded deep within the inner palace. However, as their numbers, titles, and quarters evolved with successive generations, the precise location of each rank remains open to question. At present, it is understood that the *haseki* who had already borne a son occupied an apartment befitting her favored status in the narrow porticoed Cariyeler Taşlığı (Fig. 1.7).

By contrast, the large dormitory block at the end of this courtyard housed the majority of the rank and file *cariye* inside a single hall served by a wing of communal toilets, a bath, and a laundry. Segregated much deeper within the harem were the *ikbals*, those heavily protected ladies being groomed

for concubinage. They were granted a row of six seemingly identical suites in the northernmost courtyard (Fig. 1.8). However, their elegant two-room apartments were easily missed, being purposefully sited above the portico and accessible only by a secret stair.

Each of these courtyards displayed noticeable domestic qualities. Spatially, the open courtyards, their surrounding rooms, and facades were equivalent in scale to traditional houses. Additionally, the construction and material qualities were far removed from the solid stonework gracing the outer courts or the dazzling display of the black eunuchs' courtyard, recalling instead vernacular traditions from the Ottoman regions; for instance, a glimpse into the İkballer Taşlığı evokes the timber-framed houses of Safranbolu. Though plenty of interior spaces were characteristically decorated with tile work, the modest external appearance of many harem buildings was indicative of its fate as a space denied any external spectatorship.

But a harem was not defined against the eyes of the intruder alone. As a forbidden and inviolate sanctuary, its preservation was also dependent upon ensuring those inside remained so. Bound on all four sides, no harem courtyard afforded the slightest visual connection with the outer public realm. The introversion and sense of confinement was most acute in the narrow Cariyeler Taşlığı where the sliver of sky above only exacerbated the isolation from the world. Only those chambers built atop the outer retaining walls of the palace were granted a lone gaze out across the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus; the few latticed windows yielding stunning yet frozen glimpses of a distant and untouchable world. Even the *valide sultan*, for all her invested authority and status, could not fail to be reminded of her seclusion. Painted onto several walls of her private apartments were numerous fanciful views of garden landscapes and the distant scenes of island seas. The upper walls of her bedchamber, for example, depicted a European-style palace in its landscaped setting, complete with flowing fountains, a bridge, and a lake shimmering on the horizon—a perspective which, no matter how fanciful, she was rarely, if ever, permitted to enjoy. While the appeal of such decor is evidently an adoption of Baroque and Rococo tastes, the views may well contain a reminiscence of a short-lived excursion beyond the confines of the harem.

In spite of the careful and guarded placement of the various family women, the figures subject to the most intense levels of seclusion were not women at all but, in fact, men. Architecturally, the private quarters of

1.8 Identical apartments for the *ikbal* were heavily segregated within the harem.



the sultan and his numerous (step) brothers, the princes, were upheld with the greatest level of *haram*, their spaces considered the most forbidden and inviolable within the harem. The reasons in each case are contrasting but both demonstrate once more the harem as a principle of spatial organization, a system whereby the division of space is configured along lines of permitted and forbidden qualities as opposed to gender and any perceived sacrality.

The princes present an intriguing case, unique to the Topkapı. Until the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman contest for succession followed a particularly bloody protocol, with the one victorious prince ordering the simultaneous execution of all his rival stepbrothers, irrespective of their age, on the very day he ascended the throne. Under Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603), who incidentally gained the throne without opposition, the practice of royal fratricide was abandoned.³⁷ Hereon, all the princes were condemned to a life of imprisonment deep inside the harem, their dedicated cells becoming known, somewhat appropriately, as *Kafes* (or The Cage). Unlike the women of the household, who were occasionally permitted beyond the harem walls on organized and heavily chaperoned outings, the princes were never to emerge and remained unknown beyond the harem. Their lowly family status condemned them to be forbidden, both spatially and sexually, prevented as they were from growing beards or fathering children even though, it is believed, they were permitted concubines.

