THE URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE ISTANBUL DIVANYOLU: URBAN AESTHETICS AND IDEOLOGY IN OTTOMAN TOWN BUILDING

WHAT'S IN A NAME? TOPONYMY VERSUS MYTH AND IDENTITY

The Divan Yolu (in Turkish, “the road of the Divan”) was both the main thoroughfare of Ottoman Istanbul and the most important ceremonial segment of the Istanbul street system, the stage for the sultan’s stately processions. Nevertheless, its representation of power and magnificence never assumed an overall architectural image; the thoroughfare acquired monumental coherence only in some stretches and perhaps only after the seventeenth century, thanks to individual donations by pashas in which medreses (theological schools) and türbe (mausoleums) were focal elements.

Official toponomy in the past hundred years has restricted the name “Divanyolu” to the fairly straight avenue running from the Hippodrome to Beyazıt or even to the sole tract up to Çemberlitaş, corresponding to the ancient Mese Regia. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century chronicles and maps employ it much more widely. To my knowledge, the first text to use the name applied it to a very long stretch of the axis from Ayasofya to the city walls; this is the Vehbi Sūrnāmē, addressed to Sultan Ahmet, maintaining that the 1720 circumcision procession, which he watched from the Nakaşhane near Ayasofya, had followed the Divanyolu, passing by the Lâleli Fountain, Darbha-nâı Atik, and Valide Hammam. A few decades earlier, Naima had designated many important events as occurring along the same route, but despite mentioning some of its important buildings, he had not named it.

By the end of the eighteenth century the extensive application of the place-name “Divanyolu” is well established. Foreign observers or local non-Muslims writing for a foreign public are quite explicit about it: D’Ohsson calls the whole thoroughfare up to the city walls “Divan-yoli,”3 as does Carbognano. Some of these authors implicitly qualify as the “street of the Divan” both the thoroughfare up to Edirnekapı and the southern branch that bifurcates after Beyazıt and leads to Aksaray and Koca Mustafa Pasha, retracing roughly the ancient southern Mese in the Porta Aurea–Via Egnatia direction. So at least two important Ottoman documents of the same period. Serkâtbî Ahmet Efendi, privy secretary to Selim III in 1799, describe almost all the sultan’s Friday or ceremonial trips in the Fatih–Edirnekapı and Lâleli–Koca Mustafa directions as running through the Divanyolu. Seyit Hasan, a member of the imperial mühendishane (corps of engineers), registers the name “Divanyolu” on at least three different points of his so-called Beyazıt II aqueduct map, presumably drafted around 1810: west of Çemberlitaş (Divanyolu sebili), south of the Bozdoğan Aqueduct near Saracbane, and in Karagümruk near Zincirli Kapı. He calls “Edirnekapı Caddesi” only the very last tract, after the Edirnekapı Atik Ali mosque. This nomenclature must have been maintained until the mid-eighteenth century, if not later: Baratta refers to Divanyolu as the route that touches numerous monumental buildings in the Edirnekapı direction.

The 1836 von Moltke map goes as far as to call “Divanyolu” the street that connects Beyazıt to Koca Mustafa Pasha; von Moltke was certainly using a rooted convention when defining it so extensively.

It is a common view that the Divanyolu was so named because of the processional traffic of pashas and their crowded retinues back and forth between the Divan and their konaks (mansions). In actuality, the main streets that channeled the sultans’ processions and military parades even where the transit to and from the pashas’ konaks was rare have been called “Divanyolu.” We can consequently assume that the word “Divan” in that toponymic referred not so much to the weekly meetings of the governing pashas under the sultan’s supervision as to all that concerned state and power in the Ottoman system. It was indeed the main space, involving the whole town, in which was enacted the public representation of the state. In such other loci as the Hippodrome-At Meydan—almost an outpost of
Fig. 1. Perspective view of the Dvin axis westwards from Ayasofya: natural topography and main monumental ensembles.
the Topkapı Palace—the population, mighty and poor alike, would rush to see state events. Here the power of the state touched and crossed the city in its daily life: sultans and viziers inspected, punished, showed themselves to be acclaimed, and brought terror or joy to the doors of both the poor and the mighty.

The Divan axis was not a single street or avenue; rather it was a fasciculus of streets running from Ayasofya–Topkapı to Edirnekapi and Yedikule (fig. 1) that bore, as far as we know, many names. Street-naming being of little relevance and of much less concern than mahalle (quarter) names in Ottoman towns, the designations had more to do with myths and urban collective memory than with specific urban identity.

Segments of the thoroughfare had different combinations of urban functions and were accorded different meanings in succeeding epochs. The segment from At Meydan to the Kemâneş complex just before Beyazit has always been called “Divanyolu” (fig. 2). Post-Ottoman Republican opinion has made of it a portmanteau name into which Ottoman and early Roman-Byzantine grandeur (since this segment coincides with the Mese Regia) have been anachronistically combined. From the mid-nineteenth century until the First World War, this tract assumed an important role in the rites and sites of the reformed Tanzimat state organization, and—perhaps in consequence—became a select residential quarter for the emergent upper middle class and bureaucracy. From the last decades of the nineteenth century into the first decades of the twentieth, it became, with Beyazit and Şehzadebaşı—practically the whole eastern part of the axis—a cultural and entertainment center absorbing most of the literary cafés, teahouses, folk spectacles, and modern theaters of Muslim Istanbul (as opposed to Levantine and European Pera). From Çarşıkapı to Fatih (fig. 3) were concentrated the medreses, graveyards, and sebils (fountain kiosks) of the pashas’ foundations. From Fatih to Karagümüşük, almost up to the city walls (fig. 3), this segment had—and, bypassed by the twentieth-century avenues, still has—the characteristic mix of relatively modest houses, religious establishments, gardens, cemeteries, and “mahalle life” typical of the more conservative Muslim quarters of the city. Locally it was called by the names of the quarters it ran through: Edirnekapi, Karagümüşük, Zincirlikuyu, Nişanca, etc. 10

To avoid confusion with actual place-names, I shall henceforth call “Divan axis” the whole thoroughfare from Ayasofya to Edirnekapi, and “Divanyolu proper” the street that runs from Ayasofya to the bifurcation at the eastern corner of the now-demolished Kemâneş complex, an easily recognizable single space. I offer no conclusion on whether the Beyazıt–Aksaray–Hasek–Koca Mustafa Pasha axis, or at least part of it, can be included in the Divan axis system (though apparently for a few decades it was apparently so considered), since no enduring evidence of this has been left in official written records.

But despite its heterogeneous functions and toponomy, the overall urban identity of the whole axis as the urban thoroughfare of Ottoman power, with its peculiar role in the symbols and ceremonial of Ottoman society and the daily life and culture of Istanbul, can be deduced from maps and descriptions and from the concentration of vakif endowments that I shall discuss.

CONTINUITY AND CONTRAPOSITION FROM THE BYZANTINE MESE TO THE OTTOMAN DIVANYOLU

If we apply the name “Divan axis” or “Divanyolu” extensively to the two groups of streets reaching out from the commercial and governmental heart of the city to its two most important Europe-bound outlets, a certain resemblance to the main Byzantine Mese system (fig. 4) can be discerned. However, noteworthy differences outweigh the similarities.

On the one hand, from the standpoint of general urban geography (that is, in their gross geographical layout and their starting and ending points), the thoroughfares remained unchanged for over fifteen centuries. The shift of urban weight in the northwestern Charisias–Edirne Gate–Blachernae and later Eyüp axis (in pre-Roman Byzantium, after the tenth century, and throughout the Ottoman epoch up to the nineteenth century) to the southwestern Porta Aurea–Silivri Kapı–Yedikule–Koca Mustafa Pasha axis (from the time of Constantine to the late medieval era, with a relative recovery in the late eighteenth century and full integration in mid-nineteenth) is not the result of the change from Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Istanbul but of urban functional and symbolic mutations within each period of domination. 11 Neither the Divan axis nor the Meses bore commercial development along the entire course; 12 concentration of commerce in certain tracts of the Meses was mostly maintained after the Ottoman conquest. The eastern tract of the axis, especially around the Forum of Con-
Fig. 2. Axonometric view of the Divan axis from Topkapı Palace-Ayasofya to Beyazıt. A. Ayasofya and the sultanic türbes. B. The Hippodrome-Atmeydan. C. Branching of the route by the Kemankeş Mustafa Pasha and Kara Mustafa Pasha medreses. D. Beyazıt market precinct and gates. E. Gate by Sabuncu Han and the Seyyit Hasan Pasha medrese.

Fig. 3. General axonometric view of the Divan axis from Beyazıt and Eski Saray to the Fatih complex. D. Beyazıt market precinct and gates. E. Gate by Sabuncu Han and the Seyyit Hasan Pasha medrese. F. Beyazıt Hammam and the Simkeşhane and Hasan Pasha Han. G. At Pazarı market. H. Kuyucu Murat medrese. I. Direkler Arasi arcade street and the janissary Old Barracks. L. Bifurcation of the route near the Dülgerzade Mosque. M. Main and secondary routes by the Fatih Mosque and between the southern medreses of the Fatih complex.
Constantine and the junction with the Makros Embolos (later Uzunçarşı), had been the busiest part of the town, both before and after Ottoman domination. The two streets north and south of the Bozdoğan Aqueduct, into which the route divides, quite probably existed in the Byzantine era. In a wider sense then, there is a tangible and deeply rooted historical continuity in the urban geography of the thoroughfare. However, it is doubtful that any alignments, even along the Mese Regia, survived in detail. A few columns and substructures give a rough idea of places and focal centers, but even the rethinking of archaeological evidence, such as Berger’s drastic but plausible reconsideration of the extension of the Forum Taurii, would suggest that analogies are tenuous and condemned to remain unproven. In the stretch from the Fatih complex (probably near or on the site of the Holy Apostles) to the city wall, there is no proof, tangible or hypothetical, of any coincidence. Nor does it seem reasonable to call the tract from Haseki to Koca Mustafa or Yedikule the Ottomanization of the southern branch of the Mese to the Porta Aurea: the points of potential superposition are too few, and in the Ottoman period up to the last decades of the nineteenth century the relative importance of the streets can be traced only up to Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha and Koca Mustafa Pasha.

Although the streets as recognizable urban spaces were subject to continuous architectural metamorphosis, in the architectural and symbolic meanings of the two street systems any attempt at analogy falls wide of the mark. Whereas the informal traits of the city had some common background in the two epochs, differences in the formal characterization of space were enormous. Analogy to the Roman-Byzantine Meses continues to encourage much confusion and inhibits the perception of the specific architectural values of the Ottoman axis, especially since the usual reference is to the early Meses, which were arcaded streets with clear architectural junctions and hinges (the Imperial Palace, the Million, the Forum of Constantine, the Forum Taurii, etc.), architecturally finite and correlated by geometric ground plans and perspectives. The Ottoman axis rambled through the city informally: some early foundations emerge visually and functionally but do not conclude views and are not meant to articulate the street system. However determinant their volume, form, and urban role, the Fatih ensemble and markets, the Old Palace, the Grand Bazaar, the New Palace, Ayasofya, and the Beyazıt complex are episodes in a meandering sequence of urban channels. Appreciating the spatial aesthetic of the Divanyolu required a narrative perception of juxtaposed elements rather than of measure, proportion, and ratio in the Vitruvian sense. After Constantine, all formal open space— fora, stoae, and other urban voids centered on monumental columns—were on the Mese branches; not so in Ottoman Istanbul, where the outer courts of the larger külliyes (complexes)—the Fatih being a significant exception—and informal meydan (public squares) lay at a short distance from the Divan axis (Vefa, At Meydanı, Karagümruk). In the later Byzantine period, even if some fragments of arcaded streets survived, erosion of architectural unity had set in, as the Buondelmonti view suggests (fig. 15). In addition, ephemeral timber structures and shops encumbered the main streets of the late Byzantine city: even the classical Mese had wooden arcades. The early eastern Roman emperors’ finite arcaded streets, with their clear architectural junctions and foci, had likely lost all formal identity and been transmuted into a loose, episodic, and sinuous riverbed-like route in a long process occurring well before 1453.

If the Divan axis is, as I believe, an aggregation of Byzantine spolia and new, fully Ottoman, spaces and concepts, then the spolia should be understood as the exploitation and revisitation of rough geographical positions, path directions, and gravitational centers, which count for much in urban history but are not enough to define the architectural sense of a town. The outcome of the city’s development had been a continuous reinterpretation and negation, over the ages, of the main streets of Greek Byzantium and of the Roman-Byzantine Mese system through four cultural eras: Late Roman and Early Byzantine, Late Byzantine, sixteenth-to-early-nineteenth-century Ottoman, and reformist Ottoman and Republican. The axis can be imagined, then, not simply as an aggregation of residual fragments of architecture of diverse origin (almost all the pre-Ottoman architecture having disappeared), but as an immense museum of urban spolia with general alignments, urban nodes, focal places, and even a certain persistence in the mentality of spatial use. Byzantine Constantinople had displayed and squandered Roman spolia; modern Islamic-Ottoman Istanbul absorbed, interpreted, but also deformed Roman-Byzantine and early Ottoman elements and viewpoints.

