

Art, Infrastructure, and Devotion

فن ابنية تحية وراحمه

OTTOMAN WATER ARCHITECTURE

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The vast geographical expanse of the Ottoman empire over three continents, together with its complex mix of architectural traditions, requires that a necessarily brief essay on Ottoman water architecture specify its limits at the outset. The present discussion will focus therefore on the metropolitan Ottoman tradition centered in the capital city of Istanbul, rather than that of the far-flung Ottoman provinces. The scholar of Ottoman water architecture is fortunate to have a rich trove of source material in inscribed monuments, as well as an impressive array of scholarly compilations and interpretations of the material, stemming from well over a half-century of modern scholarship published in Turkish. The Ottoman tradition of water architecture is also richly documented by European depictions in paintings and prints, as well as historical and travel narratives, which help to provide a visual and literary record of the day-to-day functioning of water resources and water customs, especially in the nineteenth century.¹ Furthermore, the core Ottoman realms of Anatolia and Rumelia (Asia Minor and the Balkans)

facing page: detail of pl. 120.

have, unlike many Islamic lands, a relatively rich supply of water in the environment, the product of abundant rainfall and a network of important streams and rivers. The Ottomans also had the great good fortune to inherit a tradition of water infrastructure from the societies they had conquered. Finally, the high level of seismic activity in the core Ottoman lands has prompted the periodic reconstruction and renewal of water architecture and infrastructure damaged by the earthquakes that have often ravaged the communities of Anatolia and Rumelia.

Art and architecture associated with water in the Ottoman realms therefore stem directly from the circumstances of the natural environment. The abundance of mineral springs in many places, a considerable number of them hot-water sources, led to the construction of *kaplıca* or hot-water bathing sites. Many trace their architectural lineage back to the *thermae* of the Romans. The hot springs of Yalova in northwestern Turkey, for example, have been frequented by those in search of relaxation and medical cures since long before they were visited by Justinian and Theodora in the sixth century. The first important Ottoman capital city, Bursa in Bithynia, is today famous for its hot springs and mineral baths. The most magnificent Ottoman example, the Yeni Kaplıca, built at the order of the grand vizier Rüstem Pasha in 1555, is said to have been designed by the great architect Sinan (Gabriel 1958).

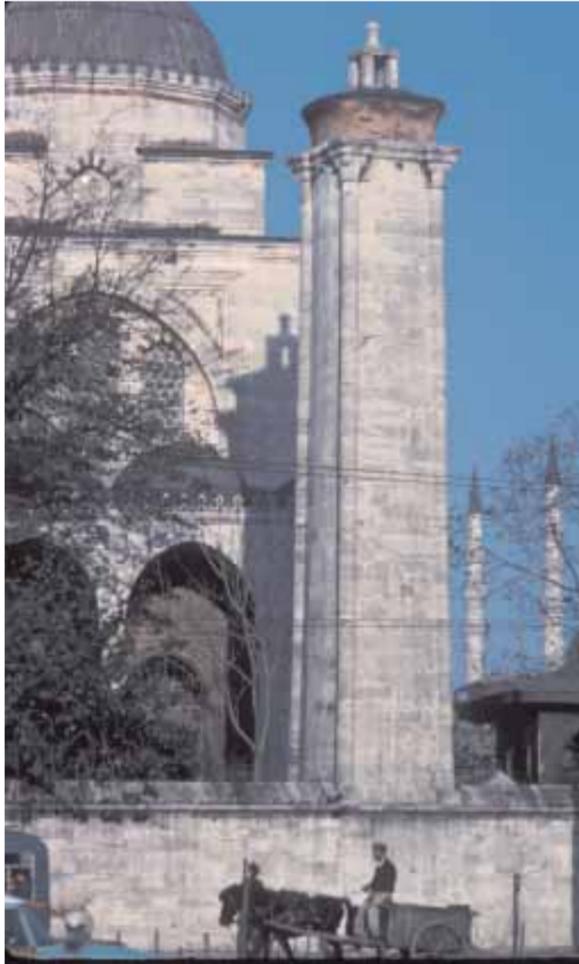
The abundance of rivers in Ottoman territories made the building of bridges a major element of Ottoman infrastructure. Before the Ottomans, the Seljuks, Byzantines, and Romans had a well-developed tradition of constructing massive arcuate structures spanning rivers, many of which have survived into our own time (Çulpan 1975; Bozkurt 1952). The engineering capability for building both temporary and permanent bridges was indeed a major element in the success of Ottoman armies, especially in the European parts of the empire, and bridge-building is prominently featured in many of the illustrated historical manuscripts chronicling the military successes of Ottoman sultans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of the best-known depictions of military bridges is that of a pontoon bridge across the Drava illustrated in the *Süleyman name* (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. 413, fol. 60b; Minorsky 1958, pl. 8).

Practical Water and Symbolic Water in Ottoman Culture and Society

Water sources in the Ottoman empire were diverse. In arid regions, wells were common; Anatolia has an abundance of artesian water springing from snowmelt on its many mountains. Reservoirs gathering runoff from rainfall, created by dams, are relatively common as well. The Belgrade Forest north of Istanbul is a prime example, its waters brought to Istanbul by a system of aqueducts incorporating both pre-Ottoman structures and those built in the course of later Ottoman efforts to repopulate and sustain Istanbul. Due partly to the historical persistence of the above-ground aqueduct tradition, partly to their vulnerability to earthquakes, and partly to soil conditions, the underground conduits known as *qanat*, common in parts of greater Iran (see the introduction to this book), were not constructed in Ottoman times. The storage facilities for water found today in Istanbul date primarily from pre-Ottoman times, when huge covered and open cisterns and reservoirs were constructed in the city as a precaution against sieges; they were maintained in later, more secure Ottoman times not only to ensure continuity in water supply during periods of drought, but also as a safeguard against the fires that periodically devastated large swaths of Istanbul's neighborhoods, which were filled primarily with highly combustible wooden houses (Homes 1872; Çeçen 1986).

Water conduits – whether arched aqueducts on the Roman model or underground pipes of clay or lead – were augmented by tower-like structures (Turkish *suterazi*) containing siphons intended to provide constant pressure, in order to reduce the danger of rupture of pipes or interruptions in service caused by falling pressure (pl. 111). As usual in hydraulically developed societies, a cadre of trained experts was occupied in the continual maintenance and monitoring of water delivery to the urban populace (Oguz 1998; Nirven 1946 and 1953; Çeçen 1986 is a specific study of the water supply of a single complex).

The delivery of water to individuals or public fountain reservoirs by large containers carried by pack animals – a common feature of the Cairene water supply over the centuries – and the public vendor of drinking water, both well-established traditions in many parts of the Islamic world, are perhaps less prominent in the Ottoman urban scene, due to the general prevalence of gravity-fed public fountains providing water gratis to the populace. Public



111 Water-pressure tower in the Mosque of Sehzade Mehmed, Istanbul, Turkey; c. 1548.

water sellers and deliverers of large carboys of spring water have been documented in European depictions of the Ottoman empire at least as early as the sixteenth century. Probably the earliest depiction of a water seller is that engraved by Louis Danet and published in 1576 by Nicolas de Nicolay in *Les Navigations pereginations et voyages, facits en la Turquie* (book 3, chapter 22). In subsequent centuries numerous costume books and travel accounts published in Europe included a water seller as an “Ottoman type.” Such water sellers were able to flourish in Istanbul because of what we might today call brand identification of particular sources of drinking water. Ottoman urban culture, especially in Istanbul, prized these special sources of drinking water, and the merits of the spring water of Beykoz, Kandili, or Büyükdere, as well as the health properties of water from *ayazma* or “holy springs” that often



112 (left) Bronze/copper canteen (*matara*) in the form of a goatskin, Turkey, 17th century. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art.