For long, the *Kafes* was assumed to be a reference to the highly ornate twin pavilions close to the sultan's bedchamber.³⁸ But upon reflection, this seems unlikely. Aside from an issue of numbers, the confinement of princes overlooking the İkballer Taşlığı would have compromised the *haram* of those select women being groomed especially for the sultan. In all likelihood, the *Kafes* was probably identified with the most introverted section of the harem, a cluster of suites occupying one corner of the *valide sultan's* courtyard (Fig. 1.3: 9). Here, a number of small apartments were tightly packed, their layout suggestive of a world kept isolated within an already closed domain, a place of exile cleverly woven within the harem courtyards. Though several chambers maintain the elegance discernible elsewhere in the harem—with domed ceilings, fireplaces and adorned walls—many rooms were cramped and entirely devoid of windows. By contrast to the lavish, light-filled baths built for the sultan and his mother, the dependent rooms reserved for the princes were squeezed into available corners and above narrow staircases. Little communication was afforded with adjacent spaces. Views into the courtyard of the *valide sultan* were blocked not only to preserve gender boundaries but also to enforce the sense of total confinement. Bounded by these walls, the princes spent all their years out of touch with both the outer world and their extended family. The harem was, after all, an ideal setting for a prison.

We leave the main protagonist of the Topkapı Palace until last. The sultan, as mentioned earlier, was obliged to remain sequestered within the harem in accordance with Ottoman codes of sovereignty. His rare, highly dramatized public appearances projected his personal space as *haram*—inviolable,

forbidden, and tinged with an aura of sanctity—an image the architecture suggests held true, even within the sanctuary of the harem. That his private chambers were constructed in the least accessible corner of the harem distanced him from both the public realm as well as the majority of his own family. Indeed, a corps of senior eunuchs, collectively known as *Müsaahibs* (derived from the Arabic word meaning “companion”), stood in close attendance to the sultan, guarding and segregating his presence from other members of his household.³⁹ This extreme seclusion cast the sultan’s space as *the* harem within a harem, the most inviolable and forbidden site in the empire, a quality reinforced by the conspicuously thickset walls enclosing his ornate domed bedchamber (Fig. 1.3: 10).⁴⁰

Thus, despite its exclusivity and strict moral-spatial segregation from the outer world of permissible space, the harem could not be conceived as a single, monolithic space. The asymmetric disposition of courtyards reveals a sanctuary divided unto itself. What initially appeared as an incoherent labyrinthine tangle was in fact a precisely defined map of the family structure, with each rank carefully assigned a specific place dependent upon their level of *haram*, that quality of forbiddenness, and the rules of seclusion constructed around their body in relation to both the outside world and the circle of the family itself. Consequently, the inner courtyards of the Topkapı are less representative of family gathering, as such introverted domestic spaces are conventionally understood, but architectural tools overlaying further layers of segregation within an already segregated space. Indeed, if at a general level the harem is recognized as the inviolate sanctuary of the family home, the Topkapı harem is conspicuous for its dearth of such “family spaces.” The nearest equivalent was the Hünkâr Sofası (Fig. 1.3: 11), the domed hall squeezed between the apartments of the sultan and his mother. Little is known of this highly decorative space since Ottoman codes of propriety prevented descriptions of what appeared to be, given the presence of a throne, the site of ceremonies and receptions within the harem. Aside from the heavy formalities, the presence of a veiled gallery for women to one side suggests, once more, that the harem was not a gendered space and was, indeed, at times segregated unto itself.

