

# Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary

Reconfiguring the Architectural Past  
in a Modernizing Empire

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## Introduction: Back to the Roots—Reform and Revivalism in the Late Ottoman Empire

Gönlüm isterdi ki mazini dirilten sanat  
Sana tarihini her lahza hayal ettirsin  
(I would only hope that art, resurrecting your past,  
Make you, every moment, dream up your own history)

—from Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, *Hayal Beste* (Dream composition)<sup>1</sup>

The prominent twentieth-century novelist and literary historian Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar describes the Tanzimat, the period of intense westernizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire (1839–76), as a time marked by a search for “new syntheses” in Ottoman culture.<sup>2</sup> Besides the proclivity for the synthetic, however, the Tanzimat brought many paradoxes and vicissitudes in its wake. Immersed in a complex dramaturgy of change, nineteenth-century Ottomans were forced to straddle conflicting poles of identification: while they actively sought to be incorporated into the Concert of Europe, appropriating myriad institutions and cultural forms, they also had to reckon with the idea of being “Orientals” themselves. In their historic stride toward political and cultural modernization, the nineteenth-century Ottoman elite faced the intricate task of redefining their own conceptions of the “East,” of reinscribing the word with new meanings in view of complex European references, and reconsidering their own identity along the parameters of this novel definition. Thus, ironically, as the Tanzimat endeavor yielded its first generation of westernized fops and dandies, it also prompted among the late Ottoman elite a novel taste for Orientalist aesthetics and reverie and even a rising predilection for “going Oriental.” The painter Osman Hamdi Bey’s (1842–1910) inexorable passion for Orientalist cross-dressing may have been a bit too ungainly and flamboyant, but his playful engagement with the Orientalist genre can hardly be considered an anomaly in the context of late Ottoman culture (Figure I.1).



I.1 Osman Hamdi Bey in Oriental garb. Courtesy of Faruk Sarç

While European Orientalist scholarship (such as the works of the Viennese historian Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall) had a profound impact on late Ottoman conceptions of the historical self, in the realm of literary and visual representation the growing awareness of European norms and conventions for imagining the Orient engendered within the Ottoman artistic milieu a diverse array of creative strategies through which novel visions of the self and other were articulated.<sup>3</sup> Especially after the 1860s, as the new Tanzimat generation began experimenting with new genres of literary and visual representation, such as the novel (more distinctively the thriving genre of the historical novel), the play, and academic painting, elaborate techniques of Orientalist displacement, illusion, and fantasy allowed the Ottoman artists to rearticulate their visions of cultural difference and to concoct their own collective daydreams about a distant and resplendent Ottoman/Islamic past.

Thus, in the midst of the initial disillusion and traumas of the Tanzimat venture, a rising search for the foundational terms of Ottoman/Islamic cultural identity generated a favorable atmosphere for the recruitment and appropriation of orientalizing fads and fantasies. Orientalizing taste and aesthetics helped add a hint of "local color" to official spectacle, as well as to the prosaic pleasures of everyday life: throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century Western-style military bands played marches composed *alla turca* in Ottoman urban centers, medievalizing plays featured actors dressed in extravagant "Andalusian" garb, and Francophone pashas dined in suites adorned with Orientalist furniture and paraphernalia. But publicly the most spectacular and significant of all was a new and highly eclectic architectural style that drew heavily from the European Orientalist reservoir of forms. Starting with the late Tanzimat period, corresponding to the reign of Abdülaziz (1861–76), the heavily westernized language of early nineteenth-century official architecture, suffused with a rich blend of classical elements and florid ornament, was replaced by an entirely novel and eclectic repertoire of forms culled from the supposedly authentic sources of Ottoman tradition (Figure I.2). These sources ranged from early Ottoman and medieval Islamic architecture (particularly that of Spain) to, curiously, European Gothic. The hybrid orientalizing idiom of the late Tanzimat, combining refashioned Ottoman elements with a rich array of Moorish gates, onion domes, and Gothic trellises, generated a broad popular appeal and remained the officially favored style till the end of the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). Its rise was concomitant to the propagation of other orientalizing styles in colonial contexts, such as the Indo-Saracenic in the British Raj and the *Arabisances* in French North Africa, and to the incipient expressions of the neo-Mamluk style in khedivial Egypt.



I.2 Taksim Artillery Barracks, from Pars Tuğlacı, *The Role of the Balian Family in Ottoman Architecture* (Istanbul: Yeni Çağır, 1990)

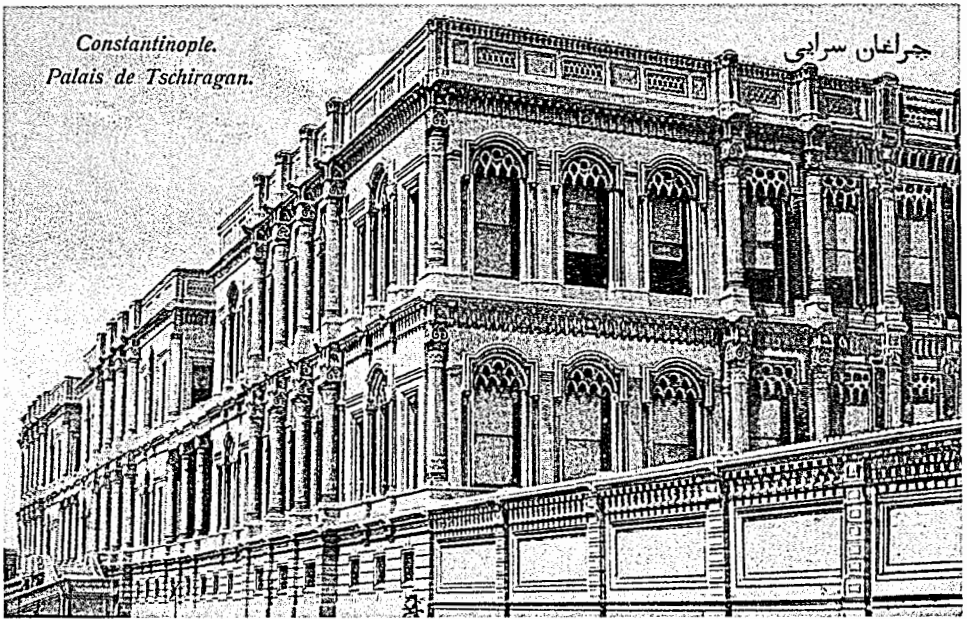
This book examines the complex historicist discourse underlying this visible self-orientalizing shift in Ottoman architecture through a close reading of a scholarly text that was conceived as the movement's canonizing manifesto: published in Istanbul in 1873, the *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani* (The fundamentals of Ottoman architecture) (hereafter the *Usul*) was the earliest comprehensive study on the history and theory of Ottoman architecture.<sup>4</sup> The present study, in its cross-disciplinary and translocal scope, sets out from a close inspection of this hitherto unstudied text, retraces its intercultural context, and explores the creative ways in which the Ottoman authors straddled the Western art historical mainstream and their new, self-orientalizing aesthetics of locality. A major objective of this study is, therefore, to convey to the reader an understanding of how Orientalism was embraced by its very objects, the self-styled "Orientals" of the modern world, as a marker of authenticity and as a strategically located aesthetic tool to project universally recognizable images of cultural difference. Rejecting the lesser, subsidiary status ascribed to non-Western Orientalisms, this book contributes to recent, post-Saidian directions in the study of cultural representation, whose exponents strive to resituate the field of Orientalism beyond its established binarisms, to fracture it into its multiple voices, and to recognize its cross-cultural potential as a polyvalent discourse. Although one should never overlook the raw social appeal of fashion, I argue that the

local orientalizing approach that emerged in late Ottoman architecture was much more than the secondary offshoot of an originary form of Orientalism devised in Europe or a mere "stylistic diversion" indexed to creative drifts in an unassailable Western artistic mainstream. Furthermore, I do not conceive or portray this alternative mode of Orientalism, in wishful postcolonial sentiment, as the outcome of a "subversive" urge on the part of the Ottomans to displace or "correct" the hegemonic core of the Orientalist establishment. My main aim, rather, is to historicize and particularize the ways in which Orientalism, both as a specific stylistic idiom and as a broad, open-ended representative strategy for the articulation of cultural difference, was transmuted in the Ottoman domain, as it was reconfigured in conjunction with local visions of community and alterity, established social hierarchies, existing professional codes, and changing regimes of visibility. I prefer to analyze the sudden exotic bloom of late Tanzimat architecture, and its lasting impact, as the outcome of a dominant urge for cultural survival and of a novel demand for envisioning authenticity, as modernizing Ottomans reckoned with the realities of a globalizing world dominated by the West. This study acknowledges the pivotal role of Orientalist tradition, in its Saidian definition, in the analysis of non-Western cultural representation. Yet, in its approach to changing forms and discourses of architecture in the late Ottoman domain, it moves beyond the designated academic field of Orientalism and aligns the Ottoman case with broader histories of cultural introspection, syncretism, and improvisation in the modern world.