113 (right) Bejeweled rock crystal and gold canteen in the form of a goatskin, 32.2 × 15.7 cm; Turkey, 16th century. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum 2/484.

dated back to Byzantine times, were debated among the cognoscenti with the same fervor that the partisanship of wine may provoke among the French urban elite in our time.

Symbolically speaking, water occupied a prominent place in the public ritual of the Ottoman court, in the visual and literary imagery of both religious and secular art and in former times as well as today, in the siting of residences; in Ottoman times, houses by the seashore, especially those on the Bosphorus, were the privilege of the wealthy and the court elite, who could afford the high price of real estate and who had the means to provide transportation by oared longboat (*kayık*), which allowed access to these desirable residences (on *yalı*, seaside palaces of Istanbul, see Balcı 1980 and Eldem 1979).

In the ceremonies of the Ottoman court, the regalia of the sultan traditionally consisted of two elements: weaponry, usually a sword and often a bow and quiver of arrows as well, and the *matara* or canteen for water. The *matara* took two forms. One was based on the traditional goatskin water-bag carried by nomadic Turkic warriors, and its characteristic cylindrical form with two vertical leg-like protrusions was duplicated in tinned copper and brass, and on rare occasions in precious materials such as rock crystal set with jewels in bezels of gold (pls. 112 and 113). The other form of *matara*, depicted

as a part of imperial regalia in a number of famous Ottoman miniature paintings, was a two-spouted ewer with a flexible handle. The Topkapı Palace has two of the most famous examples: one made of rock crystal imitating a goatskin set with gems (see pl. 113), and the other, the iconic example of regalia (Inv. 2/3825), made of gold set with jade, emeralds, and rubies with spouts in the form of dragons (Atıl 1987, 123–24 and 128–30; for the second type, see also the essay by Komaroff in this book). The symbolic importance of these water-related items of regalia has roots in the nomadic traditions of pre-Ottoman times. Turkic warriors needed a supply of water that they could carry on horseback in arid terrain, and the water canteen was as essential for survival as the ubiquitous weapons carried on horseback: the sword and the short compound bow, with its quiver of arrows. In Ottoman court ceremonies the bearers of these symbolic items were military officers as well as high court officials, and miniature painters depicted them with their traditional red headdress standing close behind the sultan during ceremonial occasions (pl. 114).

In the ritual of the domestic dinner table, from the court to the prosperous middle class, another water item was common: the *ibrik* or ewer used to wash the hands of a diner between courses, employed in conjunction with the well-known elaborately embroidered napkins or towels (*yaghlık*) created at home by well-to-do women. The Ottoman *ibrik* had a characteristic form: a bulbous body tapering to a narrow filling neck with a hinged cap on top; on one side a graceful handle connected the top of the neck to the body, and on the other an equally graceful spout stemmed from the bottom of the body of the ewer. Usually such an *ibrik* was paired with a wide-rimmed basin designed to collect the water as the diner washed his or her hands between courses at the table. In addition, the basin usually had a fitted, perforated stand designed to hold the *ibrik* when the latter was not in use (pl. 115). Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1965, 6), writing to Lady Mar on 10 March 1718, vividly describes the after-meal ritual: “After Dinner water was brought in a Gold bason and towels of the same kind of the napkins [previously described by Lady Mary as ‘as finely wrought as the finest handkerchiefs that ever came out of this Country’], which I very unwillingly wip’d my hands upon, and Coffee was served in China with Gold soucoupes.”

The association of water with Paradise in Ottoman art of all levels and in many different media is well known and frequently documented. The form of the *ibrik* itself became a ubiquitous icon for water. Simple depictions of such

114 (facing page) “Sultan Süleyman at the Eyup Shrine with canteen-bearer” from a manuscript of Lokman’s *History of Sultan Süleyman*, 37.8 × 26 cm; 987/1569–70. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. 413.



115 Brass ewer and stand, h. 33.6 cm, diam. 37.1 cm; Turkey, 19th century. Harvard Art Museum, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection of Turkish Art.

an *ibrik* on numerous Ottoman prayer rugs woven in Anatolian villages serve as a reference to both the ablutions required before prayer and the pure waters of Paradise promised to devout believers (pl. 116). The form is also found in calligraphic compositions that have a similar religious meaning (pl. 117). Another water vessel with powerful symbolic meaning is the flower vase. As a trope for Paradise, the vase of flowers appears in Ottoman art as early as 1420, in a celebrated tiled mihrab depicting the gateway to Paradise from the tomb of Sultan Mehmed I in Bursa (pl. 118), and by the early eighteenth century it had become a common decorative feature of Ottoman urban fountains.

Islam has always valued bodily cleanliness, and the endowed public bath or hammam is an important architectural feature of the Islamic urban scene (Yılmazkaya 2003; Haskan 1995). In the Ottoman empire, hammams were frequently constructed as a standard part of mosque complexes or *külliyes*, but individual patrons also constructed such buildings as individual foundations to serve particular neighborhoods. The Ottoman single bath contained



116 Detail of a *Mucur* prayer rug showing a ewer, Turkey, 19th century. Private collection.

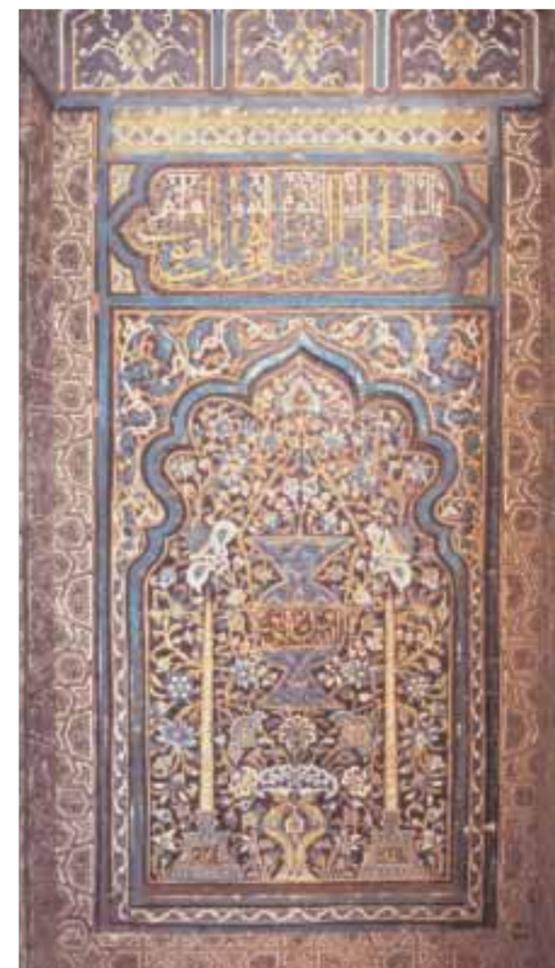
the required three spaces – disrobing and entertainment room, washing room, and steam room – that had been a part of the canonical public bath since Roman times; such buildings had separate appointed hours for both men and women. The larger Ottoman double baths – the most impressive example is that endowed by Hürrem Sultan, wife of Süleyman I, in Istanbul (pl. 119) – had separate facilities to serve both sexes simultaneously.