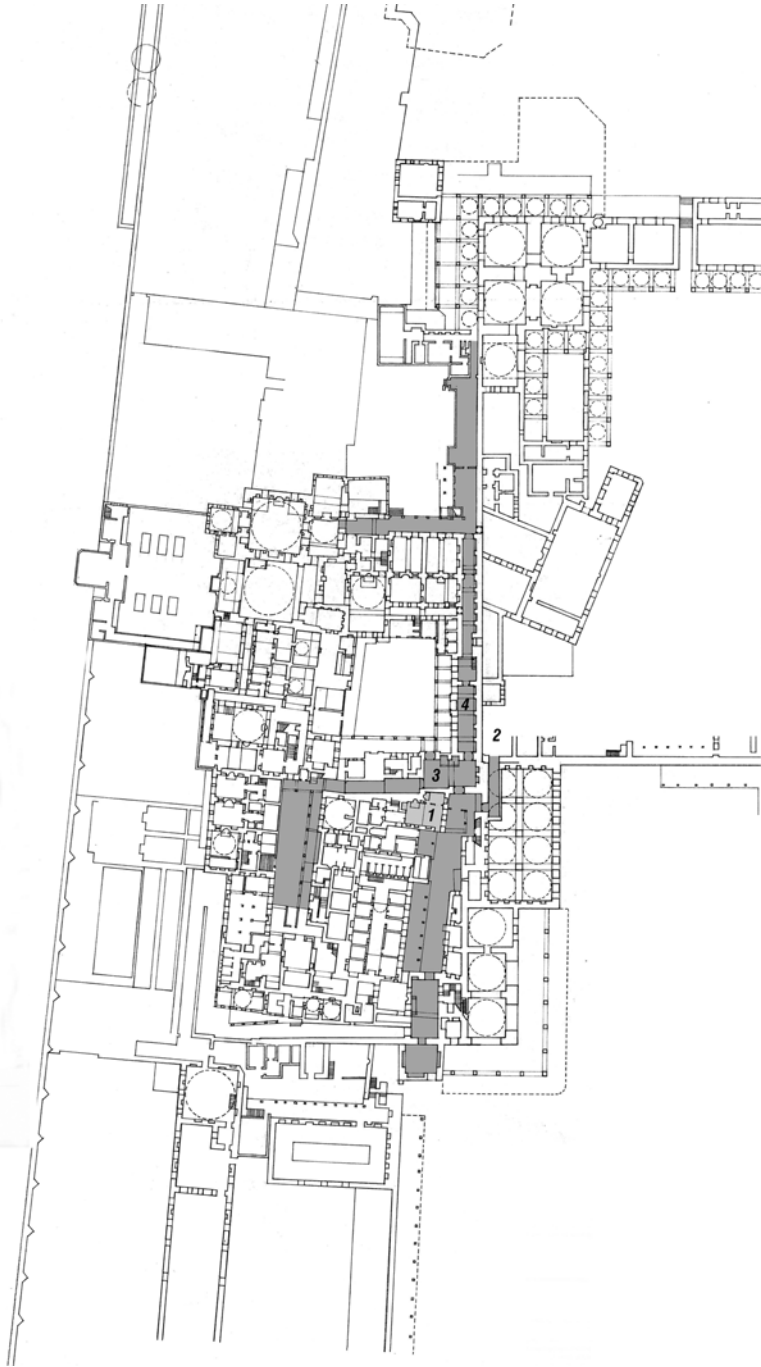
The multiple divisions aside, the harem was neither frozen nor immobile. That the courtyards are in fact connected is not, at first, apparent. Cutting across the inner palace were a number of passages, arteries extending deep into the heart of the harem (Fig. 1.10). But these were not merely faceless corridors of access lying between the courtyards. The precise shaping of each route, together with the opening and closing of their guarded doors, suggest that concerns for segregation, concealment, and surveillance were not the preserve of the harem’s outer margins alone. Indeed, such sensitivities permeated its enclosing walls, dictating the twist, turn, and thickness of every wall to ensure, firstly, that no one could leave the harem unnoticed and, secondly, that different ranks of family members, for the most part, kept their eyes from one another, with any interaction scrupulously regulated.



1.9 The mirror-lined sentry point opened onto passages extending deep into the harem. The celebrated Altın Yol (left), with its sequence of multiple thresholds, led to the secluded chambers of the sultan and his *ikbals*.