Commissioned by the Ottoman government on the occasion of the 1873 World Exhibition in Vienna, the *Usul* was conceived as a trilingual volume, with parallel texts in French and German (respectively entitled *L'architecture ottomane* and *Die ottomanische Baukunst*) that accompanied the Ottoman Turkish version. Shaped within a nexus of intense contact and engagement with the European cultural establishment, the *Usul* was produced collectively by a diverse and highly cosmopolitan group of artists, comprising French expatriates, Levantines of Italian origin, Francophile bureaucrats, and Ottoman Armenians schooled in Venice. Designed and intended as a foundational study openly affiliated with European academic discourses on art and architecture, the *Usul* was, to use Mary Louise Pratt's definition, a self-consciously intercultural text addressed to both local (Ottoman) and international (mainly European) readers, produced with the knowledge that it would be assessed differently by its multiple audiences.<sup>5</sup> This prestigious volume, therefore, constituted an elaborate attempt to "mainstream" the Ottoman dynastic building tradition, that is, to redefine it according to the standards of modern art historical scholarship as a unique and distinctively "non-Western" style that was, nevertheless, compatible and conversant with the privileged norms of the Western academic establishment. The authors of the *Usul*, in other words, were engaged in a subtle balancing act as they attempted to reclaim and translate the Ottoman tradition for their multiply positioned audiences.



I.3 Pertevniyal Valide Mosque, Aksaray, Istanbul (1868–71),  
by Sarkis and Agob Balyan, from Pars Tuğlacı, *The Role of the Balian  
Family in Ottoman Architecture* (Istanbul: Yeni Çığır, 1990)



I.4 Çırağan Palace, Istanbul (1864–71), by Sarkis and Agob Balyan.  
Postcard, from the personal collection of the author

While projecting a definite image of locality, authenticity, and aesthetic difference, they also hoped to defy marginality and pure otherness in their effort to inhabit, manipulate, and ultimately expand a master discourse on art that was rigidly controlled and dominated by the Western center. In the end, the authors defined and promoted the distinct “Ottoman architectural style” in analytical terms as a “highly evolved” product of the Oriental denomination of styles that, allegedly, outgrew its precursors and defied all negative stereotypes associated with its marginalized category. More akin to the “grand” Western tradition, the Ottoman style was brandished as a rational and universally applicable system of building that was innately modern and, uncharacteristic of all other non-Western styles, open to change and continuous innovation.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond being a purely scholarly endeavor, then, the *Usul* was also conceived as a guidebook, or even a manifesto, for an officially endorsed program of rediscovery and revival in Ottoman art and architecture. The grand narrative of architectural history offered in the book, delineating the “beginnings, rise, and fall” of the Ottoman style through the ages, culminates with a portrayal of the Abdülaziz era as an age of downright revival. Here, this era’s eclectic monuments in Istanbul, particularly the Pertevniyal Valide Mosque in Aksaray (1869–71) and the Çırağan Palace on the Bosphorus (1864–71), are acclaimed as the harbingers of an emerging “Ottoman Renaissance” in architecture (Figures I.3 and I.4). Setting out from

a close reading of the *Usul* and its broader context of fabrication and display, the present study provides a better understanding of the intellectual, professional, and political backdrop of artistic and architectural production in the late Ottoman Empirê. It thereby contributes to the writing of a revised history of Ottoman culture in the nineteenth century, the so-called period of decline, by focusing on the late Tanzimat period not only as the seedbed of a new theoretical debate on art and architecture but also as a site of intense experimentation in reimagining the relations between the Ottoman self, its others, and the world.

The questions raised in this study, in retracing the *Usul*'s ambitious move toward universalizing the Ottoman artistic tradition, grow from a basic assumption: that the *Usul*, in proposing a novel scholarly discourse on Ottoman architecture, worked as a plural and internally complex text, constantly intersecting with different (Ottoman and European) discourses on history and artistic identity and comprising multiple, at times inconsistent, voices in its appeal to the past. This is invariably the case, of course, with all discursive formations. But the complexity is aggravated in the *Usul* because of the multiplicity of its authors, the plurality of its intended audiences, its polyglot flexibility (its engagement with multiple languages over parallel texts), and the cultural mobility of its cosmopolitan authors, who seem to have switched effortlessly between different cultural codes and sites of identification. It was the fluidities and ambivalences lying at the heart of the *Usul*'s approach to the Ottoman past that, I would argue, enabled its authors to maintain a strategic balance between seemingly incompatible goals, reconciling their nativist claims to local rootedness and difference with a bolder demand for a place in the sun within the European art historical canon. Drawing liberally upon locally established visions of dynastic hierarchy and distinction, Orientalist tropes of local richness and decorative versatility, and European narratives of historical change and stylistic progression, the authors of the *Usul* attempted to negotiate an image of the Ottoman architectural tradition that was genuinely and temptingly non-Western but at the same time actively a part of the greater European mainstream (at least as far as the privileged Ottoman center was concerned). Thus, although the *Usul* was the product of a specialized mission to represent the empire in the international arena, it would be quite misleading to approach the work as a coherent official statement, carrying the imprint of a singular and monolithic cultural agenda propagated by the Tanzimat state. As a heterogeneous text involving diverse sources and a highly eclectic methodology, the *Usul* is more indicative of the divergences, dilemmas, and uncertainties of a particular network of individuals who were linked to the Tanzimat's unresolved program of "reordering" the empire—the day-to-day policies of which were ruled more by dissonance and expediency than harmony and uniformity.

So it is the cultural confluences and intersections lacing the *Usul's* text, and the plural references in its discursive production of artistic authenticity, that interest me the most. Rather than examine the authors as mouthpieces of a supposedly unified Tanzimat apparatus, or as cultural compradors naïvely driven by the demands of Western hegemony, I approach them as self-reflexive historical actors with plural concerns and affiliations, devising their own syncretic means for the selection and rearticulation of knowledge. This book, therefore, pursues a rigorously historicized reading of the *Usul* as an intercultural text and explores the complex motives and strategies underlying its organization, its display, and its appeal to the modern culture of revivalism. It defines the *Usul* as a critical landmark, revealing in its production and consumption changing conceptions of art and architecture and rising historical sensibilities in the Ottoman realm. Departing from the *Usul's* text and exploring the ways in which it interweaves aspects of French and British theory (especially the rationalism of Viollet-le-Duc), Viennese applied-arts agendas, dynastic paternalism, imperial identity politics, as well as proto-nationalist teleology, this study unravels the stratifications of a new and modern form of architectural discourse emerging in the Ottoman realm. The *Usul* is investigated here, then, as a creative and strategic site for redefining Ottoman art as the index of an improbable "national character" for a polyglot empire, for reclaiming a distant and collectively shared past, and for initiating an open dialogue and exchange with the European cultural establishment. In the end, the critical reassessment of the *Usul* undertaken here should not be expected to reveal a genuine local voice representing the unique and indigenous realities of a struggling empire. It simply offers a glimpse into the dreams, quandaries, and inner tensions of a group of artists and intellectuals engaged in the westernizing Tanzimat venture, constantly repositioning themselves in a world marked by tremendous intercultural fluidity, sharp power asymmetries, and interlocking practices. It strives, above all, to understand the ways in which these actors contended with changing global realities and envisioned their local style, and its belated renaissance, in the context of the modern world.