Numerically speaking, the most prominent examples of water architecture in Istanbul today are those involved in the direct delivery of water to consumers: the myriad urban fountain structures of several different types created as pious foundations (Arabic *waqf*; Turkish *vakıf*) by government officials and wealthy patrons. Intended as acts of religious piety that would contribute to sustaining the population and prosperity of the city, and also as enduring monuments to the piety and generosity of their patrons, Ottoman urban fountains fall into several distinct categories.



118 (above) Tiled depiction of the gateway to Paradise, tomb of Mehmed II, Bursa, Turkey; c.1421.

117 (facing page) Calligraphic composition in the form of a ewer, 37.3 × 25.1 cm; Turkey, 19th century. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Edwin Binney Third Turkish Collection, M.85.237.60.



Ottoman Shadirvan Fountains: Ablutions before Prayer

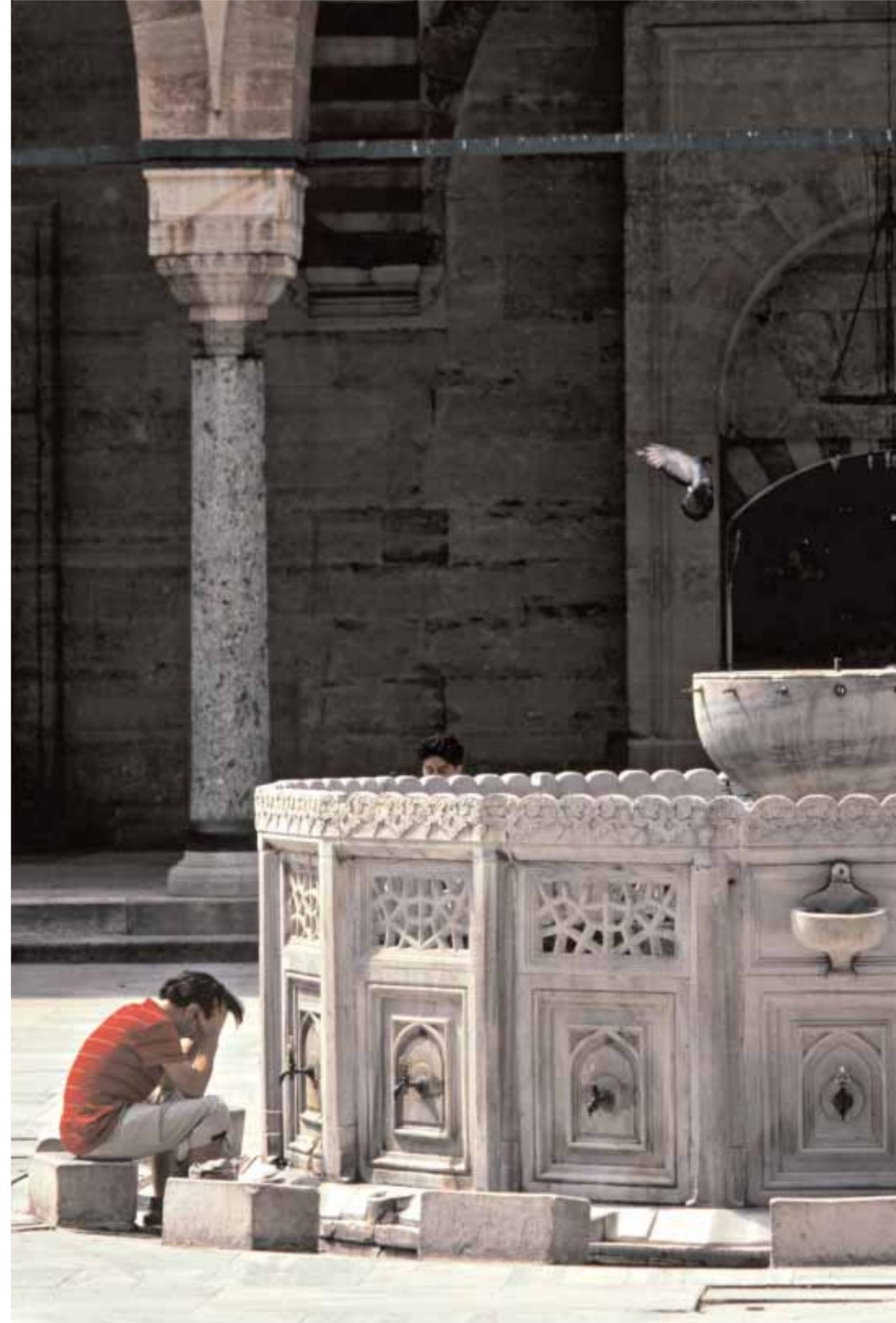
First in terms of prestige, due to their essential function of providing ritual purification before the five daily prayers, are the ablution fountains (*shadirvan*; Turkish *şadırvan*) found in or next to all Ottoman mosques. The freestanding polygonal or rectangular structures found in the middle of the forecourts (*avlu*) of the most important mosques are often small masterpieces of decorated architecture, containing a central reservoir with stone or metal grilles and a series of spigots and troughs, each with a small stone bench (pl. 120). Another common form of Ottoman mosque fountains is the linear *shadirvan*, usually built into the exterior walls of the mosque itself—in the



119 Double bath endowed by Hürrem Sultan, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1557.

largest imperial mosques, such *shadirwans* can provide rows of up to forty or more individual washing stations, each with a trough, bench, and spigot, and can therefore serve a large crowd of worshippers quickly and efficiently (pl. 121). Quite strikingly, the two largest Ottoman mosques of the sixteenth century – the Süleymaniye in Istanbul (*circa* 1559) and the Selimiye in Edirne (*circa* 1572), both built by the great architect Sinan – have very simple and austere *shadirwan* fountains in the forecourt and exceptionally large linear *shadirwans* on both sides of the building. More rarely encountered in Ottoman mosques are interior playing fountains (Turkish *selsebil*), which in the fifteenth century were sometimes incorporated into that part of the covered mosque that constituted the vestigial open courtyard of earlier times. Particular impressive examples, extensively restored, are today found in the Ulu Cami or Great Mosque of Bursa (built in 1399) and the Mosque of Sultan Mehmed II, also in Bursa (completed 1421).

120 (*facing page*) Ablution fountain in the Mosque of Selim II, Edirne, Turkey; c.1572.