In this regard, the harem passages are more significant for their collective point of origin than their divergent destinations. All paths purposefully led back to the Karaağalar Taşlığı, more precisely, before the station of the chief black eunuch, the seniormost official entrusted with the guardianship of the harem (Fig. 1.10: 1). Under his latticed window, no movement into, out of or, crucially, *across* the harem could go unnoticed. Immediately opposite, for example, a short bent passage shielded the Kuşhane Kapısı.⁴¹ By contrast to the ceremonially charged Gate of Felicity, this narrow door served as the day-to-day entrance leading into and out of the Courtyard of the Male Pages. Food prepared in the vast royal kitchens (located off the Divan Court) was also carried through here for distribution across the harem.

On another front, the chief black eunuch's window maintained observation over a small vestibule, which, for the most part, stood bare save for the large gilt mirrors hung on its walls (Figs 1.9 and 1.10:3). As a centralized sentry point, all movement and communications across the harem were channelled through here, its three seemingly identical iron gates guarding access to the courtyards of the concubines, the *valide sultan*, and the Altın Yol, the celebrated passage which served the quarters of the *ikbal*, the imprisoned princes, and the sultan himself. Indeed, this unassuming and much overlooked space was central to the mechanics of the harem. The opening and closing of its gates controlled the visibility of the harem from within, concealing and revealing, expanding and contracting the extent of the inner palace that was considered accessible. Thresholds, courtyards, passages kept open one moment were closed the next, considered *haram*, forbidden and withheld from view. With the gates locked shut, the harem was reduced to a maze of indeterminate passages leading nowhere, its courtyards and residents segregated from one another and withheld from view. Once unlocked, the careful and regulated passage from one courtyard to another, between one household group and another, was permitted, and the eunuchs were, once more, the ever-watchful surveyors.



1.10 Plan of the harem showing the convergence of all passages before the Apartment of the Chief Black Eunuch.

(1) Apartment of the Chief Black Eunuch, (2) Aviary Gate/Kuşhane Kapısı, (3) Mirrored Vestibule, (4) Golden Way/Altın Yol.

Thus, despite their position at the margins, the architecture suggests that the eunuchs were central to all communication *within* the harem—at once acting as crucial mediators and formidable barriers when demanded. All movement radiated from their quarters. Whether a company of male pages was being led toward a ceremony in the Hünkâr Sofası, or the *valide sultan* and a retinue of harem ladies were being chaperoned towards the Carriage Gate for a rare outing, or indeed the sultan himself crossing from one side of his palace to another, all movement was verified by the eunuchs.⁴² In their hands lay the keys to each internal gate, the actions of locking and unlocking forever reconfiguring the layout and visibility of the harem with each movement. The one exception was, of course, the *valide sultan*.⁴³ As a measure of her control over the younger generations, her apartments and courtyard permitted a direct, and often inconspicuous, access to all corners of the harem—including a direct link to the private chambers of her son, the sultan. Through the same series of windows in her courtyard, she could maintain observation over the imprisoned princes opposite, while casting a close but none the less firm eye on daily life down in the Cariyeler Taşlığı.

The Harem: A Mechanism of Control?

Through its scrupulous concerns for separation, partitioning, and the close control of movement embodied into its walls, the architecture of the harem comes to bear a degree of resemblance to the institutions of corrective training and discipline examined by Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish*.⁴⁴ But this would seem logical. Aside from political preoccupations with dynastic reproduction, which has to be considered a marginal concern in informing the architecture, the imperative of the harem lay in meticulously training the young male and female slaves for imperial service to sustain the balance of power across the provinces. A sanctuary and household divided unto itself prevents a monolithic multiplicity but, as is the case in all traditional households, serves to differentiate, train, and instill among family members an allegiance to moral and spatial boundaries. Thus, the architecture of the harem is similar in conception to the *École Militaire*, where segregation and controlled interaction were enforced less through stark windowless walls than by means of “the calculation of openings, of filled and empty spaces, passages and transparencies ... to allow a better observation.”⁴⁵