### Beyond Orientalism and Eurocentric Vision

In retracing the contours of a new aesthetics of difference and the rise of a modern culture of authenticity in the late Ottoman context, this study raises questions that reach beyond its prescribed field of Ottoman studies, addressing issues with broader implications related to histories of cultural contact, resistance, and reciprocity in the age of modern globalization. Along these lines, it draws upon the insights of recent studies in cross-cultural representation and contributes to a more historicized understanding of the

field of Orientalism by exploring its alternative trajectories and potential for adaptability in a particular non-Western context.<sup>7</sup> My intention here is not to absolve Orientalism of its sins on the site of its Ottomanized transformation or to attribute to its localized manifestations an aesthetic or intellectual innocence beyond the sphere of the political. On the contrary, I hope to demonstrate, through a critical assessment of the alleged "Ottoman Renaissance," how Orientalism, in its manifold incarnations, was made subservient to alternative political agendas, power struggles, and asymmetries, as well as local practices of identification and alterity.

As revealed by the studies of Selim Deringil and Ussama Makdisi, by the second half of the nineteenth century Orientalism had already been superimposed over older modes of imperial hierarchy and distinction and had become part and parcel of the habitus of Ottoman modernity.<sup>8</sup> Inflected by the priorities and predilections of the dominant Turkish-speaking elite, Orientalism's techniques of exoticizing displacement, as well as its inherent archaisms and essentialisms, were recruited by the Ottoman center in order to propagate paternalistic visions of mastery and control over imperial subordinates (especially the Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking populations of the eastern provinces). Yet, while constituting the very basis of a quasi-colonial vision of domination and discrimination, Orientalist representation was, at the same time, the fertile soil upon which various modes of collective self-fashioning were shaped in the late Ottoman domain. It is my contention, therefore, that Orientalism was not merely subservient to the binary logic of internal dominance and subordination in the Ottoman lands. As a panoply of representational habits, scholarly conventions, literary tropes, and artistic stereotypes, it was manipulated by multiple groups in the empire as an open and malleable field, a hybrid and contested space for fleshing out local (sometimes conflicting) aspirations, tensions, and conflicts, and for enunciating projected identities and differences (consider the popularly cultivated counterimage of Abdülhamid II as Oriental despot).

Thus, rather than approach Orientalism as a univocal and polarizing discourse prescribing fixed positions of alterity (to be either affirmed or challenged), I follow Lisa Lowe's lead in investigating it as a broader, unstable, and inherently versatile field, capable of accommodating a whole variety of concerns with difference articulated in different sites.<sup>9</sup> This study, therefore, responds to the appeal to expand Orientalism beyond its binary, oppositional core. Based upon a close analysis of the *Usul* and of the texts, images, sites, and networks situated around it, the ensuing discussion locates and historicizes multiple and at times conflicting manifestations of alterity and identity in the Ottoman domain. As the following chapters reveal, while serving as an imperial instrument for the production and management of internal hierarchies, Orientalist representation also played a vital role in shaping nativist strategies of local empowerment and cultural survival (which generated their own

visions of political domination and social intolerance). Diverse actors (both within and beyond the Ottoman center) employed Orientalism as a potent tool to reconstitute an imagined (Islamic, Ottoman, or anti-Ottoman) past, to propagate images of collective harmony and association, and to fabricate archetypal visions of the "Oriental self." While numerous intellectuals in the Islamic world contested the Orientalist tradition's discriminative subtext, centered on an essential ontological inequality between East and West, many seem nevertheless to have reveled in the creative potential of Orientalist dualistic imagination, as it provided new and potent categories through which non-Westerners articulated their own cultural differences vis-à-vis the looming presence of the West in their everyday lives. Thus, like the newfangled "Renaissance" dominating the late Ottoman artistic mainstream, Orientalism carried the potential to be redeployed in an alternative center as a potent instrument in an open and creative engagement with visions of locality and the past. It is hoped, therefore, that this study, setting out from a close inspection of the *Usul* and the world around it, contributes to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which Orientalism was displaced, reconfigured, and complicated by a diverse body of mediators outside its originary Western context.

## Historical Overview

The nineteenth century was a time when the image of the Ottoman sovereign and the political and cultural mechanisms that held together the diverse inhabitants of his imperial domains were subjected to intense scrutiny and revision. It was not that a public critique on the order of things was wanting in the Ottoman realm before the advent of the reform culture specific to the nineteenth century. In fact, from the late sixteenth century onward, an enduring and pervasive consciousness of decline, along with the reactionary/reformative discourse it entailed, continued to inform the disparate revisionist agendas (both conservative and boldly experimental) articulated within various strata of Ottoman society.<sup>10</sup> Especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century, as the Ottoman authorities came to acknowledge the absolute military superiority of Russia and the European powers, substantial efforts were made (albeit in piecemeal fashion) in the military and administrative fields in order to restore the authority and efficiency of the central state apparatus. But the decisive turning point in the history of late Ottoman reforms came with the reign of Mahmud II (1808–39). Mahmud's radical attempt to centralize the state along European models proved to be a success, as it entailed the suppression or outright annihilation of major power groups resistant to authoritative centralization: the provincial power magnates and the military-social network of the Janissary corps. Under the initiative of the modernizing

ruler, the Ottoman Empire in the early decades of the nineteenth century saw a fundamental transformation in reform psychology. The reformative discourse of the new era was centered less upon an ideal paradigm embedded in the distant past than on novel standards of order and change derived from the intellectual arsenal of the modern West. The extensive measures taken under the iron hand of Mahmud II were destined to regulate and restructure all levels of social and political life; these ranged from the reformulation of the legal and administrative structure to the imposition of new sartorial codes along Western models.<sup>11</sup>

The initiative of reform was transferred from the palace to the Sublime Porte (bureaucracy) with the proclamation of the *Gülhane* Edict in 1839 under the auspices of the newly enthroned sultan, Abdülmecid I (r. 1839–61). The edict was a formal manifestation of the state's commitment to creating a secularized and egalitarian political entity based largely on European concepts of administration. It marked the official beginning of the period usually referred to as the *Tanzimat*, named after the set of legal, administrative, and economic reforms envisioned and conducted by the Ottoman bureaucratic elite.<sup>12</sup> This modernizing cadre faced the difficult task of crafting a complex reformative agenda in an environment in which the traditional sources of dynastic/religious legitimacy remained largely inadequate for reinforcing the new regime's novel and increased demands on the diverse layers of Ottoman society. Thus, similar to other "old-fashioned" empires in nineteenth-century Europe, the *Tanzimat* regime attempted to generate its own peculiar form of "official nationalism" as a basis for political commitment and social cohesion.<sup>13</sup> With the hope of creating a transnational whole out of a multiethnic/multireligious conglomerate, the Ottoman reformers strove to reconcile revised notions of dynastic allegiance with a collective and secular sense of "Ottoman nationhood."