Some vague similarity might be found in the imperial and ceremonial attributes of the axis: sultans, emper-
Fig. 4. Topographic details of the Mese and environs. Above: from the Charsia Gate (Edirnekapi) to the Holy Apostles (Fatih). Below: from the Forum Taurii to the Hippodrome. (After August J. Mordtmann, *Constantinople au Moyen Âge: Relevé topographique*, Revue de l'art antique 34 [1891]).
ors, armies, and processions paraded through the thoroughfare. But the meanings, modes of use, and overall picture of ceremonial in space are worlds apart, despite the common policy of imperial exposure to public view. The Ottoman rulers, who felt they had to vie in many areas with the more magnificent of their earliest Christian predecessors—a magnificence lost decades and perhaps centuries before the Ottoman conquest—seemed uninterested, excelling their concern with the impact of the outstanding architectural ensembles on the city profile, in incorporating urban space into their vision of rite and grandeur. It may be that, after the conquest, the thoroughfare had quickly reacquired the ancient density of its urban functions, making it difficult, even had the will existed, to model its space into a unique and coherent architectural representation of state power. It may be that with the late Byzantine emperors the Mese had already ceased to be a crucial part of imperial ceremonial, and hence architecturally representative. Was the sultans’ self-representation through their movement in urban space and their symbolic stopping at certain points (by the türbe of an ancestor, or at the gate of the Eski Odalar janissary barracks) comparable to the taxis of the Byzantine emperors? I believe not. Such stops during a procession were, and are, usual in almost all cultures. In Byzantine Constantinople, the ceremonial stations (fig. 5) had an exceptional aura and a symbolic intricacy of religious and loyalist meanings; in the emperors’ processions through the town, numerous ceremonial stations were both religious and civic. Such interpenetration of religious and state ceremonial and culture in urban and architectural space, as well as the intense musical and plastic theatricality of Christian Orthodox rite, were unknown to the Ottoman town. Of course, some Ottoman imperial processions were directly religious and deeply touched popular feelings—the visiting of the Prophet’s Mantle (Hırka-ı Şerif), the display of the banner of Islam and the Prophet’s Beard, the visit to Eyüp for holy feasts (the important Hajj procession did not involve the axis, inasmuch as it went east across the Bosphorus)—but on the whole the intermingling of state and religion in Istanbul was much different from that in Byzantine Constantinople.

**THE DAILY STAGE: FORMAL ORDER AND URBAN CHAOS**

The scenery of the Divanyolu was not grandiose and solemn. Processions and the frequent ceremonial passage of pashas and sultans took place amid the confusion of an ordinary urban setting. After the Divan meeting, the members—pashas and viziers—greeted each other formally, in hierarchical order, before moving to their residences and offices via the main palace gate, the Bab-ı Hümâyûn. According to the ceremonial manual *Tesrifat-ı kadime* of Eş’ad Efendi, a late-eighteenth-century official, each pasha and his retinue had an established position to the left or right of the gate, in front of or around the sebil; some positions were by the bakkal (grocer) or other shops. The slow, punctilious, and silently dignified ceremonial therefore admitted disorder and the loudly undignified and mercantile bustle of the busy town (fig. 6).

The rather narrow lanes of the thoroughfare had shops, often of timber, at many points and were encumbered by ephemeral barracks. As in the Byzantine Mese, commercial concentration was discontinuous; it was well established in three main areas: on the southern margin the great *çarşı* (Grand Bazaar) and in Beyazıt and Saracbane-Atpazari (figs. 7–8). But however significant, these areas were not as vital as those situated perpendicular to the axis. Nor did the thoroughfare include the weekly markets so important for the population, except that of Çarşamba, a few hundred paces north of the axis. The main concentrations of *hans* (courtyard buildings with warehouses and workshops) were not on the axis but around Mahmut Pasha, south and east of the bazaar and on the long slope to the port. Nevertheless, some important *hans*—Vezir Han, Elçi Han, Simkeşhane, Hasan Pasha Han, Sabuncu Han, and Şekerci Han, as well as the chief land customs area, Karagümruk—were on the axis: the road to Edirne was important, even though Balkan overland trade was not as extensive as maritime and eastern caravan trade. The thoroughfare was certainly a generator of urbanization: important market areas, activities, and monumental complexes had connections to it and through it were connected among themselves. Except for the Fatih Sarâcane market quarter founded by Mehmet II, it was not the axis itself but the areas it crossed that had the highest commercial densities of the city. As Pitton writes of the “rue d’Andrinople,” “...après avoir bien considéré cette rue la plus longue & la plus large de la ville, ordinairement...
The presence of still-important janissary troops in the Eski Odalar (the Old Barracks built by Mehmet II), on the southern side of the Şehzade Direklerarasi, left a strong imprint on the functions and life of the Şehzade district; the abolition of the janissary corps by Mahmut II in 1826 brought many changes in the quarter and opened the way for the transformation of this tract into a lively entertainment area after the mid-nineteenth century. Though in the seventeenth century there were no taverns, amusements, or music in the central area, towards the end of the nineteenth century the western part of the Divanyolu between Çemberlitaş and Beyazıt gained the biggest concentration outside Galata-Pera of teahouses and coffee shops and, later, theaters and cinemas.

The axis and its immediate hinterland must have had a substantial residential life despite the abundance of religious and public establishments. Some of the mosques were associated with a quarter (mahalle); others, being sultanic Friday mosques or connected to some non-local institution, did not serve the local residential community. Unfortunately our knowledge of the distribution of pashas’ konaks in almost all periods, and of kapıs (palaces) before the eighteenth century, is defective. Much circumstantial evidence points to the presence in all periods of both sarays and konaks. The latter were either large, free-standing buildings in gardens enclosed by high walls on the street, or smaller structures featuring the typical Ottoman house architecture of wooden facades.
Fig. 7. The main concentrations of commercial activities, indicated by cross-hatching: Sarachane, southeast of the Fatih complex; Şehzadebaşı and Beyazıt; and from the Divanyolu up to the Golden Horn. The large dots represent important hans on the axis.
and bow windows. The smaller konaks, like middle-class houses, were aligned with the street and with them constituted a substantial element of the street scene, particularly in the western tracts.31

On the whole, building density was low, in the nature of the very loose Ottoman urban fabric; gardens and voids were woven into the built-up areas, and buildings were not tall. This was even characteristic of the monumental buildings of the axis: their typological categories differed in a certain measure from those of other quarters of Istanbul. While the Divan route led to the districts in which were sited some of the most important sultanic complexes, its architectural space included only four royal mosques: Fatih, Şehzade, Beyazıt, and Mihrimah Sultan, which was not literally an imperial mosque. Ayasofya is not quite on the axis. The impact of the sultanic mosques (excepting the Fatih, which was an effective center for the radiation of Ottoman urbanization) was outweighed by the more spectacular siting of the other sultanic foundations of Istanbul. Of the pashas’ mosques, only the two early Atik Ali Pasha mosques, the classical Nişancı, and Mesih Pasha (which is not on the main branch) are conspicuous monumental buildings, whereas many others are either minor elements of foundations or mahalle mosques. Vakıf-built sibyan mektebi (primary schools for boys), libraries, and fountains—important features of Istanbul streets—were not much more frequent on the axis than on other thoroughfares.32

What very strongly marks the Divanyolu is the medrese-türbe combination, a novel building type introduced by the aged Sinan in Eyüp, in the form of the Sokullu medrese.33 Sixty-three of the 166 medreses in Istanbul and Üsküdar at the end of the nineteenth century faced the thoroughfare or its immediate hinterland.34 Surprisingly, only five out of the 159 tekkes extant in 1869 were on the eastern Divan axis between Firuz Ağâ and Şehzade.35 A third of the over forty monumental Istanbul sebils—architectural elements that spectacularly defined the street scene in post-seventeenth-century Istanbul—are here, mostly combined with medrese-türbe-type buildings.36 On the other hand, fountains are not denser than in other parts of the town, although the axis runs along the crest lines of the main Istanbul hills, as do most of the main underground aqueducts and the Byzantine Bozdoğan Aqueduct, which supplied many of the grander külliyes.37

THE RITUALS OF POWER AND THE CITY

As we have previously pointed out, it is commonly held that the Divanyolu was so named because it was the main public route that the pashas and their retinues used for travel back and forth between the Divan meetings and their palaces. The association of the axis with the symbols and ceremonials of Ottoman society and with the daily life and culture of Istanbul was, however, wider and more complex.
Fig. 9. A seventeenth-century procession and popular feast among monuments and shops around the Column of Constantine (Çemberlitaş). (Vienna National Library, Codex 8626)
Well into the mid-nineteenth century, the whole thoroughfare and a considerable stretch of the Beyazıt–Aksaray–Hekimoğlu route were involved in the stately royal processions: military parades, the sultan’s weekly trip to one of the Friday mosques, his ritual pilgrimage to the main imperial türbe, and the wedding and circumcision processions of princes and princesses.

Busbecq de Ghislaine refers to it as “[une] rue, qui conduit au Sérial du grand Seigneur: c’est celle par laquelle il passe tous les Vendredis, pour aller à la prière au Temple de Saint-Sophie.”

For Pietro della Valle, it was “[la] strada... donde ill Rè & altri personaggi sogliono far le entrate più solenni....” Some of the processions would fan out from the main thoroughfare into side streets to reach the various imperial tombs and Friday mosques, spread over a fairly wide distance from the Divan axis, or to reach the pashas’ konaks and sarays, which acted as offices, residences, and centers for their clans and stimulated other activities and housing around them, but which often changed tenure. All this involved a wide urban area and explains why the Divanyolu might have been perceived as—and often effectively was—a fasciculus of routes running along parallel or convergent lanes, and not simply a single route. Other ceremonies, such as the parade of troops leaving on European campaigns or a new sultan’s trip to and from the sword-girding ceremony in Eyüp, ran directly through the city and out of the Edirne gate, perhaps via the Fatih complex; the latter—a five- or six-hour cavalcade particularly significant among the rites and events of the city—certainly stopped at Fatih’s türbe.

The sultanic mosques of Istanbul have also been examined as part of an ideal itinerary binding the sultans’ türbes along the Divanyolu. The funeral processions, with the sole exception of those of the sultans buried in the Emînönü-Başçakapı district, had to run in large part along the axis. The thoroughfare in itself aligns with some sultans’ sepultures but not the majority (fig. 10). Patterns that for decades dominated the dynastic modality of self-exposure to the public, at least with regard to the cult of the dead, are clearly evident. These had some effect on the symbolic hold of the Divan axis, which until the first decades of the sixteenth century had been the dynasty’s axis for showing unity and magnificence. Decentralizing his father’s tomb and his own, Süleyman I “the Magnificent” had already inverted the tradition created by Mehmet the Conqueror and Beyazıt II. For almost a century and a half (from 1648 to 1789), partly coinciding with the predominance of the pasha-related sites on the axis, the sultans chose for their burial places central locations within important commercial areas, all off the axis except for the Lâleli Mosque, which is itself on the southern and minor branch. Although the beginning of this long period includes the fifty-year absence of the sultans from Istanbul while they resided in Edirne, they were always buried in Istanbul. So was the much-earlier Selim II, who had built his imperial mosque in Edirne. The implications are clear: Istanbul had to hold the buried sultans of the Ottoman dynasty, but their burial sites did not have to be on the Divan axis. The reasons for this may lie in Süleyman I’s richer, dual vision of urban splendor, more sea-oriented despite maintaining the modality of the inner city.

In the mid-nineteenth century Mahmut II (d. 1839) reversed these trends away from the Divanyolu by choosing a burial site on the corner of the street leading to Bâbâlî, underlining thus the symbiosis between the sultan and the Bâbâlî state bureaucracy. This proved to be the first step for the recovery of the Divanyolu, as the theater of the power of the new state and as its memorial. This tract, considered within a wider extension with At Meydan and the slope between Divanyolu and Bâbâlî, came to represent the reformed state bureaucracy. Within a few decades, a number of public buildings in the Western manner were built on the short tract from Firuz Ağâ to Çarşïkapı, though a complete functional transformation of the street never took place. Perhaps Mustafa III’s selection of the site in the mid-eighteenth century for his sultanic mosque—later named Nuruosmaniye—had been anticipatory of the public and imperial revalorization of the whole area north of the Divanyolu in the Bâbâlî direction.