All movement was to be carefully regulated through an architecture built to exert control upon the imperial family, ensuring that nobody violated their assigned boundaries. Though the younger male and female members of the family were indeed strictly kept apart, the precise architecture of the harem brought to light more complex familial boundaries that cut across lines of gender. For example, the sultan, as head of household, was segregated from his imprisoned stepbrothers and the young male pages, while the *valide sultan* was removed from the various ranks of concubines, wives, and slave

girls, suggesting that notions of sexual maturity and “purity” of royal blood were equally divisive. Also discernible is the separation of the One from the multiple—the cramped plurality of the anonymous male and female slaves at the peripheries of the harem enhancing the power and singularity of the *valide sultan* and her son, the sultan, at the center. Thus, the structure of the harem could not be conceived as a single homogenous family space but as a “diagram of power,” an ordered hierarchy of harems within a harem, ensuring that the Ottoman obsession with status and hierarchy emanated from its core. The seat of power, after all, had to present an ideal model.

By way of final analysis, we come back to the definition with which this chapter began. That the harem was conceived as a sanctuary, protected deep inside a residence, is irrevocable. However, besides the incorrect delimitations along lines of gender, the exaggeration of the harem’s feminine qualities, through notions of vulnerability and fragility—as pointed to by the terms “trembling liquid femininity” and “womanly inwardness”—are quite misleading. As a forbidden and inviolate sanctuary, the segregation of the harem from permissible space, of *haram* from *halal*, was configured through shared values of moral, legal (and in the case of the Topkapı, political) propriety cast in stone: common sensitivities which averted the gaze reinforced by an architecture of concealment and exclusivity at the harem’s outermost margins and gates.

A consideration from within the actual space of the harem reveals a sanctuary divided unto itself. The calculated arrangement of courtyards and passages, latticed windows and gateways evidently demonstrated that notions of the forbidden, segregation, and surveillance were not the preserve of the harem’s outer gates and walls alone but infused its entire inner structure. The placement of each internal wall was carefully considered. Each internal threshold was as much defined by exclusivity and privilege as at the harem’s outer gates. As a site which guarded its visibility from outsiders and yet only selectively disclosed itself to its own residents, the harem’s complex geometries, hierarchies, and inequalities of space professed to a mechanism of control that served to uphold the hierarchy of the family. And as with all spaces, familial or institutional, divided by the imprint of an internal hierarchy, the harem presented an ambiguity of readings. From the perspective of the sultan and his mother, the layers of seclusion, concealment, and enclosure were an expression of their exalted status. By contrast, for the anonymous rank and file male pages and female slaves, the same walls were tangible symbols of confinement, or in the unique case of the forgotten princes, lifelong incarceration. The narrative of calculated openings, sentries, locked iron gates, and impermeable cross walls encountered in any corner of the harem presented dual tales of security and enclosure, accessibility and prohibition, guarding against any touch, gaze, or a sharing of space that might be deemed unlawful. Thresholds and courtyards kept open one moment were locked shut the next, considered *haram*, forbidden and withheld from view. Thus, the Topkapı harem, described earlier as palimpsest-like with the passage of each

generation, was in its daily operation kaleidoscopic, continually reconfiguring its layout and visibility with each movement. There is, perhaps, a no more profound architectural statement of the harem's conflicting readings than two inscriptions found in close proximity to one another. The first, adorning a wall outside the sultan's grand private chambers, praises the uplifting qualities within, asking him to "make this mansion his felicitous dwelling place."⁴⁶ Close by, however, a Qur'ānic verse inscribed over a gate accessed by concubines proclaims: "God Almighty who opens the Doors! Please open us a fortunate door!"—an invocation that makes the trepidation surrounding movement inside the harem all the more palatable.