The Ottoman state remained firmly committed to the modernizing program of the *Tanzimat* and its novel vision of collective identity during the reign of Abdülaziz. Yet this later phase in the period of intense reforms, culminating with the institution of the short-lived constitution of 1876, was also the seedbed of rising uncertainties, disillusionings, and dilemmas that haunted the new generation of the *Tanzimat*'s modernizing elite.<sup>14</sup> During this period, the proliferation of modern communications media opened up the field of public discussion for reassessment of the reforms, and for the first time many tenets of the *Tanzimat* were placed under public scrutiny in relatively open terms, both from within and from without the circles of the power elite. The appearance of many publishing houses, along with the flourishing of private, institutional, and clandestine newspapers and journals, created, albeit in limited scale, a new intellectual platform where the official viewpoint clashed and reverberated with volatile shifts in public opinion. The penetration of revisionist and critical ideas into the official

realm was also made possible by the permeability of the boundaries that separated the official class from the factions and individuals that assumed opposing roles in relation to it. Instead of being severely divided by cultural rifts, most participants in the new debate over the nature of Tanzimat reforms, from the illuminati of the upper bureaucracy to the runaway litterateurs of the Young Ottoman underground, shared a background in official training and were imbued with the same ethos of serving the dynastic state. While an ideal public debate involving the participation of all segments of Ottoman society was beyond the limits of Tanzimat political acceptance, the official agenda during this period of turmoil and uncertainty was likely more responsive to the new political ferment incited in large part by the eclectic Young Ottoman opposition.

Gaining in virulence within this nascent milieu of public debate and self-reflection were the concerns voiced predominantly by the Muslim intelligentsia on the rising threat of European economic and cultural hegemony. In turn, the officials of the Abdülaziz era, in an effort to obtain a wider base of public support for the reforms, revised the reformative strategies of the Tanzimat with reference to the rising conservative mood among the dominant Muslim population. Messages of imperial stability and rootedness were conveyed in the official discourse, now suffused with references to a glorious Ottoman past and its "common and immutable" traditions. Although the state retained the "Ottomanist" rhetoric of the early Tanzimat, laced with overtones of egalitarianism and inclusiveness, revised definitions of Ottoman identity acquired an unmistakable Islamic coloring during the reign of Abdülaziz. These were to pave the way for the pan-Islamic legitimizing strategies of his successor, Abdülhamid II.

### **Tanzimat and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary**

Not a thoroughly orchestrated program of reform, the Tanzimat instead comprised a complex set of pragmatic measures and negotiations crafted in response to myriad local exigencies as well as to international politics and pressure. In its complex dramaturgy of change, therefore, the period of intense social and political transformation embodied deep fractures as well as marked continuities, hovering as it did between evocations of the past and veneration of the new. The Tanzimat's embeddedness in an internal dynamics of change is cogently underlined by Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, who reexamines the period of reforms as the culminating point of a lengthy "early modern" phase of transformation in the empire extending back to the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> The traditional underpinnings of the reforms aside, however, there is no question that the period of intense transformation in the late Ottoman Empire, initiated by the radical centralizing policies of Mahmud II and fully institutionalized

during the Tanzimat era, did constitute a critical and dramatic rupture that separated the Ottoman present from the past, ushering in a dizzying array of novel institutions, reading practices, print cultures, and radically new modes of self-fashioning and -expression.

From the perspective of Ottoman historical experience, perhaps even more significant than the actual changes themselves was the rise of a fundamental awareness of change, an irrevocable sense of breach and, inevitably, loss instilled by the Tanzimat among broad segments of Ottoman society.<sup>16</sup> The consciousness of being at a turning point and the firm belief in the advent of a radically new order of things seem to be sustained not only by the official parlance of the modernizing elite but also by disparate reactionary discourses, informed by various shades of conservative opinion fermenting in the late Ottoman milieu.<sup>17</sup> One could argue, then, that the Tanzimat, with its sentiment of dramatic rupture and irretrievable change, marks the rise of a distinctively modern historical consciousness in the Ottoman realm.<sup>18</sup> It is only with reference to this disquieting experience of departure and discrepancy, what Frank Ankersmit calls the modern sense of being "ejected, expelled, or exiled from the past," that one can explain the rising antiquarian urge among certain men of the Tanzimat to salvage, collect, and display, eventually in the format of a museum, traditional Janissary outfits and paraphernalia only decades after the total cleansing of the corps by the modernizing state in 1826.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to the facility of modern historicizing vision, what the state had deemed the "troops of ill-will" were officially reallocated to an idealized moment in the remote past that, the Ottoman audiences knew, was conclusively removed from their own reality.

The increasing demand among the Ottoman reading public for popular and scholarly works dealing with the past indicates that a passionate desire and need for history, that uniquely modern proclivity nurtured by rupture and intense yearning, started manifesting itself in the Ottoman lands in the wake of the tumultuous Tanzimat experience. With rising intensity, the Ottomans began to experiment with unprecedented forms and techniques of historical representation in order to bridge the insuperable distance separating them from their past. Thus a new and more versatile form of historical knowledge, what Stephen Bann calls the new "historical-mindedness" of the nineteenth century, made its way into the Ottoman world, replete with myriad practices of representation and popular diffusion it entailed for imagining the historical past.<sup>20</sup> The new historical culture not only pertained to the field of academic historiography but was manifested in the form of the museum, the exhibition, as well as the historical novel, play, and painting. Every aspect of the past became a potential target of historical investigation after this transformation; moreover, for a growing number of audiences, history, in all the disparate ways that it was envisaged and articulated, became an indispensable object of emotional consumption.

For the Ottoman public, a closer and more empathic relationship with the glorious days of yore offered relief from the grim realities of the present, helping overcome the sour deficiencies of living in an old-fashioned empire struggling to adjust to the age of modern change. This was the time when the Ottomans themselves invented the modern form of "Ottoman nostalgia." But these attempts, scholarly or popular, to salvage a world threatened by the Tanzimat's new life patterns were heavily laden with sensibilities of the exotic and the picturesque. The Ottomans tapped into the rich imaginary potential of Orientalism and invoked its aesthetic or academic protocols in order to recapture and reanimate past experience in veristic form and authentic detail.

Driven by an acute awareness of "expulsion" from the past, the Ottomans employed Orientalist representation as a potent instrument in the post-Tanzimat period and beyond in order to penetrate, control, and reenact history in view of their own image of empire and their changing visions of collective identity. Orientalism, in accordance with the demands of modern historicizing vision, was subservient to the broader agenda of reexperiencing the past and overcoming its ineluctable otherness. The standard Orientalist paradigm of former glory and a bygone "golden age," which felicitously overlapped with collective yearnings deeply rooted in the Ottoman historical imaginary (such as long-standing visions of the faultless ancient order of early Islam or the resplendent age of Süleyman the Magnificent), engendered a new urge among Ottoman artists, scholars, and intellectuals to reconnect to moments of power and glory in the Ottoman and Islamic past and to make these available for public consumption. The past, in other words, was recast as an object of Romantic and exotic desire, and Orientalism was an appropriate means through which this desire was articulated and made a ground of shared experience in the Ottoman domain.

The rising historical culture of the nineteenth century was a crucial political asset for the Ottoman state, as it helped the centralizing authority to reinscribe its newly contrived sense of collective identity in the distant past. The following chapters offer some insights about the role of historical scholarship and history textbooks in the fabrication of a desirable past and in the inculcation of new categories of self-definition. This study, however, focuses more closely on the evidential and authenticating role assigned to architecture in manufacturing historical identity and traces the emergence of a new set of references through which the modern notions of "heritage" and "historic monument" were instilled in the minds of the new Tanzimat generations.<sup>21</sup> Taking into account the changing historical sensibilities of the Tanzimat period, it seeks to understand how monuments, the traditional loci of dynastic pride and glory, were reappraised at this time as objects of historical insight and, on a more popular level, emotionally charged markers of a shared sense of "Ottomanness."

## The Source

The publication of the *Usul* was part of a larger official effort to represent the empire in the 1873 World Exhibition in Vienna. The text and the drawings were prepared under the supervision of İbrahim Edhem Paşa, the minister of trade and public works (the main governmental agency that directed the Ottoman entries to the world exhibitions), by a diverse group of artists and bureaucrats who had close professional ties with the state apparatus. The editor of the whole volume, and author of a substantial portion of the original text, was the amateur historian and artist Victor Marie de Launay, a "naturalized" Frenchman who held a secretarial position in the Ministry of Trade and Public Works and acted as the official correspondent of the Ottoman commission to the Vienna Exhibition. Excepting a few plans rendered by Marie de Launay, most of the drawings and color plates were executed by Pietro Montani (or Montani Efendi), an Ottoman Levantine artist of Italian origin, while some additional renderings of decorative components were provided by the French artist Eugène Maillard and the Ottoman painter Bogos Şaşıyan.