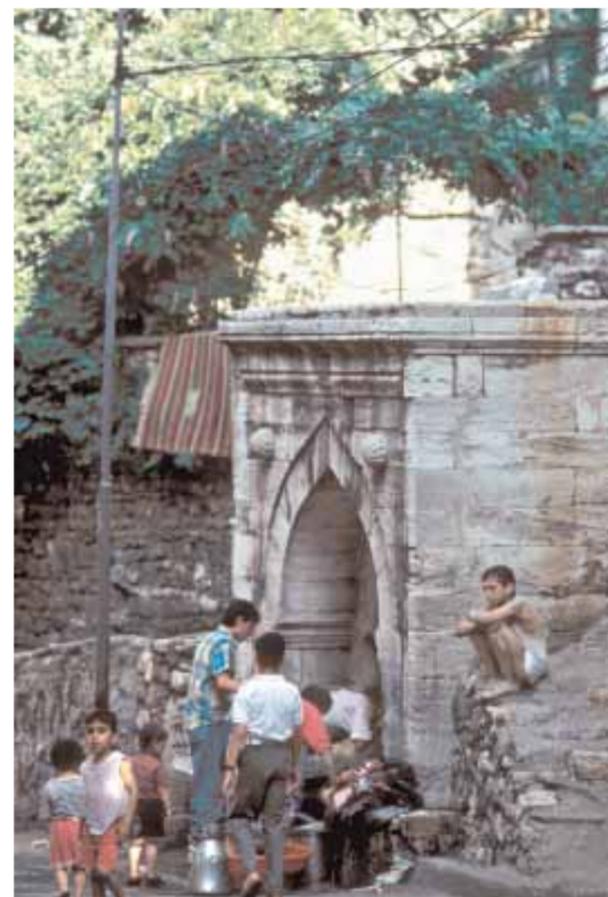




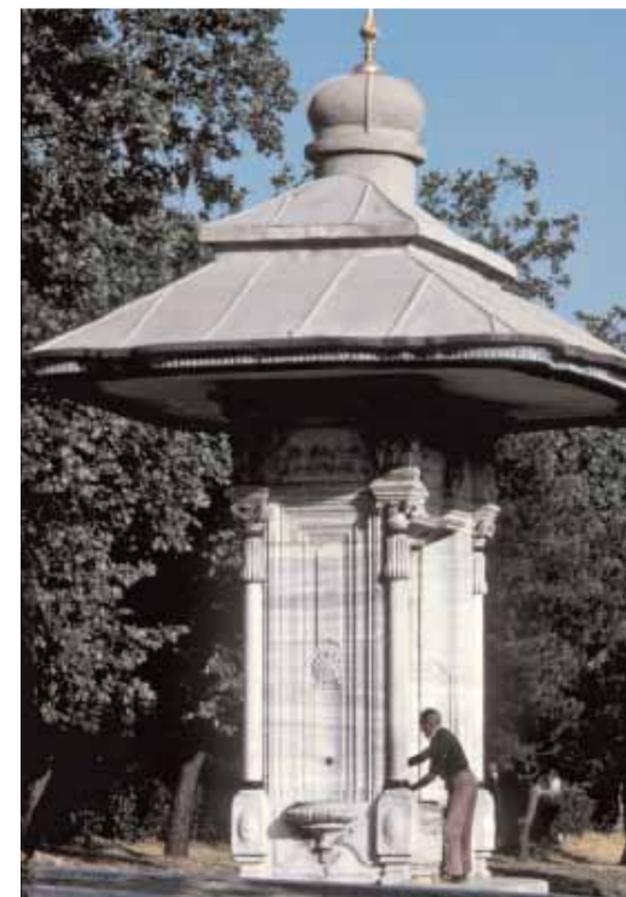
121 Ablution fountain in the Mosque of Süleyman I, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1559.

Ottoman Çeşme Fountains: Neighborhood Sources of Water

A second category of water architecture, practically the most important and by far the most common, comprises the trough fountains termed *cheshme* (Turkish *çeşme*). In their most rudimentary form these consist of a spigot, usually under a blind arch, above a basin or trough, the latter serving to collect runoff and as a watering trough for the pack animals that carried goods of all kinds for Istanbul's governmental, military, manufacturing, and retail sectors. Little attention has been paid to the ubiquitous decorative arch above the spigot on most *çeşme* fountains. It is probably a reference to the idea of an arched doorway that, like the similar form on Ottoman *seccade* or prayer carpets, evokes the gateway to Paradise (on the symbolism of the blind arch as a gateway, see Denny 1990b and 1991). *Çeşme* can be wall fountains,



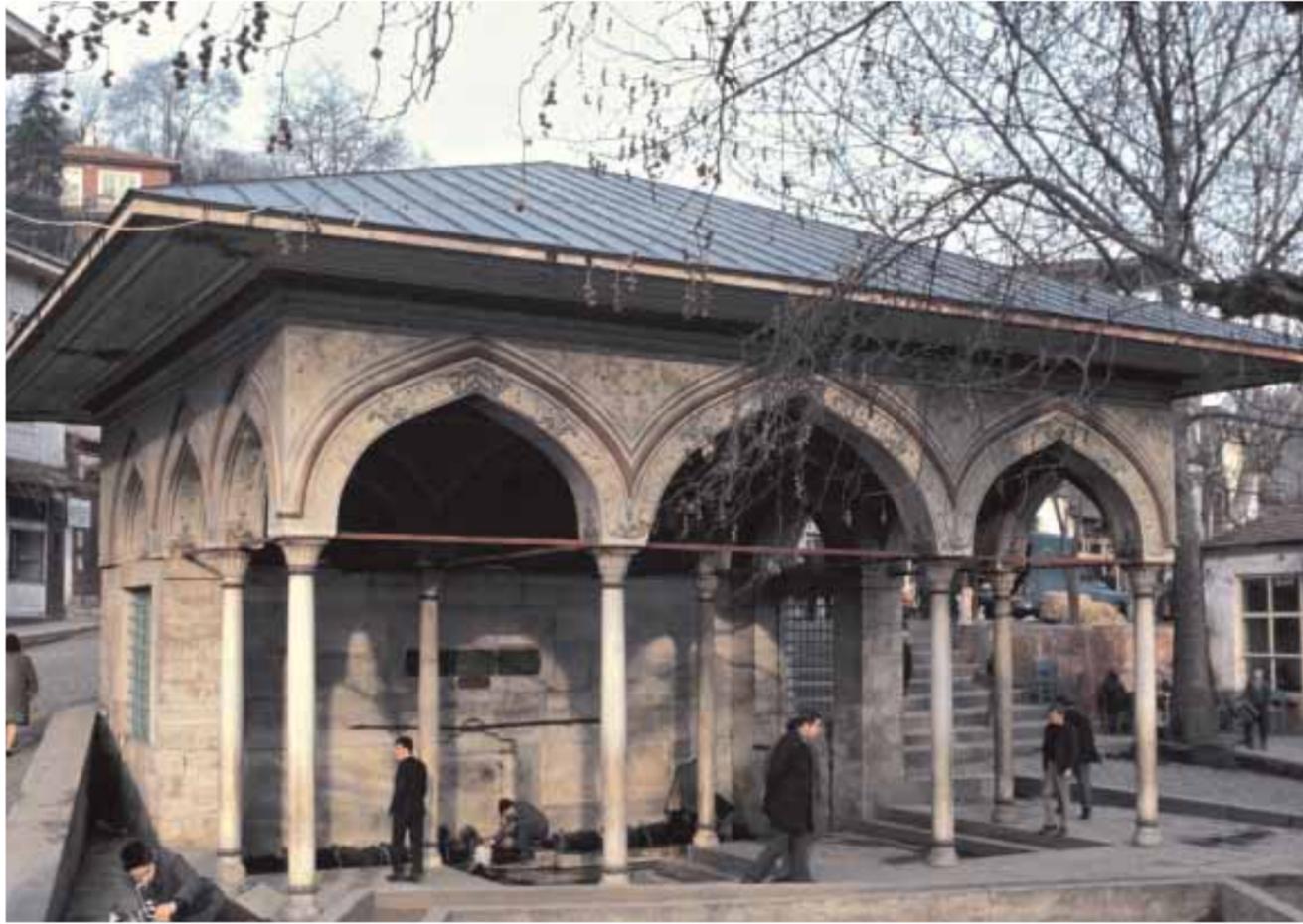
122 (left) Neighborhood fountain, Balat, Istanbul, Turkey, early 19th century.