Notes

- 1 Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 57. As is familiar, Fathy's assertive yet reconciliatory stance against the perceived ills of International Modernism promoted the courtyard house as an authentic expression of Arab culture and Muslim domesticity.
- 2 For example, the analogy appears in the influential essay by Guy T. Petherbridge, "The House and Society," in *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*, ed. George Michell (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 196.
- 3 Many publications and seminar proceedings advocating this stance often re-present similar themes of cultural and architectural conservation, with the unfailing pretension that commitment to the latter will instigate the former. For the purposes of this introduction, I will simply make reference to one recent publication seeking to distill universal principles of Islamic space: Stephano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present* (London: Thames and Hudson; Zurich: ETH/ORL Institut, 2000), p. 15.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 5 For example, see Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*, trans. and intro. Margot Badran (London: The Women's Press, 1986); Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994).
- 6 Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass*, p. 121.
- 7 According to the exegetical literature, the obligatory act of prayer does not confer permanent sanctity upon a space. There are only three consecrated sites in the *Dar al-Islam*—the Masjid-al-Haram at Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque at Medina, and the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. Mosques and houses are not formally considered sacred spaces. Indeed, the term "mosque" is derived from the Arabic *masjid*, which simply means a "place for prostration." It may be argued, therefore, that prayer can be performed anywhere, though many well-known traditions consider worship in or near the three consecrated sites more meritorious. But the validation of prayer, wherever it is performed, implies either a mobile and fleeting concept of the *masjid* defined by the edges of the individual prayer mat or, indeed, if certain *hadith* are interpreted literally, "the [whole] earth is a mosque for you."

- 8 Juan Eduardo Campo, *The Other Sides of Paradise: Explorations into the Religious Meanings of Domestic Space in Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p. 37.
- 9 By virtue of a shared etymology, the domestic space of the *harim* has come to be considered a derivative of the sacred sanctuary termed a *haram*. Yet this equivalence, at least at a spatial level, remains unproven, little explored, and not based upon an examination of the legal, moral, theological, and spatial overlap that is implied. In the absence of a rigorous etymological examination of the *h-r-m* root, the moments and specific contexts underlying the initial overlap shall remain elusive. Questions regarding whether the term *harim* appeared as a later derivation of the *al-haram* at Mecca or evolved independently from the *h-r-m* root must presently remain unanswered.
- 10 From the outset, it must be stated that there exist innumerable interpretations and variations of both *harim* and *haram* throughout different regions and religious sects, and under the various schools of jurisprudence. Each interpretation may exhibit its own subtle nuances, and each manifestation may have been shaped by its own distinct history and context. Mamluk Arabic lexicographers, for example, elaborate for several pages upon the multitude of derivations of the *h-r-m* root. Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, ed. Yusuf Khayyam (7 vols, Beirut, 1988), pp. 615–19. Similarly, the Qur'an contains innumerable derivatives of the *h-r-m* root but on no occasion does the word refer to women or their dedicated space within a house. Reference is instead made to dietary laws, prohibitions during the pilgrimage, the holy months, and the sacred precincts of Mecca in which it is forbidden to kill.
- 11 Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 11–13. As with all theories projected at a general level, Lewis's observation remains open to debate when specific examples are studied. Despite this, the horizontal relationship of power is affirmed by the subject of this chapter.
- 12 The Topkapı harem was, of course, the very site which fuelled European fantasies of the despotic and licentious sultan and his abode. A Lacanian analysis of the Grand Seraglio is the subject of Alain Grosrichard's seminal study, *Structure du serail: La fiction du despotisme Asiatique dans l'Occident classique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979).
- 13 Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte: The Grand Seraglio of Stambul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1931), pp. 29–30, quoting the sixteenth-century Ottoman writer, Mustafa 'Ali Gelibolulu, *Künh ül-Ahbar*.
- 14 For a thorough architectural history and analysis of the Topkapı Palace as an arena constructed for the ceremonial display of imperial power, refer to: Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1991). A concise study on the shifting images of Ottoman sovereignty from the frontier *ghazi* warrior to a sedentary sultan consolidating imperial gains is provided in Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 153–218, and its extensive bibliographic references.
- 15 For a collection of the inscriptions throughout the palace buildings, refer to Abdurrahman Şeref, "Topkapı Sarāy-i Hümāyūnı," *Tārīh-i 'Osmānī Encümenī Mecmū'asi* (Istanbul: Mahmut Bey Matbaası, 1910–11), p. 274.