The *Usul* comprises four main parts. It begins with a historical overview authored by Marie de Launay, which constitutes the first scholarly attempt to define and represent the entire Ottoman architectural past according to the precepts of modern history writing. Starting from the initial examples of the dynastic style, Marie de Launay orders and evaluates Ottoman monuments along a continuous scheme of stylistic progression, hence redefining the Ottoman dynastic building tradition as a "historical style," with the potential to transform itself and adjust to the realities of modern change.

The historical overview is supplemented by a section with monographs on major Ottoman monuments located in Istanbul and the two former capitals of the empire, Bursa and Edirne. It contains detailed historical and technical information on selected mosques, tombs, and fountains marking various periods in the history of Ottoman architecture as defined in the first section of the book (except for the period of "decadence," believed to span the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). Particularly well covered is the early Ottoman period represented by the fifteenth-century Green Mosque in Bursa. The close attention given to this monument both in the monographs and in the historical overview testifies to the intensity of late Ottoman fascination with the period of dynastic origins. The wealth of documentary evidence on the Green Mosque also reveals the authors' close contacts with the French architect Léon Parvillée, who had been commissioned in the earlier years of the Abdülaziz era to restore several early Ottoman structures in Bursa. His survey on the fifteenth-century monuments of Bursa, *Architecture et décoration turques au xve siècle*, following the "rational" guidelines of investigation prescribed by his mentor, Viollet-le-Duc, came out a year after the publication of the *Usul*. Although the Frenchman's work is never acknowledged in the text, a grave

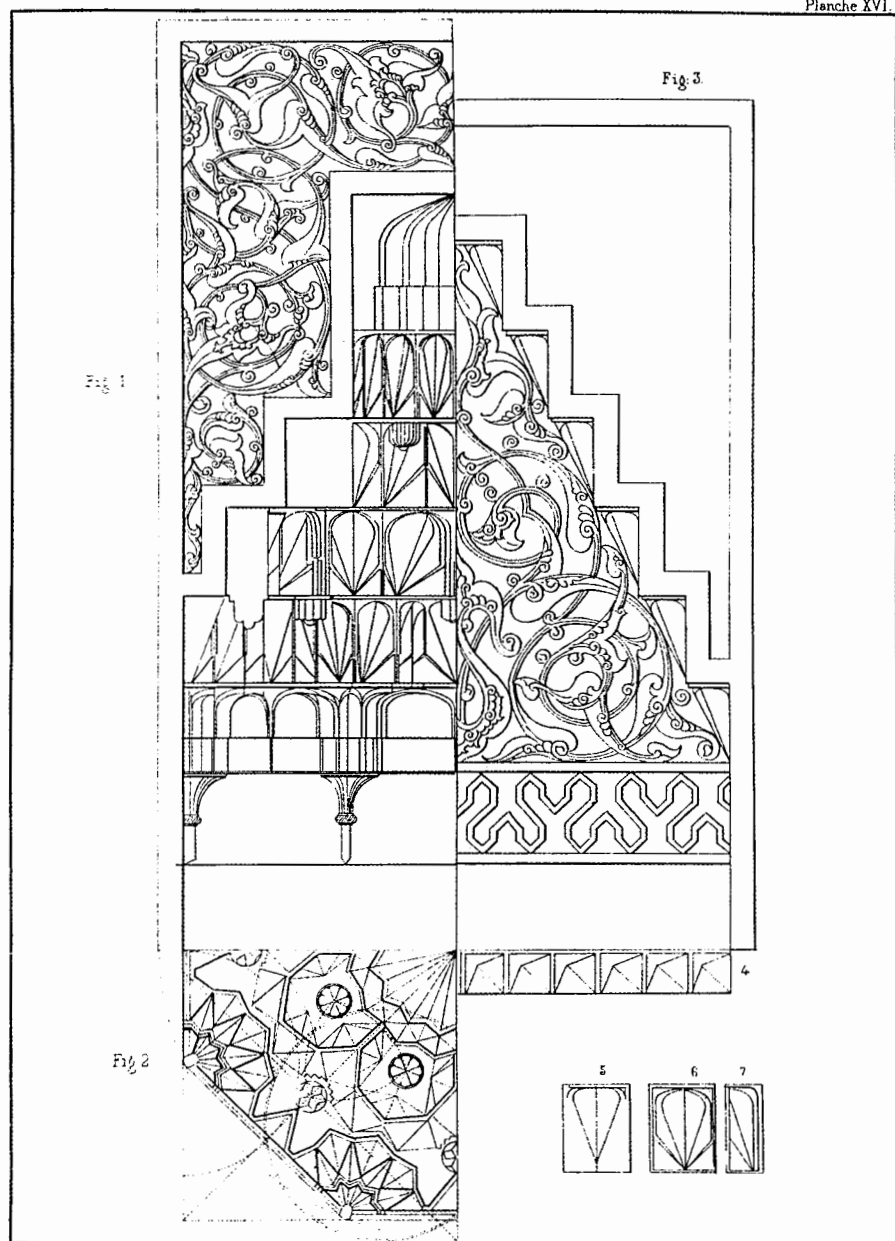
oversight traceable in all likelihood to personal (or group) resentments, the data he collected on the Bursa monuments must have been decisive in shaping the Ottoman authors' approach to the early Ottoman architectural past.<sup>22</sup>

The "Technical Documents" included in the *Usul*, constituting a separate chapter entitled "The Theory of Ottoman Architecture," were provided by Pietro Montani.<sup>23</sup> Here, through a systematic and analytical investigation of building components and decoration, Montani seeks to uncover the underlying morphological laws through which the characteristic features of Ottoman architecture were generated. The "fundamental" principles of Ottoman architecture revealed in the *Usul*, the author contends, constituted the necessary guidelines for the Ottoman architect in his new, revivalist task. In setting up a theoretical basis for investigation and explanation of Ottoman architecture, Montani draws quite eclectically upon the vast reservoir of European architectural knowledge; his sources of inspiration range from the well-established classical standards of beauty and appropriateness to revisionist postclassical norms in nineteenth-century European architecture, according to such theories as those of Owen Jones on color and decoration or those of the French arch-rationalist Viollet-le-Duc (not to mention his disciples focusing on Islamic building traditions, namely, Jules Bourgoïn and Léon Parvillée). Similar to Viollet-le-Duc's vision of the Gothic, the author outlines Ottoman architecture as a thoroughly rational building system governed by universally valid geometric rules. Montani's selective recourse to European theory stems from the dominant concern that underlies the *Usul*'s universal agenda: to render the Ottoman tradition intelligible and appreciable in the eyes of Ottoman and Western audiences. His appropriation of "international" (read "European") norms of explanation was intended to ascertain the "progressive" qualities of Ottoman architecture, as well as its contemporary professional applicability. For the Ottoman readers in particular, the technical superiority of the Ottoman style and its compatibility with the major European traditions constituted a legitimate ground for contesting, and at the same time creatively negotiating, the authority of the dominant Western architectural paradigm.

The final section of the *Usul* is a concise review of the types and conventions of ornament employed in Ottoman architecture. Despite its brevity, the chapter recapitulates the discussion on ornament that was woven into the *Usul*'s discourse on Ottoman architecture more broadly. With its emphasis on the rationale of Ottoman polychromy and the "truthfulness" of Ottoman ornament (*vis-à-vis* nature, building materials, and tectonics), the discussion resonates deeply with the prevalent issues of the nineteenth-century European debate on crafts and ornament. However, the *Usul*'s discourse on ornament was also closely attuned to rising Ottoman concerns over the possibility of a crafts revival based on the realities of low-technology Ottoman industries and dovetailed to a broader program of reform regarding the organization of the artisanal guilds.