123 (right) Neighborhood fountain, Maçka, Istanbul, Turkey, early 19th century.

incorporated into other structures; slab fountains, essentially small bits of freestanding wall with one or more spigots and troughs; or freestanding structures sometimes incorporating reservoirs, occasionally even with a *namazgah* (Turkish *namazgâh*) or open-air prayer platform on the top. The Esmâ Sultan fountain with a *namazgah* in Kadırga, Istanbul, is perhaps the best known; others include the fountain of Mehmed Pasha at Topçular and that of Sultan Abdülmecid in Yesilköy. The ubiquitous *çeşme* fountains often serve a social function as the neighborhood gathering-place (pl. 122), where individuals fill ewers and buckets of water to take home, wash dishes or laundry, and exchange gossip or conduct discreet flirtations with members of the opposite sex.

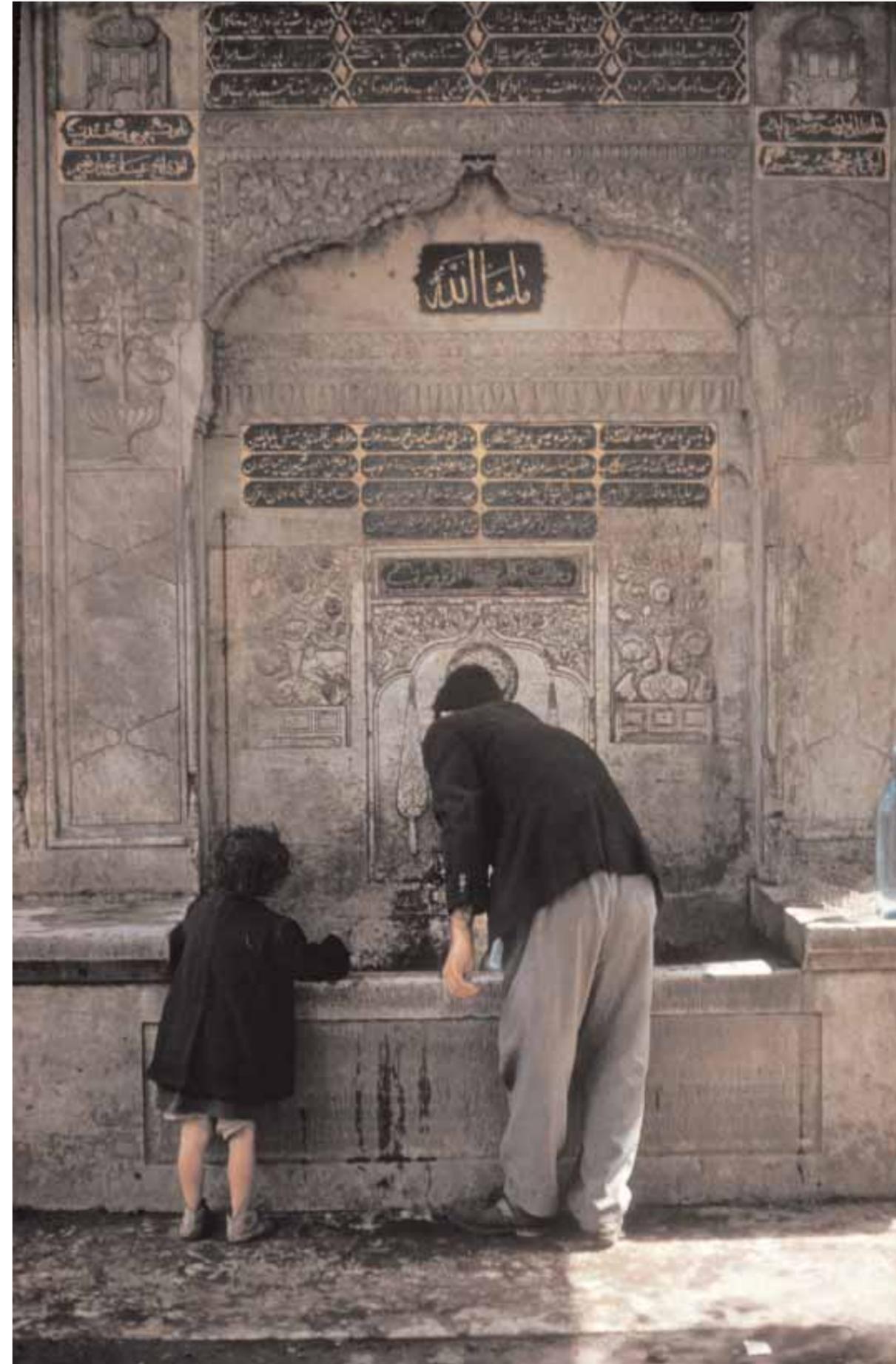
Freestanding *çeşme* fountains of the slab type include a typical example from the nineteenth century, presently situated at Maçka, which has a fountain spigot with a basin below on either side under a highly ornamental roof (pl. 123). The largest freestanding *çeşme* fountain in Istanbul is that of Ishak Agha at the



124 Neighborhood fountain of Ishak Agha, Beykoz, Istanbul, Turkey; mid-18th century.

village of Beykoz on the upper Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, a place reputed to have particularly excellent drinking-water (pl. 124). Originally built in the mid-sixteenth century by a court official of Süleyman I, Behruz Agha, the Beykoz fountain was reconstructed in 1746 by the customs official Ishak Agha, and is currently known by the latter patron's name. The spacious porch in this large structure provides a covering for the area in front of the spigots and troughs. One of the oldest of Istanbul's *çeşme* fountains incorporated into walls is that of Bereket Zade, the muezzin of Sultan Mehmed II who reputedly gave the first call to prayer in Istanbul after the conquest in 1453 (pl. 125). Essentially completely rebuilt in 1732 and more recently moved from its original location to a low curtain wall surrounding the base of the Galata Tower in Istanbul, its relief sculptures of vases of flowers and extensive inscriptions in court poetry make it one of the loveliest of Istanbul's *cheshme* fountains.