- 16 Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993): pp. 303–42.
- 17 Grosrichard, *Structure du serail*, pp. 56–63. Grosrichard uses this phrase in defining the despotic prerogative to control or deny the sight of others. This chapter argues that the architectural stage for such ceremonies is implicated in this act of control.
- 18 This adjacent gate leads to the barracks of the famed Halberdiers guards.
- 19 See note 15. The gilt inscriptions above the Carriage Gate reveal that both doorways were constructed under the auspices of the first black chief eunuch, Mehmed Agha, in 1587–88.
- 20 Lambert Wyts, *Voyages de Lambert Wyts en Turquie, 1574*, MS Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindob. 3325; Muradgea Ignace d'Ohsson, *Tableau general de l'Empire ottoman* (7 vols, Paris, 1787–1824).
- 21 In the wake of the Tanzimat reforms during the mid-nineteenth century, reformist sultans such as Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) and Abdülmejid (r. 1839–61) recognized the anachronistic image of sovereignty expressed by the Topkapı Palace. In their widespread reorganization of the empire, the Topkapı came to be abandoned in 1853 in favor of the grandiose Dolmabahçe Palace, the first in a series of waterfront palaces based upon monumental European models. By contrast to the Topkapı, the new harem remained indistinguishable amidst the symmetrical wings and neo-Baroque ornamentation of such display-oriented palaces. Meanwhile, the abandoned Topkapı was preserved as an active monument to the Ottoman dynasty, remaining the site of imperial accession and religious rituals until the final collapse of the empire in 1923.
- 22 The plans and photographic plates of the Topkapı Palace produced by Professor Cornelius Gurlitt composed one of 39 sections of his grand portfolio, *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth a-g., 1912). Despite its large blanks, Gurlitt's plan came to be accepted at the time as the most accurate architectural representation of the Topkapı, having superseded generations of plans based upon brief glimpses, hearsay, and pure imagination. Such was the continuing fascination with the palace that simplified versions of the new plan appeared in contemporary tourist guidebooks such as Carl Baedeker, *Konstantinopel* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 156. Almost seven decades after Gurlitt, a comprehensive and extremely detailed survey of the entire palace, including the harem quarters, was conducted by the architects Sedad Eldem and Feridun Akozan. The catalogue of plans, photographs, and hypothetical reconstructions was published as Sedad H. Eldem and Feridun Akozan, *Topkapı Sarayı. Bir Mimari Araştırma* (Istanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1982).
- 23 Lokman bin Seyyid Hüseyin, *Hünernâme*, 2 vols (1584–88). Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Hazine 1523-24, fols 18v, 19r.
- 24 Mustafa 'Ali Gelibolulu, *Mustafa 'Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, trans. Andreas Tietze, 2 vols (Wien: Verl. d. Österr. Akad. d. Wiss. 1979, 1982). The quotation is cited in Andreas Tietze, "Mustafa 'Ali on Luxury and the Status Symbols of Ottoman Gentlemen." In *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexis Bombaci Dictata*, edited by Aldo Galotta and Ugo Marazzi (Naples: Instituto Univeritario Orientale, 1982), pp. 557–90.
- 25 Or as explicitly laid down in the Qur'ān, Surat al-Nisa', 4: 23.
- 26 Like all densely populated quarters, the Topkapı harem had humble beginnings. According to the prevailing consensus based upon sources in the palace

archives, the Topkapı originally housed only a select number of concubines in a small appendage, probably on the site of the present harem. Until the mid-sixteenth century the remainder of the imperial household comprising the sultan's mother, aunts, wives, children, sisters, and slaves were housed in the Old Palace which once stood on the site of the present University. The major architectural growth and densification of the Topkapı site during the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–66) resulted from the aforementioned change in sovereign image, which demanded the relocation of the entire royal household from the Old Palace. Thus, the confined and concealed space of the Topkapı harem finally *came* to resemble an exclusive familial space, albeit on a grand scale. Prior to its final abandonment and ruin, the Old Palace is understood to have succumbed to a more mournful fate, being used to house the harems of deceased sultans.