The *Usul* was designed as a luxury volume, a large folio (51 × 39 cm) comprising the parallel texts and a total of 190 plates. The expertly crafted plates that supplement the texts include plans, elevations, and sections of various Ottoman buildings, as well as a rich panoply of decorative details and ornamental patterns, all meticulously depicted in accordance with the academic standards of the Beaux-Arts model. The "Technical Documents" are furnished with graphic illustrations delineating various building components, their proportional relations, and combination patterns (Figure 1.5). The monochrome illustrations are accompanied by fourteen chromolithographic plates (printed in the Sébah studios in Istanbul), skillfully drafted with vibrant and sharply delineated colors (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Considering the superior technical quality and graphic precision of its illustrations (in particular the color plates, which used a recently developed technology), the *Usul* is comparable to its acclaimed European counterparts, such as Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), Auguste Racinet's *L'ornement polychrome* (1869), and Jules Bourgoïn's *Les arts arabes* (1873). Leaving aside the academic scope of its text, the *Usul* must be considered an artistic specimen in and of itself, conceived as a unique showcase of Ottoman technical competence in the art of publishing.

Owing to its original context of display, the *Usul* was shaped with multiple audiences in mind. Advertisements in the Ottoman newspapers of the period reveal that the book was reprinted and made available to the Constantinopolitan reading public. After all, in the eyes of its Ottoman readers, the *Usul* was clear testimony to the cultural merits of a common dynastic/national past. But the prestigious official publication, with its trilingual text, also catered to a wide international audience. The Ottoman Turkish and German versions of the text were to a large extent verbatim translations of an original draft that was, for the most part, written in French. After being displayed in the Ottoman galleries of the Vienna Exhibition, copies of the book were sent to major libraries around the Western world and distributed in major cities around Europe. The *Usul* was clearly intended to open up a separate international field of discussion for Ottoman architecture and dissociate it from the reductive tropes that predominated European perceptions of Islamic architecture.<sup>24</sup> The universal claims of the authors are reflected in the imperial decree regarding the publication of the *Usul* appended to its preface: "[It is decided that this volume] ... will be prepared in the Turkish, French, and German languages in order to declare to a universal audience the great dexterity of the industrious Ottoman nation [in architecture]. It is hoped that it will serve as a basis of operation and a fine [source of] instruction for modern architects."<sup>25</sup>



P. Sebah edit.

P. Montani del.

I.5 Muqarnas details, from Marie de Launay et al., *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani / L'architecture ottomane / Die ottomanische Baukunst* (Istanbul: Imprimerie et lithographie centrales, 1873)

## Beyond the Source

The rising predilections of recent history writing—a fascination with the contingent, an attentiveness to cultural reciprocity, and an appeal to radical historicizing—have had a profound impact on the study of Ottoman cultural history. Although the recent “turns” in historiography have been more decisive in shaping what may be called the early modern history of the Ottoman Empire, the transformation has nevertheless opened up a new field of debate in nineteenth-century studies whereby the time-honored paradigm of westernization is being questioned and destabilized as a unified model for portraying the complex realities of the late Ottoman past. Fragmenting the reductivist core of scholarship on the nineteenth century not only helps dismantle ossifying contrasts affixed to a readymade East/West dichotomy but is also instrumental in revising the image of late Ottoman transformation as a linear and unswerving path leading, inexorably and with evolutionary precision, to the Republican nation-state as the culmination. More specifically, as far as the Tanzimat’s “Ottomanist” utopia is concerned, transcending the dictates of such historicist retrojection enables the researcher to revisit the Tanzimat as a complex and convoluted testing ground for the ideal of the multiethnic/multiconfessional state, rather than impulsively relegate it to the category of a failed and impossible endeavor.<sup>26</sup> Thus, against the backdrop of such inquiry and uncertainty, this study attempts to contextualize the *Usul*, the initial effort to fabricate an appropriate and collectively shared narrative for the Ottoman architectural past, as a unique experiment in support of the Ottomanist cause, as well as a bold foray into a disciplinary territory that was being shaped, and of course monopolized, by the West.

The *Usul* coincided with the rise of a new lexicon of self-definition in the Ottoman realm, but it also emerged in the midst of a complete intellectual silence in its field of inquiry. What makes the *Usul*’s comprehensive discourse on architecture remarkable is that it preceded, by a good thirty years, the rise of a proper Ottoman forum for discussion of architectural styles, their aesthetic connotations, and historical development. Architecture starts to become an issue of wider public interest and critique in the Ottoman Empire only in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, with the dramatic upsurge in popular and institutional channels of debate galvanized by the new constitution. The beginnings of a scholarly discourse on architectural history and theory in the 1870s were only achieved under the aegis of the state, still the most prominent source of artistic patronage in the Ottoman Empire, which had been, for some time, contributing indirectly to the accumulation of technical and scholarly knowledge on Ottoman (and partly Byzantine) monuments by funding systematic restoration efforts in Istanbul and the provinces. Ottoman authorities were fully aware that mapping out the stylistic progression of Ottoman architecture would lend documentary license to their novel vision of

identity, for what were selected to be the noteworthy "historical monuments" of the Ottoman past helped reify the Tanzimat's desired historical narratives into tangible and graspable form. Anyone who walked through national pavilions in the international exhibitions of the time would readily testify to the political power of style, which was assumed to reveal, in consummate form, the defining characteristics and unique "mentality" of a nation.

While the *Usul* stands as an exceptional scholarly undertaking for the period in which it was conceived, its unseasonably articulate assessment of the Ottoman architectural past was also linked inextricably to a burgeoning design agenda, which, in its clear revivalist outlook, closely resonated with changing historical sensibilities in the Ottoman realm. Such close involvement with the exigencies of professional practice was by no means unusual for a scholarly study of this kind in the nineteenth century, since art history had not as yet fully established its disciplinary safeguards as an autonomous discipline. The contributors to the *Usul* purposely set out to authenticate and sanction, in official terms, a rising revivalist outlook in Ottoman art and architecture as a full-fledged indigenous "renaissance." In this sense, this pioneering publication also attests to the complexities of a shifting design agenda in the late Ottoman world and counters the preconceived image of the nineteenth-century Ottoman architect as a passive and rather inept recipient of Western architectural knowledge. It clearly demonstrates that his choices were largely informed by local concerns and exigencies rather than by naïveté or a promiscuous drive for imitation.

It is important here, in discussing late Ottoman design agendas in the broader context of architectural revivalism, to be wary of attributing the eclectic style of the late nineteenth century offhandedly to the zaniness of "westoxicated" architects of the Tanzimat, who were ostensibly so naïve and impulsive as to emulate anything that was in vogue in the European architectural scene, be it neoclassical, Gothic, or "Saracenic." The standard template of modern studies on Ottoman art and architecture normatively prioritizes the "classical" style of the sixteenth century as the paragon of Ottoman originality and cultural "purity" while portraying nineteenth-century artistic production merely as a symptom of cultural contamination and political failure. Inflected by deep-seated declinist renditions of the late Ottoman past, this master narrative has habitually relegated nineteenth-century Ottoman aesthetic experimentation to the category of fashion and ephemera, identifying late Ottoman architects (the overwhelming majority of which, we are constantly reminded, belonged to the non-Muslim communities) as submissive intermediaries of Western aesthetic colonization.<sup>27</sup> Thus, while European eclecticism is examined as a critical and self-consciously experimental moment in the history of Western art, linked to a fundamentally new vision of architecture as an object of historical research and national politics, inquiries on nineteenth-century Ottoman eclecticism have often been burdened by an undue emphasis on its stylistic "sources of influence" in Europe, largely because of the hold of

the westernization paradigm over the reading of late Ottoman history. As a result, until very recently, little research has been conducted to provide an intellectual depth of field to the eclectic pursuits of late Ottoman architects and to reveal the specific motives and political/cultural agendas of their patrons as they nimbly maneuvered through the nineteenth century's vast inventory of available styles. This study casts off the negative connotations attached to the question of hybridity in late Ottoman architecture and reenvision the Ottoman architect as a consciously and critically engaged participant in the broader enterprise of historicist soul-searching in nineteenth-century design. It seeks to understand the period of eclectic and revivalist experimentation in late Ottoman architecture as the outcome of rising modern sensibilities and as a manifestation of the changing status of historical knowledge in the Ottoman intellectual domain. The eclectic monuments of the late nineteenth century, therefore, mostly shunned by twentieth-century architectural historians as "decadent" and "characterless," need to be reappraised as the product of a novel approach to the architectural past engendered by a complex and far-ranging revivalist discourse. The present study aims to investigate the complexities, contradictions, and divergences of this very discourse with reference to the changing cultural and political agendas of the late Ottoman state. It links the changing perceptions of art and architecture in the late Ottoman realm with innovative strategies of self-representation cultivated in a dynastic empire imperiled by the ordeals of westernization and rampant nationalism.