In the sultans’ trips to Friday prayers in the diverse sultanic mosques, the Divan axis was not the sole route, but it was the most frequent one, if we can judge from the Rûznâme, the diary of Selim III’s scribe Ahmet Efendi, which mentions all the mosques visited and distinguishes horseback trips (alay-i sâvar) and boat trips (sandal ıle). The Beyazıt, Lâleli, and Fatih Mosques were the main destinations and, in lesser measure, Şehzade, Süleymaniye, and Eyüp. Selim III sought to travel on different routes on the return trip from the Friday rite. The surâh alayî (a procession of officials with two turbans of the Sultan, a day or a few hours in advance of his passage, to announce the itinerary he would follow) also proves that alternate routes existed, and underlines an explicit strategy of expos-
Fig. 10. Funeral processions and mausoleums of the sultans. Each dot represents a mausoleum or a group of mausoleums.
ing the monarch to maximum public view, defining the relationship of power to the population through facts and events more transient than monuments.

There were many more occasions for the population to witness court life and intrigues: in the eighteenth century not only the passage of the sultan but also that of his nearest relatives must have been frequent, albeit perhaps losing some solemnity with the relaxation of court ceremonial. Courtly feasts, and not always the most important ones, occasioned processions with nahl (festival trees) between the New and Old palaces and the illumination and decoration (donanma) of houses and public buildings.

The sultan’s relation to the city and its rites and customs was a subtle and not always well-defined mix of aloofness and boisterous exposure. The limited visibility of the Topkapı Palace from anywhere but across the sea was in strong contrast to the enormous traffic of troops, goods, craftsmen, officials, princesses, and court women that the palace generated on or within reach of the thoroughfare. This mix of contingency and separateness offers us the key to understanding the interplay of the aristocracy and the plebeians, the rich and the poor, that on certain days filled the Atmeysdan, of attention and neglect, order and chaos, possession and abandonment that formed and yet deconstructed the axis as an architectural artifact. The thoroughfare in all times had an enduring connection to the ideology and ambitions of the Ottoman ruling class, with its changing balance of power, and to the more manifest expressions of the people of Istanbul, in enthusiastic concordance or more or less cryptic conflict with their rulers. The axis—in both image and structure—had overlapping and sometimes diverging layers of values, uses, and symbols: commerce, traffic, exhibition of power, and—as we shall see—acts of piety and memories of family pride.

Pietro della Valle had seen in that street a “corto pomposo dei veziri che vanno al Divano,” adding “... quasi come i cardinali in Roma...ma questo di Costantinopoli è più maestoso assai...” The representation of power and magnificence that doubtlessly imbued the sultanic processions was never translated into an overall architectural image. The axis remained apparently informal, much like the medieval via papale of Rome, organized only much later according to Renaissance and Baroque architectural vision. The sultans’ efforts at urban formation and significance, which achieved their highest level in imperial mosques and ceremonial, did not leave a corresponding imprint on the Divan axis. Nor did the axis exhibit the formal representation and harmony attributed to classical antiquity, in which stately figures moved on a stately architectural stage, and architecturally magnificent space was fittingly occupied by magnificent figures and processions. It must be noted that the architectural space of this street, stately in name rather than form, was sultanic to a much lesser measure than might be expected and not a ceremonial route for the court alone. From the last decades of the seventeenth century, a minor level of state power, that of the pashas—especially the pro tempore grand viziers—was active in modeling the axis piecemeal. As far as we can perceive today, the axis in some stretches acquired architectural coherence beyond single architectural units only thanks to individual pashas’ donations in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Small and medium vakif complexes, whose accessory elements—türbes, hazines (mosque-associated cemeteries) walls, sebils—were inserted into the urban scene along with libraries and schools donated both by pashas and by court officials, contained elements that were the basis for a coherent street architecture even though they were all individually planned. Of course, the milieux of the pashas and the court were not entirely separate entities. Grand viziers—some in power for a markedly short period, others almost dynastic—had a dialectical relationship to the sultans. However involved they might be in court intrigues, their ambitions and building programs could be distinct in content and expression from those of the sultans and validees (queen mothers). For all its different social and political roles, the court was centered on the city core (Topkapı, Eski Saray, Bâbâli and, at a lower but not always weaker level, Agha Kapisı, Fetva Kapisı, etc.), and around it rotated all the pashas, each involved with one or more of those centers of power. In terms of patronage, and consequently of site selection—functional and dimensional aspects of the vakıf endowments—there were noteworthy post-sixteenth-century differences between the endowments of the pashas and those of the sultans. No important mosques were built on the axis after the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The conspicuous mescits (small mosques) were mostly of the earlier period and had been rebuilt or restored for the mahalles. The late-sixteenth-to-mid-eighteenth-century pashas were substantially medrese endowers, their külıyes being mainly centered on these institutions, but their mausoleums, surrounded by hazines for their families and followers, were the main feature...
of street architecture. The sites most visible from the street were allotted to prominent persons; of the 106 documented Sadrazam tombs, twenty-five were concentrated on the eastern tract of the Divan axis between Firuz Ağa and Aksaray.\(^7\) The haziré walls show maximum transparency and the epitaphs maximum visibility from the street. The considerable number of nineteenth-century tombstones replacing earlier ones points to the continuing competition by a changing patronage for best placement.\(^8\)

The daily passage of powerful men was a paradigm of power—their own and that of the state they served—and the streets, whatever their architectural coherence or disorder, were a theater for an ephemeral manifestation of that power. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that manifestation acquired formal articulation in its architecture: tombs and hazirs became a metaphor of power. The central part of the axis, the Divanyolu proper, would not have achieved its architectural and spatial identity without the türbes and hazirs of Köprülü, Çorlulu, Merzifonlu, and Amcazade—important vizier families who would maintain their status by architectural means, even after demotion and confiscation, because their mausoleums and tombs would remain to mark the urban scene (fig. 11).

Paradigmatic of the distinction in type and patronage are the already-discussed differences in medrese and tekke location. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pashas may also have been tekke patrons (some select dervish orders were frequented and patronized by the ruling elite), but they certainly chose the central tracts of the axis to emphasize their more orthodox piety with sepulchral architecture and medreses (figs. 12–14).\(^9\) As far as we can judge from the scarce (mostly nineteenth-century) documentation, by the eighteenth century the konaks of the pashas, built of timber and not as imposing as those of the classical
Fig. 12. Axonometric view of the Kara Mustafa, Çorlu, and Koca Sinan madrasas.

Fig. 13. Street elevation of the Çorlu and Koca Sinan ensembles.
period, imprinted the axis and its surrounding streets. We have, however, no clear perception how the streets looked before the post-Tanzimat period.

As far as can be observed in architecture and the urban fabric, there is a distinction between the imperial court and the ruling elite external to it: court officials and high religious personalities were also important, but their donations had a less continuous impact on the axis, and their influence was less direct. Unification, in terms of an enlarged, ruling bureaucracy, came with Mahmut II and his successors.

CHANGE IN CHARACTER AND VARIATIONS OF THE PATH

The chronological study of the axis, based on the not always certain building dates of the known vakif works (from the fifteenth century to the twentieth) and on maps all no earlier than the eighteenth century, is unavoidably questionable and even equivocal. Whereas monument lists from the sixteenth century on may be precise, they do not always provide exact siting, and the urban context can be studied seriously only for periods later than the last decades of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, so many mosques,

Fig. 14. The 1745 Seyyit Hasan medrese.

Fig. 15. The northern quarters of late Byzantine Constantinople in the early-fifteenth-century Buondelmonti view, showing the area from St. Sophia (right) to the Blachernae Palace and the Charsia Gate (left). Note the meandering streets and the absence of any representation of the Meses.
Fig. 16. Detail of the 1520 Vavassore engraving, based on a view of Constantinople of around 1480. Note the winding but discernible route from Ayasofya ("S. Sophia") and Topkapi Palace ("El Seraglio novo"), by the column of Constantine ("Colona Serpentina"), Eski Saray ("Seraglio vechio"), up to the Fatih complex ("Almaratro") and the city walls.
fountains, and palaces have been rebuilt, converted, or merely repaired and rededicated by new patrons that the original foundation and construction dates of all but the most important and well-studied examples are hopelessly intermixed.

In various maps of Istanbul drawn over a period of three centuries, the width and path of the route vary enormously, due as much to the differing perception of surveyors or draftsmen as to effective changes in the layout of the axis itself. Matrakçı’s figuration (almost a graphic shorthand) suggests a direct path. The 1764 Reben-Homann map indicates a very marked and linear, though curving, thoroughfare; two centuries earlier, Vavassore did not show the route in such clear outline, although in his version it was much less wandering than it appeared in Buondelmonti’s image of the late Byzantine city (figs. 15–17). Almost a century after Reben, the 1848 mühendishane survey reflects a maze of streets, while Moltke in 1836 registers a direct linear street to the southwest and complicates the northwestern passage to Fatih (figs. 18–19). Even Stolpe, with certain justification considered the author of the first credible Istanbul map, foreshortens the Fatih-Karagümruk tract by simply eliminating the
Fig. 19. The Divan axis in the 1848 Dar-as-Saltanah map. Top: from Edirnekapi to Fatih. Center: from Fatih to Eski Saray. Bottom: from Eski Saray and Beyazıt to Ayasofya.
Fig. 20. Reconstruction of the street web from Beyazit (right) to the Fatih-Sarçane-Atpazarı markets (left) in the mid-nineteenth century, with Ottoman monuments. Note the two streets running north and south of the Bozdoğan Aqueduct and Şehzade complex. Monuments and religious buildings mentioned by Hadikat and other sources without identification of their precise locations have not been inserted.

Fig. 21. Reconstruction of the street web from Fatih-Atpazarı (right) to Zincirlikuyu-Karagümruk (left) in the mid-nineteenth century, with Ottoman monuments (where topographically identified). Note the secondary route by the Mesih Ali Pasha Mosque south of the main trunk.

Kumrulu mescit and its surroundings. Would these variations in cartographic interpretation mean that the axis oscillated in the course of time, straightening out, then curving, then developing other alignments? Certainly not. Earlier drawings and maps may give us some intuition into the hypothetical evolution before the end of the eighteenth century, but it is only after the mid-nineteenth century that the subjectivity of reading and configuring space is overcome, and we can reconstruct with more precision factual changes of form and function (figs. 20–21).

The pattern of historical change is nevertheless complex and at first sight duplicitous. No general principle of growth and expansion can be perceived; many factors had a determinant effect on the structure of the Divan axis and its mutations: the loose, open-space typology of Ottoman architectural complexes and housing, catastrophic fires, the decay or abandonment of many vakif buildings, the renovation of others where patrons saw fit, the existence and even prevalence since late Byzantine times of semi-rural voids in the city fabric, and the transient tenure of
palaces and konaks, including the reduction of their sizes. Above all, the complexity of the pattern is due to early Ottoman urbanization that, from the very beginning, included the entire historic peninsula within the walls of Theodosius, which at the time of the conquest was only partly built up. It is true that Mehmet II’s decisions had reinforced the once vibrant but subsequently emaciated northern Mese, but his pashas settled and urbanized, albeit sparsely, the whole urban territory, siting with individual vakif donations, and hence individual decision-making, monumental buildings and collective functions at disparate and sometimes quite peripheral points along the entire axis. Typical of this process are the two complexes founded by Ali Pasha the Old (Atik) at either end of the axis, with no attempt, by concentrating on an enclave or single street, to imprint the endower’s will and vision on the city in a grand design or to progress gradually from the center to the periphery. The foundations of the classical period (roughly 1520–1650) were also dispersed over the whole length of the thoroughfare and furthermore had to compete for investments with the grandly designed sea margin and external profile of the city. On the contrary, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century foundations tended to concentrate, with rare exceptions, in the tract between Fatih and Çemberlitaş.63 This explains why almost any part of even this vital thoroughfare—central or marginal, minor or monumental—could at different times be a sequence of void and built-up spaces. It might also explain the change in route lanes, not just in the architectural scene. Because of multiple factors of change, certain streets lost their relevance and were replaced by others running in the same direction. In many parts of the town the axis was formed by two or more parallel or converging streets. Very probably ceremonial processions would proceed in one or the other of the streets, to touch important events or artifacts—imperial türbes on certain occasions, janissary oda entrances or market districts on others—or simply to channel crowds through every possible space. One case is the street running from the Hasan Pasha and Simkeşhane hans on the Beyazit-Aksaray branch north to the Şehzade arcades. It was lined with the Seyit Hasan Pasha medrese, the nineteenth-century Zeynep Hatun konak, some fountains and sebils, and Sabuncu Han, and it might have developed as an alternative to the path through the Beyazit markets, which had gates and were presumably closed in certain circumstances or at specific hours.64 The route beyond Beyazit Square continued its direction towards the Aksaray quarter and took a sharp turn to the north towards Sabuncu Han, in whose vicinity it joined other streets on two parallel lines north and south of the so-called Valens Aqueduct. Deviations were so frequent that sometimes side streets took on the function of the main street. Thus, in a given sector, more than one street concurred simultaneously in forming the main course, which was not a single street or a line of streets in sequence (a “rue corridor” in the modernist town-planning sense). Nor, on the other hand, could these duplications be the result of a long process of encroachment on the space of the ancient Mese, because the distance between the alternative streets was too great.