- 27 The courtyard of the black eunuchs has received scant attention in contemporary scholarship on the palace. The most detailed overview is provided in Cengiz Köseoğlu, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi: Hazine, Kumaşlar, Manuskriptler* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1987), pp. 27–9, and the accompanying photographic plates by Banri Namikawa.
- 28 The ladies of the harem are understood to have assembled in the Dolaplı Kubbe, before being conducted, fully screened and under the guard of eunuchs, into waiting carriages outside (hence, the name attributed to its external door, the Carriage Gate).
- 29 Qur'ân, Surat al-Ahzab, 33: 53.
- 30 The spatial relationship between eunuchs and the vestibule to a dwelling are discussed, in a Mamluk literary context, in Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3–9.
- 31 The *devşirme* system was a form of human taxation against non-Muslims which helped secure a supply of servants loyal only to the sultan. References to this can be readily found in numerous studies into the social and political history of the Ottoman Empire.
- 32 For detailed descriptions of the royal structures in the Court of the Male Pages, or, as it is now commonly known, the Third Court, see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, pp. 111–58.
- 33 Kivâmi, *Fethnâme-i Sultân Mehmed*, ed. Franz Babinger (Istanbul: Maarif Basimevi, 1955), pp. 70–71, quoted in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 91.
- 34 A tabulated summary of the Privy Purse Registers from 1552 to 1652 is provided in Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 122.
- 35 The classic study of the Topkapı harem as an arena of politics, including the unprecedented power wielded by the valide sultan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the dynastic policies regulating the production of children, is Peirce, *Imperial Harem*. Descriptions of the various ranks of the harem hierarchy during the eighteenth century are provided in Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady. A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986).
- 36 A peculiar anomaly in the Topkapı harem was the less favorable status of the sultan's official wives, who, for reasons of dynastic policies, were forbidden from bearing children. See Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 39–42.
- 37 The lapse of royal fratricide is discussed in Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 101–3.

- 38 For example, Köseoğlu, *Topkapı Saray Museum*, pp. 35–6. The twin apartments, or *Çifte Kasırlar*, continued to be identified with the imprisoned princes within the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi today.
- 39 Given the succession of changes in the Topkapı harem over the centuries, it can be assumed that the institution of black eunuchs endured a similar course with each rank producing its own history, as positions were introduced, superseded, lost precedence, or were abolished. Their precise organization during the period of change under Murad III is little known at present. Later Ottoman historiography, however, does provide some information on the structure and hierarchy of the institution, in compendiums such as the *Tārīh-i 'Atā* compiled by the nineteenth-century historian, Tayyazade Ahmed 'Ata, a brief summary of which is noted in Sabahattin Batur, "The Harem as an Institution in Ottoman Life," in *The Topkapı Saray Museum: Architecture: The Harem and Other Buildings*, trans. and ed. J.M. Rogers (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 23–4.
- 40 The sultan's domed bedchamber was constructed under Murad III (r. 1574–95). A description of this space is provided in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, pp. 165–72; Köseoğlu, *Topkapı Saray Museum*, pp. 32–3.
- 41 The precise reference made by this gate remains open to debate. Kuşhane Kapısı, meaning "Aviary Gate," is often understood to point towards a small aviary that may have been located close by. But at the same time, a parallel meaning of *kuşhane*, as "saucepan," as listed in James W. Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon* (Beirut: Library du Liban, 1974), p. 690, has led to counter suggestions that the gate was possibly named after a small kitchen.
- 42 Jateen Lad, "Panoptic Bodies: Black Eunuchs as Guardians of the Topkapı Harem," in Marilyn Booth (ed.), *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 43 At this point, it must be mentioned that another occupant was permitted freedom of movement across the harem. Like the eunuch, the prepubescent child was also deemed "incomplete" in his or her sexuality and so could access different spaces and cross critical boundaries segregating men and women without unsettling the moral harmony of the household.
- 44 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir; Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975), trans. Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- 46 Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 170, quoting Şeref, "Topkapu Saray-i Hümayun," pp. 651–2.

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