Here, however, my intention is not to claim that the dynamics of architectural production in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire were entirely compatible with those of Europe and that design agendas were, similarly, nurtured by an environment of intense academic engagement and intellectual debate—this would amount to an attempt to aggrandize the status of the Ottoman architect with direct and confirmatory reference to the Eurocentric precepts of mainstream art history. Clearly, the world of the Ottoman architect, as regards his institutional affiliations, public role, and professional status, was markedly different from that of his European counterparts. His was a world governed largely by traditional modes of operation and by the particularities of an expanding, wildly competitive, and elusively regulated market modulated by the complex patronage patterns of a multicommunal empire. Rather, setting out from a close inspection of the *Usul*'s context of production, this study seeks to foreground particular networks, explores their intellectual and professional connections in the Ottoman domain and beyond, and interrogates the complex links between architectural knowledge and practice during the late Tanzimat era. Only by foraying into the incipient modern architectural discourse in the Ottoman Empire and laying bare the consonance of this local knowledge with changing visions of history and locality can one begin to make sense of the distinct exoticizing language of late Tanzimat architecture.

But beyond the facility with which they forayed into the domain of the exotic, one should also not underestimate the global ambitions of the authors of the *Usul* and their desire for "proper" scholarly recognition as they struggled to promote a self-avowedly non-Western tradition outside its prescribed ethnographic context. Thus, bringing into focus the *Usul*'s complex dynamics of involvement and negotiation with Western knowledge, this book also looks into the vicissitudes of recasting the local within the armature of the European mainstream. The authors knew that the discursive authority of their text was fully dependent upon unreserved and open alignment with the "universal" norms of art historical explanation as they were defined in the West. In turning back to their "roots" and redefining Ottoman tradition with reference to a globalized vision of art, they had to engage in a constructive (and essentially affirmative) dialogue with standards and coercive norms imposed by the European academic establishment. The authors hoped that their historical narrative on style would make Ottoman architecture part and parcel of the "pan-human phenomenon of art,"<sup>28</sup> while distinguishing it within the broad and indiscriminate category of Islamic (or Oriental) art and architecture. The "universal" discourse of art history, as it crystallized in the nineteenth century, was fraught with Eurocentric biases, and the authors of the Ottoman publication apparently had no intention of challenging its foundational tenets; neither did they possess the scholarly license or institutional backing to foster such counterknowledge. Thinking beyond or "speaking against" the universal discourse formulated in the West was not a real option, for it entailed installation of an alternative truth that was bound to remain unintelligible or, at best, parochial. The *Usul*, therefore, was not intended to work as a site of categorical resistance or confrontation (a "counternarrative," in other words, or a postcolonial diatribe *avant la lettre*) that contested the discriminatory protocols of Western art history. What it really entailed was a firm negation of marginality and an expansion and rearticulation of the rigidly Eurocentric narrative to accommodate the Ottoman tradition in its privileged core.

Still, such aspirations might seem improbable, given the long and rigidly sustained imperviousness of the art historical canon to alien nonconformists. The fundamental challenge facing the Ottoman authors is best represented by Sir Banister Fletcher's schematic vision of the history of world architecture, namely, the "Tree of Architecture." In this much-cherished analogical diagram, the architecture of the entire Islamic world, the "Saracenic," is relegated to the lesser category of "non-historic styles" and depicted as a fossilized medieval tributary that branches off from the robust trunk of Western styles evolving out of the Greco-Roman seedbed.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note, however, that Fletcher's book was the product of the age of historicist expansion and relativism in architecture and that creative revivals of historical styles, some of which harked back to medieval stylistic tributaries, constituted the most fertile and freshly sprouting branches of the "Tree." Fletcher's study represents

a period when the academic mainstream had long transcended the pure normativity and absolute universal standards espoused by the Renaissance tradition, seeking to find traces of the eternal canon in a vast multiplicity of styles now made available to historicist inspection. Thus, leaving aside the inevitable roughness of the text they produced, one can surmise that the Ottoman authors' demand that the art historical mainstream incorporate the Ottoman style was not totally implausible, for it came at a time of historicist openness and experimentation, when the Western canon's terms of exclusion were renegotiated and revised in serious fashion, at least in relation to its own historical standards. The authors of the *Usul* promoted the distinct Ottoman style in architecture at a point when myriad styles lying outside the standard classical idiom had become available for historicist consumption. What they probably knew, and preferred to overlook in their idealized presentation of the Ottoman tradition, was that European recognition of a non-Western style such as theirs was already governed by the reductive protocols of professional practice and the cosmetic whims of mass consumption.

Complicating the question of the *Usul*'s position vis-à-vis the dominant codes of the Western center is the cultural mobility of its cosmopolitan authors. The plural allegiances, "uncentered" lives, and multiple affiliations of these actors, with respect to domestic and international networks, defy rigid categories of cultural belonging and locality, revealing a web of interlocking practices that blur sharp distinctions between a "monolithic center" and its designated margins. In all, then, the demand of the *Usul*'s authors for direct and equal access to the privileged tools of modern scholarly representation, their outspoken claim for a share of the center, and their ultimate posture of compliance with its hegemonic codes bespeak the greater quandaries of cultural representation in the non-Western world, bringing new insights into the imperatives of cultural mainstreaming and into the dilemmas of defining locality within a globalized aesthetic regime. The bigger question faced by the authors of the *Usul*, therefore, is an enduring one, which still resonates through discussions regarding so-called Third World literatures and artistic practices in the non-Western world today. The question is whether difference, defined on the basis of culture and locality, can gain global visibility without being staged as marginal and exotic, whether it can be accounted for universally without reconfirming the hegemonic codes of the cultural center.

The authors of the *Usul* aimed to create a niche for Ottoman architecture within the history of art as it was formulated in the West—thus transforming and opening up a singularly Western domain. Today, as a growing body of scholarship scrutinizes the premises and historicity of the discourse compiled on Islamic art within the dominant paradigm of Western art history, such a conscious effort to defy marginality remains compelling and legitimate. The engagement of the *Usul* with a field that had been the privileged turf of Western experts alone stretches over the conventional binary oppositions

such as "modern"/"traditional" and renders labels such as "Western impact" insufficient. It helps us reflect not only upon the biases and shortcomings of the dominant discourse on art history but also upon its potential for accommodation, diversification, and fragmentation. A thorough and critical reading of the *Usul* as an open and constructive intellectual endeavor, therefore, may not only help illuminate how a theoretical framework of discussion was formed for architecture in the late Ottoman Empire, but also contribute to the larger task of unlearning and rewriting the history of architecture. The *Usul's* attempt to universalize Ottoman art as an unresolved site of negotiation and contestation, then, evokes the possibility of a truly global history of art, involving a complex interplay between pluralized histories and interconnected sites. It also implies the necessity of dismantling the foundational premises of "globality" as a Eurocentric construct.