It is very difficult to perceive a well-defined aspect of the axis at any given period because of frequent changes and the transience of many buildings. Of course, “In cities only change endures...all cities are caught in a balancing act between destruction and preservation....”65 Street levels rose or dropped at even greater rates than in Rome.66 The diffusion of provisional booths and sheds must have added to the feeling of continuous transformation.

CHANGE IN TIME AND PATRONAGE

Change in patronage was, of course, important in setting new trends. Mehmet II and the pashas of the conquest and the subsequent two generations, with their new nahije (district) pattern, had structured the axis by centering mosques and mahalles along the route and creating the fulcrums of the Fatih and Beyazit ensembles, the Old Saray, and the reinforced bazaar district. The classical period brought the Şehzade complex, the Valide Mihrimah foundation in Edirnekapi, some monumental pashas’ mosques, and the Valide Hammam. From the end of the sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth, a new foundation type, the türbe-medrese-sebil combination,67 and quite a few hans defined the architectural and functional aspect of the axis in a period in which new sultanic foundations were rare.68 The eighteenth century was also a period of library and school endowments by pashas and court officials,69 and one in which the patronage of tekkes was apparently dissociated from that of medreses.70 The hold of pashas’ patronage on the axis changed in the course of the nineteenth century; konaks and burial space passed into new hands. A new bureaucracy emerged, and foundations and public buildings were now a direct emanation of the reformed Tanzimat
state, paralleled by the expansion of a high middle class of lesser pashas, officials, and an emergent bourgeoisie that took over a large proportion of housing in the area. Perhaps the most important structural and symbolic changes in the position of the various tracts of the axis became manifest after 1860, with the gradual shift of functional and political importance from the Topkapı–Ayasofya–Çemberli taş axis to that of Bâbîli–Çemberli taş.  

In every sense the funerary complex of Mahmut II (fig. 22) was the urban hinge on which both topographic and socio-political change turned.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century there emerged in the eastern tract of the axis, in the Divanyolu proper, an upper-middle-class environment of konaks and coffeehouses of various types. The tombs nearest to the street in the Çorulu, Köprülû, Atik Ali, and Koca Sinan hazires date mostly from the nineteenth century, as the result of the gradual appropriation of the “aristocratic” or pasha-related burial sites by a diffuse class of high officials.  

After the Tanzimat reforms, the eastern half of the axis was subjected to various attempts at modernization (or Westernization, as some prefer to call it) in architecture and urban organization. This was the starting point for the formal and ideological conflicts in “planning” and aesthetic attitudes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As an architectural and, to a certain degree, urban project, such modernization was not a wholly new factor. From the first decades of the eighteenth century, it had assumed the character of a creative and experimental process of trial and error, initially a brilliant cultural success. Western Baroque and Rococo concepts filtered into the Ottoman architectural discourse without disrupting it, enhancing the ornamental apparatus and the spatial and plastic continuity of connective elements.  

Such change had also brought certain typological inno-

Fig. 22. The funerary complex of Mahmut II (1839), before street widening in the last decades of the nineteenth century. (Historic photograph)
vations in housing and in the form of monumental single-class school buildings. In the end, however, it rigidly superimposed the Western concept of avenues and norms of monumental composition on the existing situation, neutralizing the semantic values that had crystallized from the mid-seventeenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth. Reformist Ottoman technicians and intellectuals of the nineteenth century, raised on a Western-oriented vision of urban values, ignored traditional Ottoman structure and town planning, rejecting an urban order they considered chaotic and disorderly, which to a certain extent it certainly was. In some cases, the new vision produced interesting results on the axis, paradoxically not in the global aspects of urban structure, which had been its aim, but in such single architectural cases as the 1825 türbe and hazire of Hattat Mustafa Rakim, the Mithat Pasha Mausoleum in the Beyazit complex, and the Mahmut II külliye, or such individual functional solutions as the tramway line. On the whole, however, reformist modernization did not resolve the fundamental organizational problems of the emerging city discharged along the axis—problems too great for that fundamentally brittle historical structure (fig. 23)—and it was, in substance, a culturally and physically destructive process.

To enlarge the street, many monumental buildings along the Divanyolu were submitted to coarse and ugly reductions (figs. 24–25). I shall discuss further the formal implications of this failure and its causes: the incompatibility of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century “modern” Western idea of the town and its aesthetics with the ideas and techniques that gave form and character to Ottoman urban space.

**THE URBAN FORM**

My aim in the balance of this paper is to discuss urban architectural form—that is, the acquisition by buildings...
and spaces of aesthetic significance within a larger context—and how the relationships and common principles of buildings of different epochs and formal logic are established as a common architectural and urban koiné. I do not focus on single monuments but rather on the overall urban architectural character of the axis and the re-elaboration of typological and semantic themes that shaped changes in the axis over the long run, due both to autonomous factors and to Western influences.

Town architecture is not the mere sum of single architectural units. It is affiliated with, but distinct from, architecture tout court and should be studied as a system of architectural references and interconnections. In a given culture, the study of how ideology and myth are reflected in urban form can involve issues quite different from those analyzed in architectural history. Such a study stands, in a way, where classical history of architecture and urban history intersect; it is neither one nor the other. It is methodologically uncomfortable, and yet there is no other way of understanding fully the way members of a civilization looked at a town.78 It might help to explain aspects of individual architectural events that philosophical research cannot reveal. Of course, urban architectural form stands firmly within what is considered to be the history of architecture: the issues of the two are strongly related. But this being so, why does historical analysis shy away from stringent explanation of urban forms that cannot be reduced to simple, geometrically describable ground plans or spatial composition? The answer is that the needed tools and what these tools uncover are different for towns not formally designed. Alternative conceptions and terms have been sought, such as “organic” (for medieval towns), “picturesque” (for Ottoman towns), or Gesamtkunstwerk (for a town constituted of many diverse architectural elements—practically any town!), but these are vague and of no use other than to hide the embarrassing inapplicability of the rules for analyzing the single work of architecture.

Fig. 24. Street facade of the Köprülu complex (left) and the corner of the Valide Hammam (right), prior to street widening after 1865. (After Thomas Allom, L’empire ottoman illustré: Constantinople ancienne et moderne [Paris, ca. 1840])

Fig. 25. The Divanyolu near Çemberlitaş in 2002. Note the amputated facades of the Valide Hammam (right) and the Köprülu medrese (left), with replacements designed by Barborini at the end of the nineteenth century; cf. fig. 24.
Do we know the form of fifteenth-century Istanbul? The scholar of urban architecture cannot call “form of a town” a plan represented by a map that at most contains, say, a third of its monuments, the names of its mahalles, no indication of its street web, one or two of its main streets vaguely defined, and none of its houses or housing types. Certainly we have more information than that for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Istanbul, but still not enough. The early maps and most of the hand-drawn representations are too subjective to be trustworthy; housing and important accessory elements such as hazire walls may have changed alignment and shape in the course of time. While it is impossible to reconstruct an image of the full axis or even large parts of it in a given period, we can partially construe eighteenth-century housing; we know what some houses and quarters looked like, though we do not know where each type stood and how all the quarters were built up. We also know, even if incompletely, a larger number of monuments of that period and how some of the earlier ones had changed, but we do not know all the monuments. We still know very little of the street web. After the third quarter of the nineteenth century, much has changed, but the rich if not exhaustive mapping and photographic campaigns reveal much that can be read as unchanged and therefore as maintaining the typical relationships between buildings and urban space of the previous period. This renders it possible, for the period extending roughly from 1750 to 1850, to construct a working hypothesis of the appreciable architectural sense (rather than the exact configuration) of whole parts of the town-form around the Divan axis. That is a long period, and a very dynamic one, for which Istanbul had no Canaletto to depict a precise synchronic picture. We may be looking here (in a certain place and period) at the layout of streets, there at the housing, and still elsewhere at the three-dimensional reality of certain monuments and the mere ground plan or position of others. In other words, we are working on an out-of-focus image with voids and diachronic juxtapositions; nonetheless it is a concrete image of the town-form of a civilization at a given phase of its maturity, and as in all civilizations, it is the result of the sedimentation of various epochs.

Rykwert’s exploration of the concepts, dreams, and beliefs implicit in the basic geometric layouts and functional distribution of historical cities—as, for example, in the symbolism of center, fringe, and gate—can be readily applied to outstanding Ottoman külliyes but would be at odds with the apparently formless, unplanned, and inarticulate nature of the Ottoman town.79 Doubtless, Ottoman society charged the Divanyolu with ideological and ritual meanings, but these meanings did not lie in its general form, nor did they determine its form in the way that the foundation myths and rituals of many other societies determined the plans or skylines of their urban components. Nevertheless, we do find elements of myth and ideology indirectly reflected in the construction of the Divan axis. The first is the myth of foundation, perceivable in the subtle rhetoric of construction (and reconstruction)—in the concept of the patron (the pasha or the man of religion) as a founder of a mahalle or complex. Ottoman Istanbul is the sum of many foundations—mahalles, tekkes, and külliyes, single eponymous foundations and units only sometimes having recognizable boundaries or form but always having widely recognized meaning. If in the century of Fatih and Beyazıt II the impact of the foundation concept is psychologically and historically that of the hero-foundation-tomb progression that had Ottomanized the city (the foremost pashas having actually founded the mahalles and religious complexes), in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the concept is also applied to refoundation through rebuilding, and sometimes through mere renaming. Additionally, in the eighteenth century the pietistic attitude reported in vakıfnames (endowment deeds)80 brought increasing richness and variety to tombstone and hazire wall design. The peculiar aesthetics of late Ottoman urban space is well illustrated in the dialogue of urban cemeteries (hazires) and tombs centered on monumental türbes with the street through transparent precinct walls—a street scene in which the main components of the religious building (mescit, medrese) are understated despite their larger volume or simply placed away from the street margin. The reverence due to the founder-hero is extended collectively to the outstanding dead, the tombs of family members and clan sharing the protective locus of the türbe of the prominent founder, thereby attracting reflected devotion and identity. Foundation myth, individual piety, and prestige-seeking are intermingled. I have already mentioned the great number of substitutions and replacements of tombstones near the transparent precinct walls, whose symbolic and formal role must be reexamined in view of such a competition for tombstone positioning. Piety certainly played a dominant role not only in the attitude of patrons but also in the ingrained feeling of the town populace for centrally
placed hazine and the widespread practice of saying short prayers for the dead whose tombs were visible from the street. The collective presence of the dead, or rather, the sum of so many individual sepulchers in the Ottoman scene, has as much meaning (and poignancy) as that of the single emergent hero.

Ottoman power found its own significant representation in fragmentary signals: in single monuments and buildings (as enounced in the profile of the city as were sultanic mosques and mausoleums, but not knitted into an overall, plastically controlled town architecture), or in those that had more to do with costume and posture or nature and landscape. The non-architectural media of such signals were various: the appropriation of natural landscape (for example, by siting new buildings on hilltops), epigraphy, the display of costumes and turbans of symbolic form and color and of symbolic tools such as tuğras (sultans’ monograms), the stance of persons or groups in physical space, and the juxtaposition of architectural elements in charged symbolism extending far beyond their mere architectural relationships (such as fountains and sebils on school facades and tombs clustered around türbes). Processions assumed their own lofty symbolism by incorporating such elements of costume and stance or by contact with certain sites, and not because of a backdrop of triumphal arches, majestic colonnades, or deep perspectives. In Levni’s illustrations in the 1720 Sürnâme, the procession itself is perceived and depicted as being monumental, while its theater is much less hieratic. This is a key to understanding the Ottoman use and perception of urban space. Formal monumentality in urban space as a symbol of power and civitas—and hence total control of its formation—was not part of the Ottoman mentality. Nor were there architecturally significant countersymbols, as in the pluralistic use in the European medieval town of structures (church and commune) as counterweights to the representation of the sovereign lord. The overall architecture of urban space was not decanted into a harmonious scene: the chaotic and rich magma of urban facts was not perceived by Ottoman culture as potential form that could be abstracted into a higher level of symbolism. Because of its too heterogeneous typological elements, the formal order into which that magma theoretically might have been molded was not that of Ottoman monumental ensembles; on the other hand, its different cultural roots would not have suggested anything resembling the post-Renaiss-

sance Western town’s concretion of harmony out of complexity, as inspired by classical antiquity.