125 (facing page) Neighborhood fountain of Bereket Zade, Galata, Istanbul, Turkey; early 18th century.



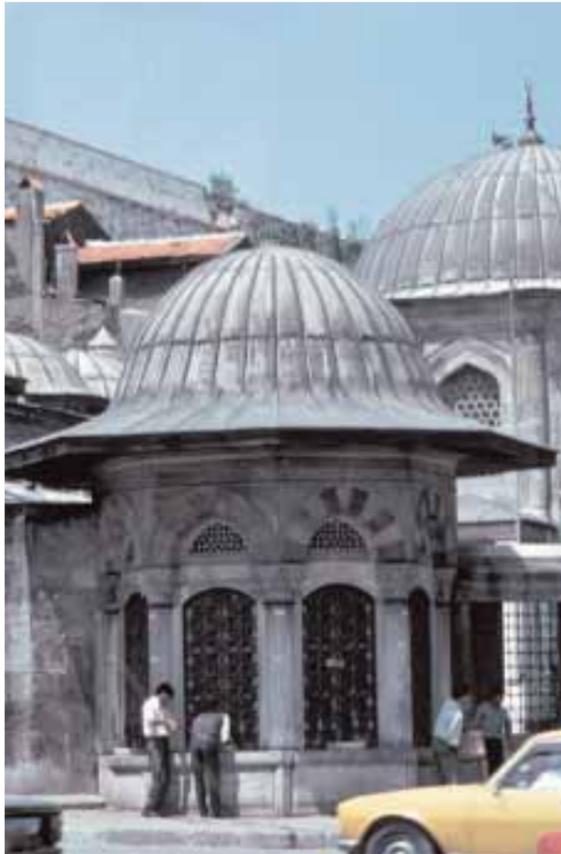
The large number of *çeşme* fountains documented from the Ottoman period allow a certain amount of statistical inference. The exhaustive list compiled by Tanısık (1942–45; see more recently Kara Pilehvarian, Urfalıoğlu, and Yazıcıoğlu 2000) contains 2 examples from the fifteenth century, 45 from the sixteenth, 51 from the seventeenth, 168 from the eighteenth, and 116 from the nineteenth. Interestingly, in the eighteenth century, 109 foundations predated the great earthquake of 1755, while only 59 were constructed after it. The decline in new *çeşme* fountains after the earthquake suggests that the rather small buildings, mostly two-dimensional and without vaults or interior spaces, often survived earthquakes relatively intact, although they may have required repair. There is also little correlation between fountain building and the aftermath of the great fires that burned various parts of Istanbul, probably because the stone structures were more apt to survive major conflagrations. (Ernest Mamboury's scholarly guide *Istanbul touristique* [1951, 142–47] provides a useful compilation of the dates of both the great Istanbul earthquakes and the devastating fires that periodically destroyed large areas of the city.)

Given the lack of correlation between the building of *çeşme* fountains in Istanbul and the historical pattern of fires and earthquakes, it is probable that we should look to other circumstances, mainly fashions in patronage, to explain the uneven statistical distribution of surviving monuments, bearing in mind that in the early periods of urban reconstruction in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there must have been a huge campaign of fountain building resulting in monuments now no longer extant. For example, in the so-called Tulip Era – the reign of Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703–30) and its immediate aftermath – an unusually large number of fountains were constructed, including some of the largest and most handsome multi-function structures, but there was also an effort to replace fountains from bygone eras that had fallen into disrepair. One example is the Bereket Zade fountain, the result of a self-conscious attempt to recapture the glories of the past due in part to the influence of the historical theories of the court historian Na'ima and the energetic court patronage of the arts by the Sadrazam Damad Ibrahim Pasha and the resulting widespread historical revivalism in Ottoman arts of the time (Thomas 1972; Danisman 1969; Denny 1990a).

Ottoman Sebil Fountains: Drinking Water and Soft Drinks

The third major type of Ottoman urban fountain is the *sabil* (Turkish *sebil*) or attended fountain, often erected in combination with a *çeşme*. Ottoman *sebils* are perhaps the loveliest and most characteristic of Ottoman fountains, reaching a high level of development not only in Istanbul but also in other cities of the empire, most notably Cairo (see Dobrowolska's essay in this book). *Sebil* fountains in Anatolia date back to the thirteenth century, that of Sahip Ata in Konya, constructed in 1271, being the best-known early example (Konyalı 1964, 508–09). It and a few other early *sebils* were in effect simply windows in an architectural curtain wall giving out onto the street, behind which a vendor sold drinks to the public. In contrast, the standard form of the Ottoman *sebil* is a small polygonal or cylindrical building, usually with a domed roof, either incorporated into the curtain wall of a larger building complex or combined with other fountains in a freestanding structure. In the Ottoman *sebil* an attendant, who is paid with income from the *vakıf*, stands inside the structure and dispenses, either free or for a modest price, drinks of various kinds, including water and the usually cooled fruit drinks termed sherbet (Turkish *şerbet*), through openings in a grille, which in a few earlier structures was made of carved marble, but in most cases is made of cast bronze. Indeed, the grille-work of Ottoman *sebils* may be characterized as one of the richest Ottoman artistic metalworking traditions, and the patterns used are among the most original and interesting to be found in Ottoman art.

A typical *sebil* is that of Gazanfer Agha (pl. 126) incorporated into the small complex built in 1591 at the order of an important court official who finished his career in the service of Sultan Mehmed III. The complex of buildings, which includes a madrasa (Turkish *medrese*), or school, and the tomb of Gazanfer Agha, was placed at the junction of two streets, with the octagonal *sebil* incorporated into the surrounding curtain wall at the corner. As presently restored, the *sebil* has six gridded windows with a dome and projecting roof, with access to the interior from the complex's courtyard. The metal grilles, typically for earlier *sebils*, utilize a geometric pattern based on the apposition of six-pointed stars in staggered horizontal rows. At the bottom of each grille, somewhat reminiscent of the openings in bank tellers' cubicles, ticket offices, and post offices in earlier twentieth-century North



126 *Sebil* of Gazanfer Agha, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1591.

America, are larger openings suitable for passing metal cups containing drinks. To prevent their disappearance, the cups were secured to the *sebil* by metal chains and were returned by the client to the attendant for washing after use.

In Istanbul the *sebil* built at the southwest corner of the Mosque of Aya Sofya after 1640 by Sultan Ibrahim serves as an example of a *sebil* with a rarer carved marble grille (pl. 127); the Damad Ibrahim Pasha *sebil* of 1719 at Şehzadebaşı is a typical *sebil* from the so-called Tulip Period of the early eighteenth century (pl. 128); while the *sebil* of the Mosque of Sultan Mustafa III, built in 1763, with its elaborate metal grille-work and complex projecting roof, is typical of the Ottoman Baroque style (pl. 129). This later one can be compared to the almost exactly contemporary *sebil* of Ruqqaya Dudu in Cairo (1763), which attests to the high value of Cairene real estate by its vertical incorporation of a reading room on a second story above the *sebil* itself.



127 *Sebil* of Sultan Ibrahim, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1540.