### Revisiting the Source

This book is structured in two main parts, each one comprising two separate chapters. The first part brings into focus the specific context in which the *Usul* was produced and displayed, while the second delves into its scholarly discourse and situates it within the intellectual and professional context of the late Tanzimat. The initial chapter examines the publication of the *Usul* as part of the programmed display of Ottoman culture at the World Exhibition in Vienna. Concentrating on the 1873 exhibition, I elucidate how the Ottoman display agendas were shaped with respect to both the official concerns of Ottoman bureaucracy and the broader program stipulated by the Austrian organizing committee. The architectural setting of the Ottoman section in the Vienna Exhibition, along with several publications prepared for the event (an ethnographic costume album and a guidebook on Istanbul accompanied the *Usul* as the most prestigious printed works on display) and myriad objects in the galleries, constituted a comprehensive project for representing the empire as a stable, rooted, and unified entity.

I approach the world exhibition as a prominent site of global contact, exchange, and rivalry, imposing its global standards for the display, translation, and commodification of cultural difference and authenticity. Moving beyond a fixed and polar vision of the dominant western European center and its disempowered peripheries, the first chapter, with its particular focus on the Vienna Exhibition, explores the dynamic confluences between multiple centers, including Vienna, Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo—a regional rival for the Ottomans—and traces overlapping patterns and conflicting strategies in the representation of local difference. It seeks to understand the ways in which the Ottomans maneuvered within the exhibitionary order by employing discourses of authenticity that were informed both

by local identity politics and by exotic sensibilities shared with European audiences. Due to the very nature of the exhibitory setting, questions related to consumption and exoticism (as a universally acknowledged mode of aestheticizing and commodifying authenticity) form the major trajectories of investigation in this chapter. A close examination of Ottoman strategies and priorities of display in the exhibition reveals the formative impact of policies of economic protectionism on the rise of nativist and revivalist sensibilities concerning art, architecture, and objects of everyday use. Gathering evidence from official correspondence, pamphlets, publications, and objects on display, the chapter probes the complexities of Ottoman engagement with exoticism as an aesthetics of diversity. The Ottoman recourse to an exoticized aesthetics, it is argued, was not only a means for channeling “difference” in the international arena but also a localized defensive strategy for promoting domestic production against the influx of Western taste. Thus, ultimately, the chapter aims to situate the practice of exoticism beyond the privileged western European center and approaches it as a pluralized aesthetic regime, altered and rearticulated in multiple sites by its various users.

The second chapter includes a prosopographic study of the circle of artists, intellectuals, and bureaucrats involved in the production of the *Usul*. Probing into this small and motley group (consisting of Francophile officials, Turcophile Frenchmen, Ottoman Armenians, and Italian Levantines) and the networks with which they were closely affiliated during the exhibition, the chapter offers a vivid cross section of intellectual life in Istanbul during the 1860s and 1870s. By drawing upon primary archival and biographical sources as well as the diverse oeuvres of the authors, I investigate the relations of these individuals with the palace and the state as the major patrons of art, their professional backgrounds, as well as their links to multiple professional and social networks inside and outside the empire. I prefer to call these multiply affiliated individuals “embedded cosmopolitans,” in that they fashioned their identities in between different cultures and communities, constantly crossing borders and defying fixed and rigid notions of belonging and locality. Yet driven by particular commitments (like the *Usul*) and conditioned by their local sites of operation, they also played decisive roles in devising new and local forms of cultural improvisation (which transcended the sphere of individual communities), in experimenting with new modes of self-fashioning, and in defining a new culture of authenticity in the Ottoman realm.

Chapter 2, therefore, tackles what seems to be the paradoxical status of the *Usul* as an “indigenous” product: the first nativist discourse on architectural history in the Ottoman domain (and one of the earliest non-Western responses to the dominant European canon) was launched by none other than a highly cosmopolitan team of individuals whose lives were marked, above all, by plural and shifting loyalties, intercultural conditions of existence, and constant mediation between multiple sites of identification. But rather than dispute the

"indigenous" attachment of the authors or the "genuine Ottomanness" of the *Usul*, this study proposes to cast aside constraining visions of identity (founded upon ethno-national or geographic narratives of fixity) in its conception of the Ottoman artistic past. Instead of presupposing such broad and elusive terms as "the Ottoman artist," it attempts, in its rigorously historicizing outlook, to concentrate on specific sites, networks, and performances through which "Ottoman art" or, for that matter, "Ottoman culture" was materialized as an "achieved fiction."<sup>30</sup> In all, then, the second chapter takes a closer look at the way artistic "difference" was rearticulated in the cultural interstices of a polyglot empire. It thereby provides a more open and multifocal vision of artistic production in the Ottoman domain and proposes a more nuanced outlook on the nature of Ottoman plurality.

The second part of the book explores the *Usul* as written evidence for the changing cultural status and public role of architecture in the late Ottoman realm, evaluating it as part of the novel endeavor to define and articulate the artistic/architectural patrimony of the "Ottoman nation." The third chapter brings the *Usul's* narrative of art history into sharp focus, comparing it with contemporaneous examples of architectural writing in the Ottoman realm and relating it to the current state of architectural theory in Europe. It investigates the text as an index for the redefinition of architectural discourse along academic lines in the late Ottoman setting.

The authors of the *Usul* were the first to locate Ottoman architecture within the broader context of cultural history and examine its course with respect to long-term changes in the history of the Ottoman Empire. In embarking on a close reading of the text, I delineate how the established European strategies of analysis, explanation, and justification informed this discourse on Ottoman architecture. Through a close study of the authors' selective and critical methods of scholarly appropriation, I elucidate the creative and unique channels through which the existing body of Western architectural knowledge was transferred to the Ottoman realm. While analyzing the methods used by the *Usul's* authors in structuring the history and theory of Ottoman architecture, I also attend to the broader ideological significance of the text. I examine the *Usul*, as a tract on architectural history, against the background of late Ottoman publications on imperial history in which the Ottoman dynastic past is reconstructed as the locus of a stable "national" identity. Through study of this text and its context of production, I hope to delineate the broader intellectual framework within which the Ottoman architects worked during this period, elucidating the architects' novel critical stance toward their own architectural past as well as toward the ineluctable authority of European architectural knowledge. I also hope thereby to gain and convey a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of architecture and the incipient nation-building policies of a dynastic empire entering the second half of its final century.

Drawing upon archival sources, related construction documents, and artistic and literary texts, as well as the *Usul* itself, the fourth chapter outlines the emergence of a revivalist discourse in the architecture of the late Tanzimat and explores the impact it had on architectural practice. Here, the professed "Ottoman Renaissance" of the late Tanzimat is explored as a decisive turning point in Ottoman architectural history, a moment that left a strong imprint on the subsequent revivalist endeavors, which dominated the architectural scene until the early years of the Republican era.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to the earlier imperial buildings of the century, which displayed the Ottoman architects' long-standing engagement with European forms, the monuments promoted in the *Usul* as the pioneering examples of the late Ottoman revival display a deliberate attempt to partake in a dialogue with the local/Islamic architectural past. My primary aim in this chapter is to reflect upon the motives behind this conscious stylistic shift and to discuss the cultural context of revival in Ottoman architecture by leaning on the *Usul* as its canonizing manifesto. With reference to comparable historicist trends in European architecture, I discuss the rise of the "Ottoman Renaissance" in architecture as concomitant to the beginnings of a modern form of historical consciousness in the Tanzimat era. The elaborate self-orientalizing strategies of this novel orientation in art and architecture are, therefore, positioned beyond the stiff polarized alignment prescribed by standard visions of Orientalism. The critical and experimental leanings emerging in late Ottoman architecture, along with the Tanzimat's nostalgic reversion to the past and demand for cultural revival, are explored as part of a greater search for cultural syncretism and "novel syntheses" in the global context of the nineteenth century.