Another key to the comprehension of Ottoman town-form is the position of monuments and their reciprocal relationship to the street in the Divan axis. Streets, Kostof remarks, were not a natural form but an invention: every culture or epoch has its own positive and active way—not simply the passive assembly of buildings—of conceiving and shaping them. What are the premises of late Ottoman street formation?

The perception that the Divan street-and-thoroughfare system was formless, narrow, and deprived of hierarchy is in part the result of objective functional problems, such as narrowness and bottlenecks during parades. This perception had emerged relatively early, in part from the ruling classes’ growing awareness during the final century and a half of Ottoman rule that the thoroughfares did not compare favorably in ambitions of representation and order to those of Western towns. Central, important sections of the axis might have margins defined by barracks and other tracts be neat, pleasing sequences of gardens, cemeteries, small houses, and monuments (fig. 23), but this was not the form that had emerged in Europe. The difference was deeper than that between medieval and Renaissance-and-post-Renaissance organization, or between aristocratic and popular quarters in the West, which since the late Middle Ages had had a common basis of street structure: flow of space, continuity of facades, typological momentum of building entrances, and homogeneity of alignment and orientation. Street form in the Divan axis, and in Istanbul generally, had evolved out of a conception in which street-flow and serial composition were not referential denominators: streets were not seen as important elements in the identity of urban space. Ottoman monuments of large or medium scale had little reference to street alignments; landscaping and orientation towards Mecca further complicated their relation to public space, and accessory elements such as walls (some fenestrated), fountains, and epigraphy (on precinct walls or the ground floors of the main buildings) mediated between private and public space. The main facades of buildings, especially külliyes and sometimes konaks, were independent of street alignment. The concept of street facade, so important in Western town architecture, was practically absent, except where a continuity of built volumes isolated the building from the street. Understandably, descrip-
tions of streets as specific architectural and environmental entities are rare in Ottoman culture. Street-flow is not indicated in Ottoman architectural and urban representation, and, in the representations of Istanbul in the Hünêrname by Matrakçı Nasuh, Piri Reis, and Velican, serial form is more suggested. In Matrakçı’s drawing, for example, one can vaguely discern the route of the Divan axis because the buildings, however conventionally represented (they form a sort of “shorthand” description of typological classes that remains to be decrypted), do reflect a logical and realistic disposition in their sequence and position, left or right, along the route, but the street itself is not represented (fig. 26).  
Perspective and its logical nexus, the long view of interrelated events, remained unexplored even in the eighteenth century, when a discourse on continuity by fragments and short interconnections within the elements of a külliye, or among diverse külliyas, opened the way to a new aesthetic and ideological identity of streets. Single episodes were more fluently connected in a sort of architectural “narrative,” but the Ottoman vision of streets was not transformed totally. I cannot date exactly the origin of this “narrative and formal linkage”; it can be sought intuitively in such cases as the Amcazade complex of 1699–1700 (fig. 35)—an almost experimental combination of previous typological elements not yet semantically fluent and in which juxtaposition is not yet linkage—but it could well have been present in other ensembles or series of buildings now lost. When did certain such innovations occur for the first time? The case of the extreme transparency and “narrative composition” of hazire wall fenestration is typical: if the example from the Şehzade enclosure (figs. 27–29) is actually original and not a later transformation, we might say that experimentation had begun as early as the age of Sinan, but no other example has survived. So doubt remains whether this is an original sixteenth-century form or was modified later, when a new vision and function of street architecture emerged.

With changes in urban fabric and functions, the reciprocal relation of monuments to the street changed much in the course of time. The continuous trend—probably starting early—to relatively higher densities, smaller vakif buildings, and new functional building types such as single-class schools brought about facade continuity on the street front, in combination with the basically open and low-density Ottoman housing and public-use archetypes. The unique street scenery of the post-seventeenth-century Divanyolu, com-

Fig. 26. The Divan axis in the 1537 Matrakçı Nasuh representation of Istanbul. Along the axis can be seen: A. Aya-sofyâ. B. Çemberlitaş, Atik Ali Mosque, and, further left, the Grand Bazaar. C. the Beyazıt Mosque. D. the Old Palace. E. the Sarâçhane and Atpazarî markets. F. the Fatih complex. G. the Adrianople Gate (Edirnekapi).
Fig. 27. A central section of the Şezade hazire precinct wall on the Divan axis.

Fig. 28. Detail of the wall seen in fig. 27, showing the split jambs aimed at increasing the transparency from the street into the burial area.

Fig. 29. Architectural representations of the hazire wall shown in figs. 27 and 28.
posed of such different volumes and such a variety of modes of aggregation—as in the case of monumental schools inserted in a continuum of street fronts of houses and shops (figs. 36, 37) on the one hand, and of freestanding buildings and gardens or garden-like cemeteries on the other—was a consequence of given institutional and social factors, but also of an architectural culture reacting and adapting to those factors. Instrumental in this development were both an inventive reiteration of classical Ottoman architecture and the example of the emergent middle- and upper-middle-class (or bourgeoisie, to use a not altogether appropriate term) housing fabric. Probably new, Western-influenced techniques of composition also contributed to the development: certainly the combination of Baroque layout and Rococo and Tulip Period ornamentation rendered the insertion of single buildings more fluent after the mid-eighteenth century.

Did the Divan axis as street architecture have common features distinguished by general formal principles? I cannot say if the main characteristics listed below apply to the whole three-century period of the post-classical Divan axis, but they certainly are common to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were partly the result of a random juxtaposition of various architectural units, but also, often, of compositional stratagems to reciprocally interrelate elements standing at short distances from one another. These stratagems recall the process of narration rather than balanced Vitruvian harmony (symmetry, perspective, and overall geometric plan). Dominant characteristics were variety in size, form, type, and volume of adjacent elements, independently built but mutually sympathetic; autonomy of main facades from street alignment; emphasis on corner situations; and use of subtle detailing to resolve the conflict of diverse forms.

To judge from single architectural ensembles, towards the end of the seventeenth century and all through the eighteenth many technical refinements were invested in the design and redesign of secondary or accessory elements—the delicate and relatively small-scale architecture of semi-transparent hasire enclosures, so classically simple and regular in previous centuries (figs. 32–34); of sebils and fountains (fig. 31); and even of small houses and konaks—bringing a great inventiveness to the form and details of individual openings on the street frontage. These became the carriers of innovative architecture and dominated the street front, while the main buildings of the külliye, fundamentally simpler and more conservative, remained in the background, as can be seen in the Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha and the Çorlulu Ali Pasha complexes (fig. 33). In many monuments or public-use buildings, insertion of the rich ornamentation of fountains and epigraphy on ground-floor facades differentiated those areas from the more sober upper floors (figs. 14 and 36); this reversed the rule in traditional Ottoman housing of the ground floor being less fenestrated and plainer. Either way, ground-floor facades formed a continuum of public frontage in counterpoint to the more private and often more serial (in rhythm and window design) upper floors. The distinction and diversification of outstanding elements, the subtly varying common scale (ground floors ranged from 4 to 5 meters, hardly any building surpassed 10–12 meters in height, and windows were mostly of standard dimensions) referred to pedestrian eye level, that is, to the main field of the street scene perceived without depth of perspective and long-distance design. It ensues that all other elements of different scale or, more simply, not of immediate pertinence to the street scene were kept at distance, the distance being more psychological and perceptual than physical. The facade of the medrese building proper might be only three or four meters behind the street-facing enclosure (fig. 33) and the upper floor front practically on a plane with the street frontage (fig. 36), and yet these would be pushed into a spatial sphere different from that of the street by their simpler, more austere, or more repetitive composition and detailing. Corners were used as architecturally enriched frontage or street dividers (fig. 30) much more often than in other urban cultures, or for that matter than in other situations in Istanbul. They were enhanced by ornamental elements or openings (almost always elaborate sebil gratings) to underline their roles as hinges in nodal urban situations (figs. 30–32, 34).

All these characteristics resulted in an idea of form, a common style and its varying leitmotifs, running through what was visible from public urban space, as distinct from the form or idea of a town organically composed and ensembles comprehensible at a glance, as külliyes and grand palaces were, or as ideal towns could have been. Nevertheless, this style had a definite grammar and syntax of urban form and of the insertion of architectural elements in urban space, based on the reciprocal linkage of individual architectural units and their connection to elements in the environs. The formal interrelations of neighboring groups,
Fig. 30. Axonometric reconstruction of the Kuyucu Murat Pasha medrese (ca. 1610).

Fig. 31. The Kuyucu Murat Pasha sebil, once at the bifurcation of the two Divan axis lanes (cf. fig. 30). The sebil and the southern lane (left) have now been enclosed within the grounds of Istanbul University.
such as that of the Çorlulu Ali Pasha, the Kara Mustafa Pasha, and the Koca Sinan Pasha külliyes in facing one another and in being mutually referential, were not the chance result of casual combination. There was, I believe, an awareness of urban aesthetics and a deliberate aesthetic strategy meant to create a common background. The location on the Divanyolu of these pasha complexes derived motivation and prestige from their being a collective endeavor, perhaps independent from the court strategy of self-enclosure. I call “short linkage” the formal composition stratagems to reciprocally interrelate elements standing at short distances from one another, whether within the same architectural design or within neighboring designs. This approach to architectural composition made recourse to architecturally refined accessory elements as a means of introducing cross-references between neighboring heterogeneous elements. To resolve the conflict of diverse forms, it exploited devices such as continuous but direction-changing molding and wall coping, generously fenestrated walls defining void margins, modulation of varying heights within a limited scale, reiteration and variation of the rhythm of openings, diversification of building materials, and accentuated complexity of the street frontage of ground floors (figs. 35–37). Carefully designed enclosure walls along the street margin filled in the hiatus between separate buildings, and there was a balance in weight and size of elements used as accents or for counterpoint (fig. 30). All these had been classical devices used in sixteenth-century architecture to articulate ensembles; they were now used in street architecture.

In the richly variegated typological context of the Divan axis and its alternately void and built-up envi-
Fig. 34. Detail of the Çorlulu Ali Pasha hazine precinct wall (1716–17).

Fig. 35. The Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha medrese-türbe-school complex (ca. 1700).
Fig. 36. The Recai Efendi School (1775).

Fig. 37. The Cevri Kalfa School (1819).
Fig. 38. The so-called Mahmut II sebil (built by Mahmut I in 1745 and restored at the beginning of the nineteenth century) in front of the western main gate of the Fatih complex. The path of the street is unchanged but has been widened and features modern buildings.

Fig. 39. The Damat Ibrahim medrese and arcade street complex (built ca. 1720) in the 1830s. (After Thomas Allom, L’empire ottoman illustré: Constantinople ancienne et moderne [Paris, ca. 1840])
rnonment, the composition of connected, contiguous elements amounts to a process of narration. It is a modality of urban architectural form that, through sequence building, derives fascination from spatial, formal, and typological variation. The taste for natural landscape and natural elements—an established fact in Ottoman town-building—allowed for a townscape in which single trees (enclosed or exposed as individual elements), single gardens, or hazire voids played panoramic overtures to the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea and, thanks to the dominant geography of the thoroughfare and the nature of its fabric, further articulated the overall composition. The meaning of that particular form of urban creation was not simply architectural. It was also a journey through the myths and symbols familiar to the population—the domes of the powerful, the sebils and fountains that betokened generous donation, the memory of processions terrifying or joyful, and the tombs that individually suggested piety and prayer but collectively evoked, via cemeteries architecturally enhanced yet with the scale of daily life, both pride in common roots and a fatalistic et in Arcadia ego spirit. This is one of the richest examples in all of urban culture of urban space used as a path, a trip through events, and a narrative composition—as opposed to the post-medieval Western concept of public monumentality imposing symmetry, centralized hierarchy, and serial reiteration of elements and types. It was this latter concept, adopted as the only alternative by the urban reformers of nineteenth-century Istanbul, that brought crisis. The two concepts of urban form—on the one hand the Ottoman system, which had gradually built and adapted urban space and its grammar over three centuries, and on the other the tabula rasa propagated by Western-referring reformism—were fundamentally opposed: the concentration, introversion, and homogeneity of the bazaar-çarşı structure and its pedestrian lanes versus the chain-like, long commercial streets of the West and their dependence on vehicular traffic; the open, low-density residential fabric of the Ottoman town as opposed to the more compact and dense fabric of the western European model; the typical Ottoman fragmentation in form, volume, and direction versus the serial regularity of the modern avenue and its alignments.