Of the surviving Istanbul *sebils*, according to Şerifoğlu's reckoning (1995), one example survives from the fifteenth century, twenty-four from the sixteenth, thirty-three from the seventeenth, thirty-three again in the eighteenth (with only one new *sebil* built within the Istanbul city walls after the 1755 earthquake), and thirty from the nineteenth. This large mass of architectural data allows us to draw a few conclusions about both the topographical and chronological distribution of such *sebils*. Unlike the *çeşme* fountains, whose main function was the serving of domestic needs in residential neighborhoods and the watering of pack animals, the *sebils*' function was as a higher level of urban amenity, dispensing prepared beverages on the same level as the public vending of food. This perhaps explains the large number of *sebils* found on the Bosphorus shore and at crucial transportation nodes in the commercial areas of central Istanbul, where they served both the thirst of the commercial population and the open-air recreations of the leisured urban elite.



128 *Sebil* of Damad Ibrahim Pasha, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1719.

Royal Patronage: Large Freestanding Fountain Structures

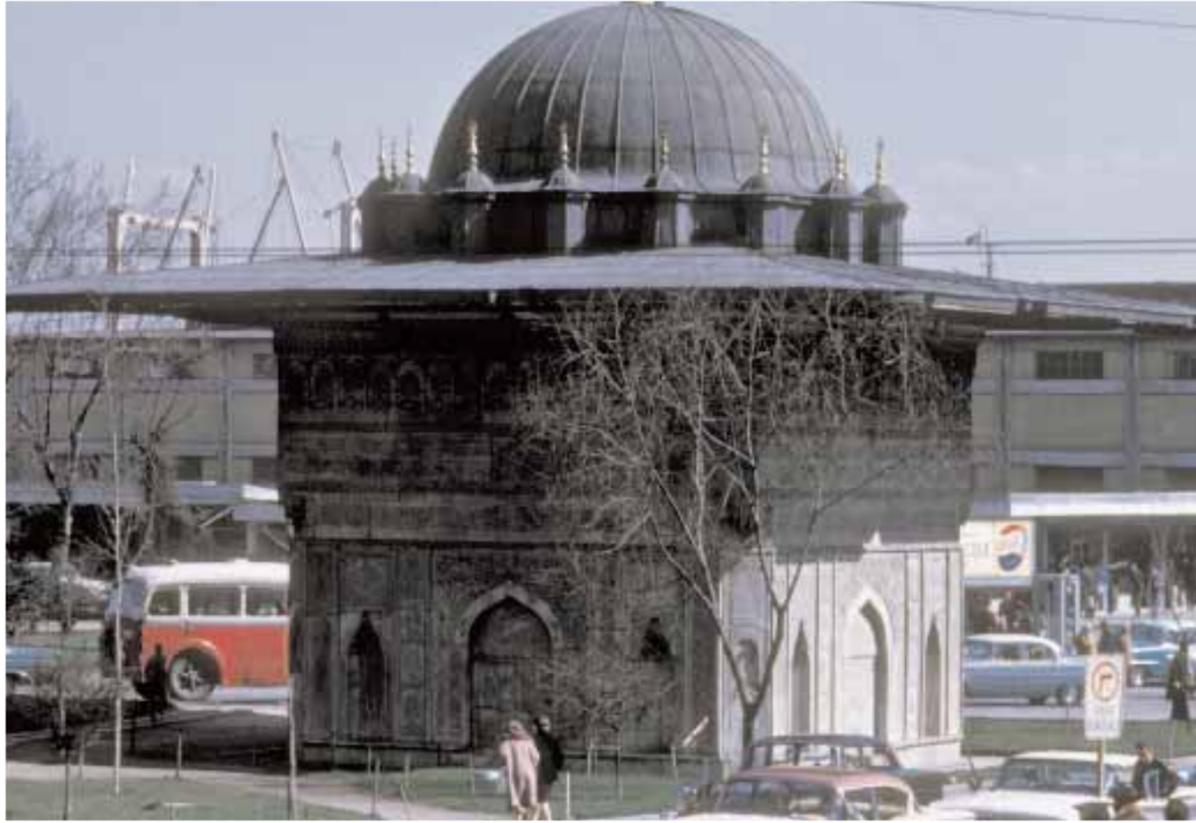
Large freestanding fountain structures commissioned by royal patrons or the highest court officials, usually incorporating a combination of both *çeşme* and *sebil* fountains, although sometimes restricted exclusively to the former, are the best-known examples of Ottoman water architecture in Istanbul. Three examples, all from the Tulip Period reign of Ahmed III, demonstrate the variety of the genre. The fountain of Sultan Mahmud I at Tophane on the European shore of the Bosphorus was constructed in 1732, and through the centuries was frequently portrayed together with the nearby late sixteenth-century mosque of Kılıç Ali Pasha by such Orientalist artists as Melling, Allom, Bartlett, Prévault, Führmann, and many others (Arslan 1992, 179–84). The form is simple: a square building with beveled corners, completely faced in marble, with a projecting roof and a central dome surrounded by a garland of sixteen tiny cupolas with finials (pl. 130). Each of the four façades



129 *Sebil* of Sultan Mustafa III, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1763.

has a central panel with a spigot under an arch, with a trough below each spigot; these four central fountain panels are each flanked by two mihrab-like niches. The four marble façades are covered with relief sculptures of scrolling vines and vases of flowers, and two bands, one of poetical inscriptions in rhymed couplets, and the other, higher, of arches framing sculpted vases of flowers, encircle the building at a higher level under the projecting roof.

A second, exactly contemporary large fountain completely clad in carved marble is that of Mahmud's mother, Saliha Sultan, located near Azapkapı behind the sixteenth-century mosque of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha (pl. 131) and depicted by such European artists as Bartlett and Flandin (Arslan 1992, 177–78). This edifice is essentially a rectangle in ground plan, but its main (east) façade combines two *çeşme* fountains set at a 45° angle to the basic quadrilateral, with a cylindrical *sebil*, giving the entire structure a pentago-



130 Fountain of Mahmud I, Tophane, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1732.

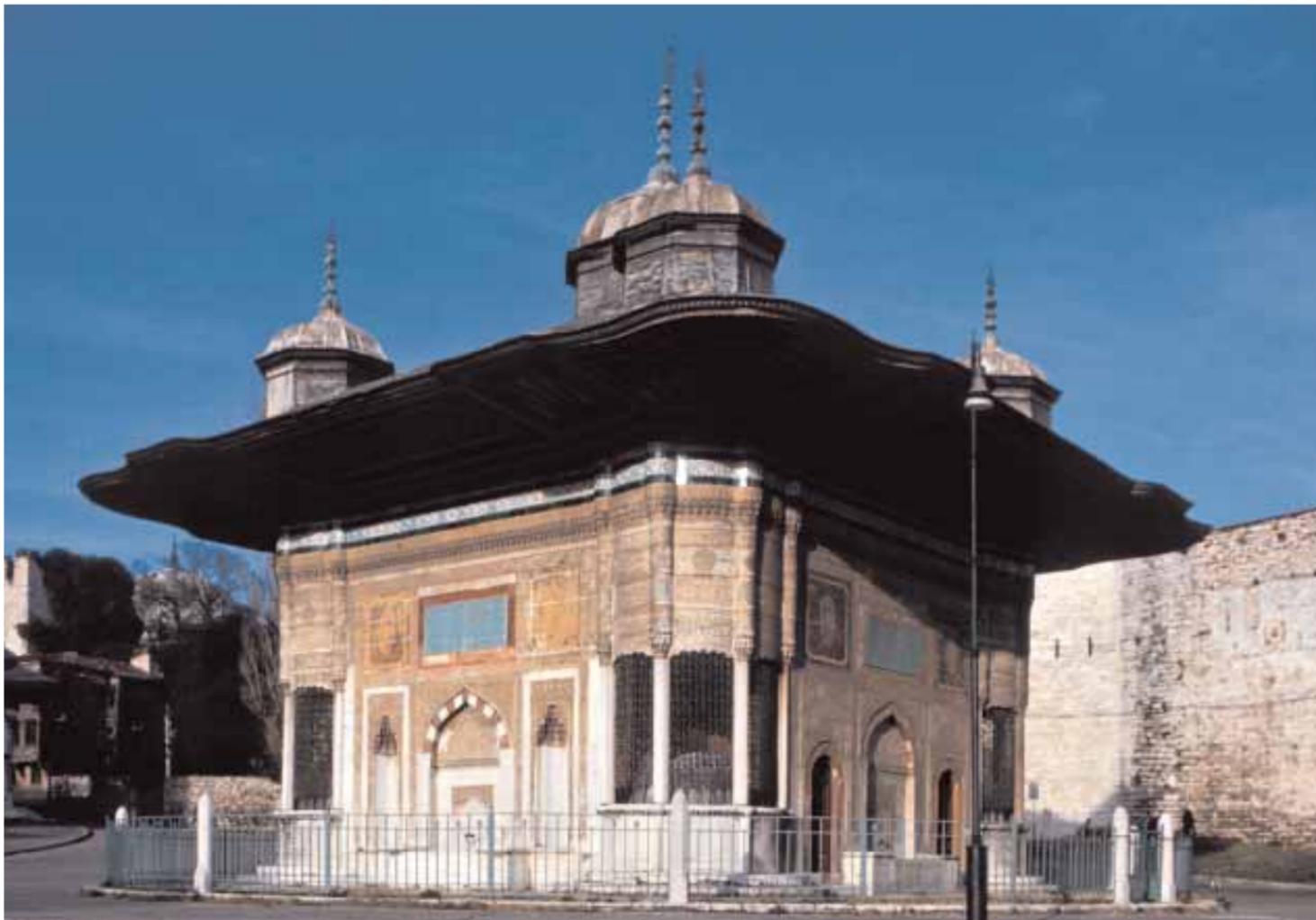
nal “arrowhead” ground plan. The marble decoration is by the same team of carvers that worked on Mahmud I’s fountain at Tophane, in exactly the same style with the same motifs, including extensive inscriptions in the rhymed couplets of Ottoman court poetry. The cast bronze grilles of the *sebil* are a marvelous fantasy of small vine-spirals, closely paralleling the style of the *rincaux* carved in marble. A small wooden door on the left corner of the *sebil* provides access to the interior for the attendant, while the rest of the building, essentially a rectangle in form, is more sparsely decorated than the east side. The wide-eaved roof follows the shape of the building, with a small dome on a cylinder above the *sebil* deliberately evoking that of the thirteenth-century shrine of Jaleddin Rumi in Konya, and the dome over the main reservoir has eight small adjoining cupolas.

The most splendid of all imperial Ottoman fountains, which served as a sort of model for the two examples already cited, was created about four years earlier, in 1728, under Sultan Ahmed III (pl. 132). Louis-François Cassas depicted it splendidly in the early nineteenth century with Selim III parad-



131 Fountain of Saliha Sultan, Azapkapı, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1732.

ing past the building (Boppe 1989, 222–23), and it was a popular subject for many other artists such as Choiseul-Gouffier, l’Espinasse, Melling, Castellan, Hobhouse, Bartlett, Lewis, Allom, and Flandin (Arslan 1992, 164–72). Symbolically, its location is the most important of the three, since it was built near the south side of the gigantic Aya Sofya mosque, a few meters from the main gate (Bab-ı Humâyûn) of the Topkapı Palace. In form it is rectangular, with a semicircular *sebil* in each corner, and a *çeşme* fountain under an arch, flanked by two mihrab-like forms, in the middle of each façade. The poetry of the inscriptions was composed by Vehbi, the primary literary figure at Ahmed’s court, and around the top of the building, just under the projecting roof, there is a band of eighteenth-century Ottoman tiles from the Tekfur Saray ceramic manufactory, the reincarnation of the sixteenth-century Iznik tile ateliers founded by Ahmed’s son-in-law and Grand Vizier Damad Ibrahim Pasha more than a decade earlier in the outskirts of Istanbul.



132 Fountain of Ahmed III, Ayasofya, Istanbul, Turkey; c.1728

The extensive use of polychromy on the façade, which today is the manifestation of twentieth-century restoration, may in fact reflect the original architectural decoration of many of these eighteenth-century fountains; similar coloration, from a similar restoration, is observable on the Bereket Zade çeşme fountain discussed above. Five small cupolas, one in the center and one above each *sebil*, each covered with the characteristic Ottoman lead sheeting, complete the distinctive silhouette of this large and beautiful fountain above the pitched projecting roof.

Conclusion

This brief examination of the role of water and water imagery in Ottoman art, architecture, and urban infrastructure shows a long and highly developed

artistic tradition of beautiful objects and buildings, tied closely to both a sophisticated tradition of hydraulic engineering and a complex tradition of patronage under the umbrella of religious foundations. An equally complex symbolism, layered with visual imagery, court poetry, and traditional evocations of religious visions of the afterlife, informs the imagery of much of Ottoman water art. Other Ottoman works of water-related art may reflect dynastic and ethnic traditions that evoke a Turkic nomadic past that had long faded into distant cultural memory by the time Istanbul flourished as a great metropolis under the Ottoman dynasty. But all of this art reflects a societal awareness of water, a consciousness of its fragile abundance dependent on artifice and technology, and an appreciation of water as a divine gift. Given the relative abundance and security of the North American water supply in the twenty-first century, one might be tempted to draw the conclusion that consciousness of the importance – and the beauty – of water, and thus of water-related objects and buildings, diminishes in direct proportion to its availability. In this light, it might be something of a paradox that the Ottoman empire, historically one of the most abundantly supplied with water of all Islamic realms, nevertheless produced some of the most memorable water art and architecture in the Islamic world. For whatever reason, the great Ottoman works of water art and architecture have endured as exemplars of a tradition that used the water supply as both the pretext and the focus for a remarkable record of artistic patronage and an equally remarkable series of artistic accomplishments.

Note

¹ See, for example, Julia Pardoe's *The Beauties of the Bosphorus* (1839), with a series of views of Constantinople and its environs from original drawings by W. H. Bartlett, and *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (1838), illus-

trated in a series of drawings from nature by Thomas Allom and a historical account of Constantinople and descriptions of the plates by the Reverend Robert Walsh. Both contain numerous steel engravings depicting Istanbul's fountains in use.