Not reform but the incapability of reformers to understand and transform—as it had always been transformed—the finesse of Ottoman urban aesthetics brought crisis and the dissolution of urban meanings. Lack of historical vision or analysis was followed by lack of creativity: modernization was conceived as substitution. This meant not so much the destruction of traditional buildings, which were too numerous to simply disappear merely because of the cutting of new streets, as it meant the loss of meaning of their vital heterogeneity when connected in complex non-serial relationships, which were now annulled by the insertion of long layouts and perspectives in a new geometrical discipline (fig. 38). It meant new facades (not that many, but just enough to interrupt previous linkages) and avenue-like rows of trees muffling the perception of the splendid single trees that had formerly been one of the glories of Ottoman Istanbul. The subtle rhythm of the hazire walls, the trees here and there in nooks and gardens, and the small ornamental elements of varying size and profile of the previous Ottoman scene (fig. 39) lost all their formal privilege, and hence their significance. The road to total destruction was opened.

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NOTES

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1. See, in the facsimile volume Seyit Vehbi, Sürnüme: An Illustrated Account of Sultan Ahmed III’s Festival of 1720 (Bern, 2000), fol. 152b and 153a. Actually the translation of “Ve alay-i hümâyûnun ibidâsi Mînchier kapusundan Vezneciler içindeen Eski Odalar önüne Serrac-hane başında Horhor Çeşmesi’den Ak Saray’a çıkıktan sonra Divanyolu ile Lâleli Çeşme ve Darb-hane-i ‘Atik ve Valide Hamamı önüne mürur etmedin Azmetli Padişah alay nahillerin seyrişâh Arslan-hane kurbunda Nakaq-hane’de iibda’ u inşa olunan kasr-i bi-küşur-i dil-keş-nakṣ-i têmesâyî sayeste-sâz-i teşrif-i kudum-i icâi ve şeyket ve mutekarîyi alay-i pür-hâmet olđular,” reads, “And after the beginning of the imperial procession had reached Ak Saray, [having emerged] from the Gate of the Musk Dealers and [passed] through Paymasters [and proceeded] before Old Chambers of the Janissaries and past Horhor Fountain at the head of Saddlers-House, [it followed] Divanyolu without passing before the Lâleli Fountain, Old Mints, or Baths of the Queen Mother and arrived, replete with magnificence and pomp, at the per-
fectly designed and heart-fetchingly beautiful pavilion that had been newly constructed at the Court Studios in the vicinity of the Lions’ Menagerie so that His Majesty the Sultan might view the passage of the festival trees (nahhū). I have changed only the passage “...[it followed] Divanyolu without passing before the Lâleli Fountain, Old Mints, or Baths of the Queen Mother...” to “...[it followed] Divanyolu before passing by the Lâleli Fountain, Old Mints, or Baths of the Queen Mother...” interpreting “mürür etmedin” as “mürür etmeden,” since there would be no sense in listing buildings not paraded by.


4. Cosimo Comidas da Carbognano, Descrizione topografica dello stato presente di Costantinopoli (Bassano, 1794), 51: “ricise bella e agevole, quella dicesi Divan-Iolu, la quale dal Seraggio conduce alla porta di Adrianopoli.”

5. Inciciyan, XVIII. asrada İstanbul (Istanbul, 1976; orig. pub. 1956), 76, calls both streets “Divanyolu.”


8. Antonio Baratta, Costantinopoli effigiata e descritta (Turin, 1840; orig. pub. Genoa, 1830), 559: “una delle più belle e spaziose vie di Costantinopoli, della quale occupa una cresta centrale. Contansi in essa, tra molti altri raggardarevoli edifici, il mausoleo di Soliman Pascià, la moschea di Nisicangi Pascià, di Chemi-Kammam e Carakumruk...”

9. Graf Helmuth von Moltke, Karte von Constantinopel, 1/25,000 (Berlin, 1842). Also printed as a Mektebi-i fânuni harbiyye edition in a scale of 1:2500. Von Moltke’s position is quite different from that of other mapmakers of the first half of the nineteenth century. I do not believe as did Ergin (Nuri Osman Ergin, Mecelle-i umur-i belediye [Istanbul, 1995; orig. pub. 1330–38/1912–21], 1243–45) and Çelik (Zeyneb Çelik, The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century [Berkeley, 1993, orig. pub. Seattle, 1986], 84) that his map was meant as a proposal for the reform of the street system. Admittedly, the map shows a very linear Beyazıt-Hekimoğlu connection, but so did the 1810 Seyyit Hasan map. Was it a question of perception, this tract containing many new (late-eighteenth-to-early-nineteenth-century) buildings? On the other hand, von Moltke indicates a much straighter street south of the Hasan Pasha and Simkeşane Hans and the Lâleli complex, which no other map reports, whereas the street that ran by these monuments has a less linear course. Could it have been a proposal for a new street (in which case Ergin and Çelik would be right)? I doubt it. It is curious that von Moltke never mentions such a reform project in his numerous letters to his family, whereas he expatiates on his survey work.

10. See caption text to pl. VIII in Cerasi et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study.


14. The few certain archeological finds show that the actual Divanyolu has shifted some 10–15 meters south of the Mese. See the detailed maps in Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, Bidexikon zur Topographie Istanbul (Tübingen, 1977), based on pre-1965 maps. This seems to have been the case almost a century earlier, too: see the map by August J. Mordtmann, “Constantinople au Moyen Âge: Relèvé topographique,” Revue d’art chrétiens 34 (1891): inserted after 182.

15. Most maps drawn by Europeans in the nineteenth century meticulously superimpose the ancient Byzantine-Roman sites and place-names on the Ottoman town: see C. Stolpe, Text zum Plan von Constantinopol mit seinen Vorständen (Pera and Constantinople, 1863). The site-names of the Mese, the Artopoleon, and various fora, which would have merited their own proper autonomous representation, have been added in this totally extraneous context. Later, in Mordtmann, “Constantinople au Moyen Âge,” the scant archeological data rightly are used more parsimoniously. Far more incongruous were (and still are) the ideological equation “Mese = Divanyolu,” and the misplaced sentiments of popularizing historicism that offered ideologic support to the gross street clearing of the 1950s and the resultant pretentious, miles-long perspectives. A naive although well-meaning precursor was Celâl Esad (Arseven) and his reconstruction drawing of the so-called Byzantine Mese (Djelal Essad, Constantinople de Byzance à Stamboul [Paris, 1909]).

16. See Jean Ebersolt, Constantinople: Recueil d’études, d’archéologie et d’histoire (Paris, 1951), 49, for Basil I’s Sunday procession from St. Sophia to the Holy Apostles (actual site of the Fatih külliye), which does suppose an imperial parade through the main axis; most ceremonial texts mention tours of the walls or short trips to given religious sites. A gradual reduction in ceremonial use of the thoroughfare in Byzantine times seems plausible, the Constantine Forum being visited by imperial processions only once a year: see Albrecht Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions in Constantinople,” in N. Necoçoğlu, ed., Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life (Leiden, 2001), 73–87. On the routes of the Byzantine imperial manifestations, and generally
on the so-called Mese main streets, see Müller-Wiener, Bil-
dexikon, 269–70; see Guillard, Études, vol. 1, 217–49, for
"Itinéraires des Livres des Cérémonies," and vol. 2, 69–76,
for "La Mésie ou Regia."
17. M.-Fr. Auzépy, "Les déplacements de l’empereur dans la ville
et ses environs (VIII–Xe siècles.)," in Cyril Mango and Gilbert
Dagron, eds., Constantinople et Its Hinterland: Papers from the
Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford,
April 1993 (London, 1995), 359–66. Though some proces-
sions did run through the town from palace to gates, Auzépy
reads a stronger symbolism in the circling processions that
took the palace cross to various sites in a spiral of processions,
or sailed around the town walls and gates.
18. The Book of Ceremonies of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus
attributes the title "holy" to many rooms of the imperial palace
in which the ceremonies took place (Mango, "The Triump-
thal Way," fig. 2).
19. Es'ad Efendi, Osmanlılarda töre ve törenler (Teyrifat-i kadime)
20. We have calculated a width of 6 to 8 meters at such impor-
tant points as Direklerarası and between the Valide Hamam
and the porch of the Köprüli Medrese. Most sources men-
tion widths varying from 3.6 to 6 meters at the beginning of
the nineteenth century. Della Valle writes that it could be
traveled through in a litter born by four mules: Viaggi di Pi-
tro della Valle il Pellegrino, con minuto ragguaglio de tutte le cose
notabili osservate in essi, Descritti da lui medesimo in 54, Lettre
familiari, da diversi luoghi... (Rome, 1660; orig. pub. 1650),
304.
22. Robert Mantran, Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle
23. The 1810 Seyit Hasan map indicates some sparse clusters
along the axis and many commercial appendices branching
off the route forming bazaar precincts in what is now Beyazit
Square, some of which had gates. But the survey might have
been incomplete or have shown only the clusters connected
to the water supply system (the chief concern of the map).
24. Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, Relation d’un voyage du Levant,
25. Note that in the Byzantine epoch, too, the eastern tract of the
axis had been the busiest part of the town, especially around
the Forum of Constantine: Ebersolt, Constantinope: Recueil
d’études, 74 (also 304 for street- and market-flow). See Ogier
Ghislain de Busbecq, Lettres du Baron de Busbecq, Ambassadeur
de Ferdinand I... auprès de Soliman II... (Paris, 1748; trans. Itu-
nara Constantinopolitanum et Amazianum, 1581) 17, descri-
ing his lodging in Elçi Han, "dans l’endroit de C. le plus
habitue et le plus élevé."
26. Mantran, Istanbul dans la seconde moitié, 279–81, quoting Evliya,
mentions the main concentration of entertainment activi-
ties (taverns, musical entertainment, kuyumacı) in quarters
all distant from the Divan axis.
27. See, for example, Helène Desmet-Grégoire and François
Georgetown, Cafés d’Orient revivisés (Paris, 1997); Malik Aksel,
"Divanyolu konakları," in Sanat ve Folklor (Istanbul, 1971),
295–302; Metin And, A History of Theatre and Popular Enter-
tainment in Turkey (Ankara, 1964), and various headings in
28. For the mosques with mahalles, see Ayvansari’s Hadikat, as
reported in Cerasi et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study, 80,
n. 141.
29. The term kapı was used to designate the palaces in which
the highest officials of the city and the empire resided and
held office—the grand vizier at Paşa Kapısı, the commander
of the janissary troops at Ağâ Kapısı, and the Şeyhülislam at
Fetva Kapısı. From the end of the seventh century, the
Paşa Kapısı was sited in Bâbiali.
30. Disparate and uneven information for certain periods can,
evertheless, be gleaned from occasional remarks on important
mansions in the chronicles of Evliya Celebi and others, from
the 1810 Seyit Hasan map, and from detailed maps, dated
from 1904 to 1940, of some Istanbul quarters surveyed and
drawn for insurance companies by the surveyors Goad and
Pervitch. For the latter, see Jacques Pervitch signot haritalar-
rinda Istanbul = Istanbul in the Insurance Maps of Jacques Pervi-
titch (Istanbul, 2000), which also contains extracts from Plan
d’Assurance de Constantinople: Vol. 1, Stamboul, Chas. E. Goad,
Scale 1:600 (London, 1904).
31. In the Pervitch maps of the 1920s, we find groups of wooden
houses even in the dense commercial quarters. These are
probably remnants of larger residential ensembles of pre-
vious periods, wedged into the masonry-dominated fabric.
Curiously, there are few photographs of the residential fabric,
but literacy evidence and maps are quite clear. See Maurice
Cerasi, "The Perception of the Divanyolu through Ottoman
History," in A. Ağır, D. Mazlum, and G. Cephanecigil, eds.,
Afife Battur’u Armağan: Mimârlik ve Sanat Tarihi Yazarları
(Istanbul, 2005), 111–24. The western part of the axis has main-
tained its mix of relatively modest housing and commercial
and public use up to the present day.
32. Özgünül Aksoy, Osmanlı devri İstanbul sibyan mektepleri üze-
rine bir inceleme (Istanbul, 1968). Schools located on the axis
have contributed greatly to its architectural physiognomy:
from Amcazade Hüseyin Ağa at the end of the seventeenth
century through the 1776 Reçai Efendi and the 1819 Cevi-
Kalfa schools (figs. 35, 36, 37).
33. Aiptullah Kuran. Sivas: The Grand Old Master of Ottoman Archi-
34. See Mubahat S. Kütküoğlu, "1869'da faa İstanbul medrese-
leri," Tarikh Estitüsüsü Dergisi (1977): 277–85. See also Çigdem
Kafeşçıoğlu, "Vizieral Undertakings in the Making of Otto-
man Istanbul," in Art Turc/Turkish Art: Proceedings of the 10th
International Congress of Turkish Arts (Geneva, 1999), 409–
13.
35. Of course, the tendency of the dervish tekke to seek peripher-
ial sites might be a partial explanation. It might also be due
to the standing contrast between the medrese-based ılımye class
and the tariqat (dervish orders), reminding us of the politi-
cal proximity of the Divanyolu to official ideology as expres-
sed by the ılımye class and hence of the favor it accorded
to the medrese milieu. At least officially, in public space
and public life the dedication of the ruling classes to the
dervish organizations, in particular the Melevi order, did not seem
to suffer from this hiatus. In all, the quarters around the
axis contain no more than thirty-eight tekkes, most of these
in the Fatih–Karagümür–Edirnekapı area. See Zakir Şükru
Efendi, Die Istanbuler Derwish-Konvente und Ihre Scheiche (Mec-
mua-i Tekâya) (Freiburg, 1980). The coexistence of tekke and

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medrese, not unusual in the classic period, was later rare. The Çorlulu Ali Pasha medrese and tekke, with its layout of two adjacent courts, is an interesting eighteenth-century exception.


39. D’Ohsson, Tableau, vol. 3, 420–23. The week-long parade of troops and pashas leaving for campaigns in the West developed along the five kilometers of the Edirnekapı–Topkapı route, and the troubles that occurred during its duration must have had a strong impact on the people of Istanbul. Such events were at the very heart of the Ottoman political system and its tensions in dealing with the population. In 1793 Abdül Hamit I abrogated the aley (troop parade) tradition and the campaign against Austria started without that ceremonial.

40. See İslam Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul, 1988–) s.v. “Istanbul,” 1214–19. Also see Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı devletinin Saray teşkilatı (Ankara, 1988); Cemal Kağadad, “Eyüp’teki kilise kuşanına Törenleri,” in Tülay Artan, ed., Eyüp: dün/büyün: Sempozyum, 11–12 Aralık 1993 (Istanbul, 1994). Until 1807 the Sultan was taken by rowboat to Eyüp and, after being consecrated there, rode back from Edirnekapı to the palace via the Divan axis, where he was acclaimed by his subjects. In 1807 Mustafa IV inverted the traditional direction of the citus (accession) parade, going to Eyüp by land and returning to the palace by boat. Perhaps the parades would have involved the Şehzade Mehmet complex in a more spectacular way if the original project of a symmetrical outer court on the Eski Odalar grounds had been realized. Here I would ask if Sinan’s genial innovation of lateral arcades for the sultanic mosques might not have been thought of as a fitting backdrop for, or architectural commentary on, the processions.

41. Gültu Necipoğlu, “Dinamic Imprint on the Cityscape: The Collective Message of Imperial Funerary Mosque Complexes in Istanbul,” in Cimetières et traditions funéraires dans le monde islamique: Actes du colloque international du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (proceedings of a conference held in Istanbul, Sept. 28–30, 1991) (Ankara, 1996), 23–36; and idem, Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries (Cambridge, MA and London, 1991), 31–34. Dr. Çigdem Kafesçioglu kindly allowed me to read her paper “Reckoning with an Imperial Legacy: Ottomans and Byzantine Constantinople,” to be published in 1453: The Fall of Constantinople and the Transition from the Medieval to the Early Modern Period (Rethymnon, in press). I read it after submitting a final draft of this paper, too late to comment on her argument of the Divanyolu as the principal connector of the urban icons of imperial Istanbul. There is some general truth in this, considering the gross geographical lay of Istanbul, but not with specific regard to the street architecture with which I am dealing (see n. 45, below).

42. On the axis are the sepulchers of Mehmet II (d. 1481) at Fatih; Beyazit II (d. 1512) at Beyazit; Selim II (d. 1574); Murat III (d. 1595); Mustafa I (d. 1623) and Ibrahim (d. 1648), both in Ayasofya; and Ahmet I (d. 1617), Osman II (d. 1622), and Murad IV (d. 1640), in the Sultan Ahmet complex nearby. Süleyman the Magnificent (d. 1566) chose a site on the axis for his son (Şehzade) Mehmet, but his own külliye and türbe and that of his father, Selim I (d. 1520), were built on isolated and impressive hilltop sites at a distance from the thoroughfare. Abdülmejid (d. 1861) is also buried in the Selim I complex.

43. Mehmet IV, buried in the Eminönü Valide Camii; Süleyman II and Ahmed II, both in the Süleymaniye complex; Mustafa II, Ahmed III, and Osman III, also in the Valide Camii; Mustafa III (d. 1774) and his son Selim III (d. 1808), in Mustafa’s mosque in Lâleli; Abdül Hamit I (d. 1789), in his Bahçekapi külliye.

44. The reader will note that in the research project maps analysis has been restricted to a generous 200 meters left and right of the axis. Given the geographical and local morphology of Istanbul and its perceptual impact on urban consciousness, this seemed the maximum limit for effective architectural and non-functional urban anchorages. If the Divan axis had been a single, straight space, I would have further limited the range. The Golden Horn and the Divan axis are not (or are only in slight measure) part of one and the same psychological, semantic, and architectural structure, as the [overly] large-scale maps of the narrow peninsular topography of the city and the distant views from Galata (see the Lorich cityscape and the many nineteenth-century photographic surveys) would suggest. Of course, as Necipoğlu (“Dinamic Imprint,” 34) asserts, “the intimate…constant dialogue between the cityscape and the sea” was an important fulcrum of the Ottoman dynasty’s control of, and expression through, the architectural image of the city. But the Divanyolu was a distinct part in that dialogue. The individuality of the parts has to be examined and understood. The sea and land routes were at the same time alternative and complementary. The Selim I complex and the Süleymaniye, so important in the general landscape, are not on the Divanyolu. We can say that after the first decade of the sixteenth century the dynasty seems to be seeking something other than visibility within the city’s throbbing core (with the Şehzade complex as a great and important exception). Nuruosmaniye and its court on the Grand Bazaar axis, though less than 200 meters from the Divanyolu, appear to have been designed as an alternative to it. Even Ayasofya and Sultan Ahmet are separated from the axis by several city blocks, as can be seen in the detail of the redraw of the Kauffner map by Melling and in all later maps. Effectively, the principal türbes were placed as near as possible to the Divan route, “reflecting a desire for greater visibility from and proximity to the processional route” (Necipoğlu, “Dinamic Imprint,” 29). But, though the Divanyolu still was the route to most sultans’ tombs, the initial imperial gambit for public exposure based on a principal thoroughfare became much richer and more complicated over time. The Divanyolu gave way, during the course of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, to Eyüp, the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, and the main commercial quarters. It was left to the seventeenth-to-mid-eighteenth-century pashas as their privileged hunting ground for prestige and self-representation. Could that be
seen in terms of consensus- and support-seeking among the various categories of population—clauses, shopkeepers, or particular social groups? Or was it a simple show of muscle, inter-pasha or of pasha vs. imperial court? But these are questions for the political and social historian.

46. The position of the gates of the Nuruosmaniye complex anticipates a shortcut from Bâbiali to the bazaar district that would come about only a century later; see Maurice Cersai, “The Urban Perspective of Ottoman Monuments from Sinan to Mehmet Tahir: Change and Continuity,” in Aputullah Kur'an için yazarlar = Essays in Honor of Aputullah Kur'an, ed. Ç. Kafesçioglu and L. Thyss-Şenocak (Istanbul, 1999), 179–80 and fig. 8.


48. It is reported that on her son’s enthronement Osman II’s mother transferred from the Old Palace to the Topkapı Palace in the winter of 1754, riding in a closed litter and greeting the crowds through “shamelessly opened grilles” (“Bîla-hicab kafesleri açmış”; s.v. “Osman II,” in Dünden bugüne Istanbul anısklopetisi, vol. 5, 154–57). See also Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power, 258: “...the eighteenth century marked an increased relaxation of the ceremonial code. . . .”

49. “The palace was not only an architectural manifestation of Ottoman absolutism; its architecture in turn actively informed the discourse and conceptualization of empire for generations...standing isolated...majestically raised over the Byzantine acropolis...” (Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power, 242).

50. As early as the sixteenth century, the poet Yahya Taşçıah met the crowds pouring into Atmeyard from its side streets. See Asaf Halet Celebi, ed., Divan sırrinde İstanbul (Istanbul, 1953).

51. Della Valle, Viaggio, 94.


53. The libraries of Köprüli, of Şehit Ali Pasha on the northeastern boundary of the Şehzade complex, of Şehîlislâm Sâlîyûddin Efendi (attached to the Beyazıt Mosque), and of Mahmut I in the Fatih complex are all highly visible from the route. The important Ragıp Pasha Library is on the southern branch of the Divan axis. (See Ahmet Kütükcalı, “İstanbul Vakif Kütüphaneleri,” in V. Vakif Hafızası: Restorasyon ve Vakıfların Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etikleri Semineri, 7–13 Aralık 1987 (Ankara, 1987), 51ff. Siyasi schools appear to have been fairly diffused throughout the entire historical peninsula: the Divan axis had its fair share but no more. The schools of Recai Efendi and Cevri Kalfa are named after court officials. Many pashas’ foundations, such as that of Amcazade Huseyin Pasha, incorporated schools (see Aksoy, Osmanlı devri İstanbul siyasi mekteleri, and A. Turgut Kut, “İstanbul siyan mektelerine ilgili bir vesika,” Journal of Turkish Studies 1 [1977]: 55–82).


55. Of the thirty-five important eighteenth-century mosques listed in İnci Nurcan, “18. Yüzyılda İstanbul camilerine bağlı etkisiyle gelen yenilikler,” Vakıflar Dergisi 19 (1985): 223–36, only seven, including the restoration of the Fatih complex, were on or very near the axis: Kaptan Ibrahim Pasha (1707), Çorlulu Ali Pasha (1716), and, not quite on the axis but strongly related to it, Çakmakcılar, Zeynep Sultan (1769), and Nuruosmaniye (1756), as well as Lâleli on the southern branch near Aksaray.

56. See n. 33, above. After the 1496 Atik Ali medrese in Çemberliataş, which is dominated by the mosque of the complex, and the Edirnekapi Atik Ali Pasha complex (1499?), whose medrese, although large, was not dominant, the other main kütüleşes are centered on medreses, some having small mosques or prayer halls incorporated; Koca Sinan (1593), Gaziâner Âğâ (1596), Ekmekezâde and Kuyucu Murat (both around 1610), Kemankeş Mustafa (1641), Köprüli Mehmet Pasha (1661), Kara Mustafa Pasha (1683), Amcazade Huseyin Pasha (1690s), Çorlulu Ali Pasha (1708), Damat Ibrahim Pasha (1720), and Seyit Hasan Pasha (1740).

57. Of the rest, thirty-nine are in Eyüp ve Üskûdar and only forty-two dispersed over the Istanbul urban area. See M. Orhan Bayrak, Istanbul’da gömülmüş meşhur adamlar (1453–1788) (Istanbul, 1978); Hakki Onkal, Osmanlı hanedan türbeleri (Ankara, 1992).

58. See Cersai et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study, 67 and n. 107, referring to the Çorlulu, Köprüli, Atik Ali, and Koca Sinan hazire. Very few pre-1800 tombs have survived, whereas many tombstones marking the burial places of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century personalities and their families are visible from the Divanyolu. After 1860–70, inhumation was always in peripheral cemeteries (mainly Eyüp and Üskûdar), but it appears that the reuse of tombs in central hazire was current practice for the privileged. Only important notables could be buried in these areas. See Nicolas Vatin and Stéphane Yerasimos, “L’implantation des cimetières ottomans intramuros à Istanbul,” in Cimitères et traditions funéraires, 37–56.

59. The Çorlulu complex was an exception. See n. 35, above.

60. Şehiîlislâm had donated libraries (see n. 53, above). Recai Efendi and Cevri Kalfa were court officials who had schools in their names on the axis. Mantran, Istanbul dans la seconde moitié, 173, asserts that the Kızlar Ağası (the palace Chief Eunuch) had substantial power in the vakif due to his influence in the assignment of sites.

61. The map is “Bosphorus Tracicus. Der Kanal des Schwarzen Meers...geometrisch aufgenommen durch Johann Baptist von Reben, Kaysl. Königl. Ungar. I Ingenieur Hauptmann,” published by Homaene. Erben of Nuremberg, 1764. Most maps made from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth are based on the Kauffer map (“Carte générale de la Ville de Constantinopel et du Canal de la Mer Noire,” in Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce, vol. 1 [Paris 1782]). Revised and updated editions have followed. See British Library Map Room, 43990.10, “Plan von Constantinopel und seinen Vorstäden...aufgenommen im J. 1776, berichtigt und vermehrt in J. 1786 von Fr. Kauffer, Ingenieur...mit neuen Zusatzen von J. B. Barbé du Bocage 1821” (Berlin and Pesth, 1821). They show Ayasofya–Beyazıt–Edirnekapı as the prevalent direction of the principal thoroughfare. The two official nineteenth-century Ottoman maps are: Dar-al-Saltanah, “Plan of Constantinople” (Constantinople, 1848), scale approximately 1:11,000, and the map of the Ottoman Imperial Engineering School (Mühen-
62. I disagree with the many historians who have deduced certain aspects of Istanbul from such maps and drawings or from individual statements of chroniclers; I do not know exactly how the Divan axis looked before the eighteenth century, because I cannot deduce direct architectural aspects of Istanbul from the too-vague maps and drawings of previous periods, or from individual statements of chroniclers (and I disagree with whoever takes them at their face value). They allow an interpretation but are not a reflection of urban architectural reality. Consider Pieter Coeck’s well-known engraving of an Ottoman procession, which I published in Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study, reversing it to show the correct relationship of the Fıroz Ağa Mosque to the Fathi kültüre. This does not mean that at any point the two could both be seen at the same time, or that the Divan axis was a nearly empty open space. The view also includes Galata, which would have been behind the observer; hence the map was panoptic but not realistically so. It does, however, give a rough idea of the hierarchy of perception of urban space and, perhaps, an idea of architectural forms, though somewhat distorted.

63. See Plates V–VI in Cerasi et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study.

64. See figs. 3 and 8, above.


66. Inciçivan, 18. Asrda, 67–69, asserts that the base of the Column of Constantine was 5 meters [sic] below street level. The grading of the Divanyolu after 1867 brought about a drop in street level in front of the Mahmır II funerary complex that gave it its odd look of being raised on monumental steps. Compare this with Rome, where, from the Augustan to the Constantinian period, there was a rise in level of 120 cm.

67. See n. 33, above.

68. Koca Sinan (1593), Gawanfer Ağa (1596), Ekmeçizade Ahmet Pasha and Kuyucu Murat Pasha (both around 1610), Kemalkeş Mustafa Pasha (1641), Köprüülü Mehmet Pasha (1661), Kara Mustafa Pasha (1683), Amcasad Hüseyin Pasha (around 1699), Çorulu Ali Pasha (1708), Damat Ibrahim Pasha (1720), and Seyit Hasan Pasha (1740).

69. For the dates and patronage of the main buildings and endowments, see the “Catalogue of Monuments” in Cerasi et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study.

70. See n. 35, above.

71. After 1654, when the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha’s konak near the Atay Köşk was confiscated, Bâbâli, off and on for the next decades, became the seat of the grand vizier in charge: see Mehmet Nermi Haskan, Hükmüt kapısı, Bâb-ı Âli (Istanbul, 2000). In the first decades of the eighteenth century it became the permanent seat of government. There was consequently a conspicuous shift of traffic and ceremonial symbolism from the Topkapı Palace. And yet, for many more decades, until at least 1848, there was no direct connection between Bâbâli and the bazaar district, which had to be reached either through Mahmut Pasha or through the Divanyolu by Ayasofya (see n. 46, above).

72. See n. 58, above.

73. The conscious and nostalgic perception of the “Istanbul tradition” in intellectual and middle-class opinion for almost eighty years, from around 1860 to the early 1940s, has been described in memoirs and atmospherically probed in literature: see the writings of Metin And, Melih Aksel, and others. The change in the social milieu has been important but in terms of housing has hardly been registered in images. A curious question is that of the almost total absence of the Divanyolu konak in the very rich Istanbul photographic documentation of the nineteenth century, when all the maps before the early twentieth century clearly report them. See Cerasi, “The Perception of the Divanyolu,” for the curious omission from the photographic record of residential aspects of the Divanyolu, whose monumental and picturesque public buildings, street vendors, etc. were abundantly documented by well-known professional photographers.


75. Ergin, Mecneler-i umuri ve beholdarı, vol. 3, 1222, and vol. 7, 3896 and 3902, contains nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century deliberations with almost petulant references to the decorum of the select and “proud” quarters of the city contaminated by tumbledown sheds and popular activities, and complaints against huts and provisional structures in the “honorable and select places [mütenē ve şereffî mahaller]” of the Divanyolu and Grand Bazaar surroundings. The traditional way in which Ottoman towns were kept could be shocking for nineteenth-century Ottoman technicians and intellectuals inculcated with a Western-oriented vision of urban values. The partisans of municipal reform simply did not have the cultural grounding, technological or aesthetic, to cope with the subtlety and individualism of the traditional town fabric. The urban reform commission reports, from 1839 on, reflect the faith of Ottoman reformists in European town planning and street enlargement. See also Çelik, Remaking, 50–51. Since the sixteenth century, Western observers, too, had been shocked by the contrast between the daily disorder of the streets of Istanbul and the magnificence of its processions and monuments. While this was a reaction to objective factors of public uncleanness, it was also due in good part to Westerners’ extrapolation into a universal truth (which it was not) of a specific rule taught by antiquity and the Renaissance—that is, of the sublimation of urban chaos through architectural decorum. By the Romantic period, they did not react in the same way, having learned to appreciate the Ottoman scene—and not merely for its “picturesqueness.”

76. E.g., the amputation of the corner of the Çemberlitaş Hamam and the facade of the Köprüülü medrese and the addition of new, incongruous facades in moresque Usul-ı-Osmanî style by Giovanni Battista Barbarini (figs. 24, 25). The great extent of demolition during the last century and a half can be deduced by comparing our reconstruction with the maps and lists of Behçet Ünsal, “İstanbul’un imari ve eski eser kaybı,” in Türk Sanatı Tarihi: Araştırmalar ve İncelemeler (Istanbul, 1968). Another important source for the evaluation of the lost vakif buildings is, of course, Ayvansaray’s Hadikat, especially the version edited by Howard Crane (The Garden of the Mosques: Hafiz Hüseyin al-Ayvansaray’s Guide to the Muslim
Monuments of Ottoman Istanbul [Leiden, 2000]), whose notes have been invaluable for the reconstruction of the axis.

77. Paradoxically, the functional arguments put forward to justify the substantial transformation of the fabric and the street system referred to problems that are still unresolved despite the drastic measures adopted over a century and a half. Street widening only postponed by a few years the crisis of the central thoroughfare, which, after enlargement, attracted a quantity of traffic it could not possibly bear.

78. Note that while this paper deals primarily with the history of the architectural form of towns and with urban aesthetics, comprehending urban context requires reference to concepts of town formation. From the late nineteenth century on, the archeological study of the towns of classical antiquity implicitly took that stand. Joseph Rykwert, Grundformen der europäischen Stadt, Versuch eines historischen Aufbaus in Genealogien (Vienna, 1928) sketched it for the European town, and the Venetian school of Saverio Murari, Carlo Aymonino, and Aldo Rossi applied it to Italian case studies from the 1950s to the early 1970s, but its full potential for the study of the Ottoman context has been little developed.

79. Joseph Rykwert’s statement that only a hero can found a city, and that an existing tomb can exert great attraction on the assembling of a new community (The Idea of a Town [Princeton, 1976], 19–20), fits the Ottoman case perfectly if the act of foundation is not thought of as the overall creation of a new city, and if the appellation “hero” is extended to whole social groups, families, etc.


82. Even in Italy the hiatus was sensible: wholly Renaissance quarters such as the Estense extension of Ferrara (a rare case of an entirely aristocratic quarter) were very few. Pienza, often held to be a typical Renaissance town, had few Renaissance buildings ensconced in a structure typical of late medieval towns. The so-called ideal town views of Urbino and Baltimore show many pre-Renaissance building types. Here, as in the Ottoman town, building types of various social classes and functions were intermixed. In contrast to the Ottoman street, however, there was a substantial historical continuity of street structure (in the flow of street space, continuity of facades, typological position and concept of entrances, and homogeneity of alignment and orientation).


84. If it were proved that the narrative sequence seen in fig. 27 (part of the Şehzade hazine) was of the Sinan epoch, we could conclude that there had long been a predisposition for such freely varying sequences.

85. For a full description of the architectural characteristics of the Divan axis, see Cerasi et al., Istanbul Divanyolu: A Case Study, 89–120.

86. The eighteenth century brought about unique experimen-
tation in expressing a more explicit unity of urban space: arcaded streets in Damat Ibrahim Pasha’s “Dirèkler arası” near Şehzade and, three decades later, the shop arcades on the northwestern margin of the Nuruousmaniye complex. The idea could be a result of Western influence, but their scale and the form of their constitutive elements instead recall modest Byzantine examples as well as the central arcade of early-eighth-century Anjar, the only arcaded town center in Islam. For the clever but wholly un-Western use of Baroque and Western concepts to enhance the fundamentally Ottoman roots of eighteenth-century experimentation in Istanbul, see Cerasi, “Un Barocco di Città.”

87. In the West, it was only in mid-to-late-nineteenth-century bourgeois town architecture that corners of buildings became elaborate and architecturally prominent in urban hinge situations.

88. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ottoman housing, a privileged position on a crossroads would often stimulate imaginative corner solutions.

89. Von Moltke writes that Mahmut II had chosen the site of his mausoleum because of its view of both the Golden Horn and the Marmara (Graf Helmuth von Moltke, Unter dem Halbmond: Erübisse in der alten Türkei 1835–1839 (Tübingen and Basel, 1979), 345.

90. Gérard de Nerval’s description reflects his awareness that the thoroughfare was a concentration of exposed and narrated events, utterly distinct from the serial and homogeneous conception of the Western avenue. He saw a “...longue rue des Mosquées, qui forme l’artère principale, et qui aboutit aux grands bazars. Elle est admirable, la nuit surtout, à cause des magnifiques jardins, des galeries découpées des fontaines de marbre aux grilles dorées, des kiosques, des portiques et des minarets multiples...inscriptions dorées...” (Voyage en Orient (Paris, 1875 [orig. pub. 1851]), 192.

91. The Divanyolu and Divan axis as I have described them no longer exist. Divanyolu is now a mere toponym: an avenue, neither Ottoman nor modern Western in architecture and function, with a few sparse and dissociated monuments, and ghostly (and ghostly) rows of trees still miserly after 150 years of repeated planting and replanting. Many commentators have lamented the loss of the once select social and cultural life of the eastern tract (see n. 78, above); many others have denounced the senseless destruction of dozens of monumental buildings (e.g., Ünsal, “İstanbul’un imari”). As far as I know, however, nobody has considered the destruction of the overall central setting of the city’s pulsating artery, destruction rooted in the first decades of the nineteenth century. See Edhem Eldem, “İstanbul: From Imperial to Peripheralized Capital,” in Eldem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, eds., The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul (Cambridge, England and New York, 1999), 202: “As with the Empire as a whole, Istanbul began to reflect a growing divide between modernity and tradition. While some of its parts adapted to the new functions and roles assigned to them, a great portion of the city, unable to conform to the new conjuncture, began to decay and stagnate.” I myself would hold that even in the parts that did “conform to the new conjuncture,” conceptual creativity “began to decay and stagnate.” In the destruction of the architectural environment of the Divan axis, “Westernization” and “urban reform” were alibis. The
former is a senseless, and I believe, imaginary category. The second is a serious issue: the Divan axis had become unlivable, and there is no question that some kind of reform was necessary. But after almost 180 years of bickering and realigning, has the eastern tract (the Divanyolu Caddesi and Yeniçeriler Caddesi) ever adapted to modern traffic? And if the issue was adapting to the needs of modern life, why was the western tract (from Kırkçeşme-Fatih to Karagümüş-Edirnekapi) allowed to dissolve into such degradation when traffic and commercial expansion had already been channeled into the new avenues to its south, and when local activities around the old axis still maintained their vitality? I must repeat that it comes down to historical analysis and its hold on public opinion: either the urban and cultural values that I have analyzed in this paper did not exist or are imaginary (in which case the whole project of Divanyolu analysis has been senseless), or there has been too much analysis limited to single historical buildings and too little contextualization; too much social, economical, and functional description of historical towns and too little evaluation of their global, living architectural character. In other words, the conception of the Ottoman town as a sum of single, dissociated architectural events has persisted too long in historical analysis and criticism.