

## Introduction



In late summer 1858 Christian Sester, the Bavarian head gardener of the imperial estates in Ottoman Istanbul, entertained an unusual guest in his hilltop garden, right next to his latest and most ambitious landscape design, the sloping gardens of Çırağan Palace. His guest was Karl Kreil, the Viennese director of the world's first institute of meteorology and geodynamics—founded only a few years earlier, in 1851. Kreil had brought with him to the Ortaköy site a mobile observatory, comprising a sextant, a theodolite, a universal instrument, an inclinorium, and multiple chronometers and barometers.<sup>1</sup> With the gardener's help, a temporary observatory was assembled on the hilltop, overlooking Çırağan on the shore, to measure Istanbul's magnetic fields.<sup>2</sup> Kreil had already updated the maps of the Habsburg territories with his panoply of precision instruments but had the grand vision of tracking changes in the world's geophysical makeup over long periods by establishing a network of observatories across the globe.<sup>3</sup>

The Istanbul coordinates for Kreil's visionary global project—tracking the Earth's behavior, no less—were taken at a spot that was developing into the new imperial center of the Ottoman Empire, exactly 34 toises<sup>4</sup> (approximately 68 meters) above sea level and 240 toises (480 meters) north-northeast of the

Mecidiye Mosque in Çırağan (today known as the Ortaköy Mosque). An anonymous colored lithograph marks the spot of this transitory but important act of mensuration and also captures the imperial garden in the act of creation that occupies the pivotal space of this book (frontispiece). Through his Habsburg affiliations, Sester put this nineteenth-century royal site on a scientific map, reflecting empirical ambitions beyond mere geopolitics.<sup>5</sup> He had been hired by Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) in 1836 to invent the reforming empire's representative landscape that would complement the new shoreline palace under construction. By the 1850s this vast green swath, which extended from the shoreline to the ridges of the neighborhoods of Beşiktaş and Ortaköy, had been fashioned by its patrons and makers into a natural amphitheater, opening onto the capital's two older coastal zones: Istanbul *intra muros* and Üsküdar, in the city's Asian quarters.<sup>6</sup> How better for the ambitious Sester to contribute to the making of the palace and garden complex, the capital's new epicenter and the most overt symbol of imperial politics, than by lending its geolocation (*Ortsbestimmung*) to Kreil's international study?

Within the context of the Ottoman state's dramatic political, cultural, and societal shifts, *The Accidental Palace* traces the multiple

transformations of this royal landscape, in a newly emergent imperial urban zone in the capital, across the nineteenth century. As Mahmud II's shoreline palace and garden complex of Çırağan, the site was the public face of the sultan's reforms, which laid the foundations for the comprehensive modernization of the empire following the Tanzimat Edict of 1839.<sup>7</sup> The root-and-branch administrative overhauls of the century's first half required representations, matching in scale, in the built environment. The palace and its expanding hilltop gardens continued to be the imperial residence of the Tanzimat regime under Mahmud's son Abdülmecid (r. 1839–61). Although sidelined by the neighboring Dolmabahçe Palace between 1856 and 1878, the site was reinstated as Yıldız Palace under Abdülmecid's son Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), enlarged to more than fifty hectares (roughly seventy soccer fields), and remained in this incarnation until the empire's dissolution in the 1920s. When Abdülhamid II reimagined it as an imperial center at the end of the nineteenth century, its orientation with respect to the coastline shifted. Now the palace's main structures were nested at the top of the hill, where, since 1795, the mothers of sultans had made their country retreats. This shift asserted the primacy of Yıldız over Çırağan, which would undergo multiple facelifts from the neoclassical to the Gothic-Alhambresque after Mahmud II and whose once iconic garden would be incorporated into Yıldız's now heavily fortified hilltop profile. Yıldız in its earliest instantiation was not conceived as a palace—it became so, accidentally.

During the thirty years it served Abdülhamid, Yıldız never stopped expanding. As late as 1902 various separate imperial lots were

appended to its holdings for the construction of a brand-new ceremonial zone. As the Hamidian palace evolved into the empire's administrative center, where all of the state's governing decisions were finalized, it had to make room for a growing cadre of employees of in-house governmental offices and retainers of the many courtly households in Yıldız. Towering walls separated Istanbul from its imperial counterpart in miniature, replete with and ravenous for the period's bourgeois tastes, a utopian microcosm in which a theater, a photography studio, an arsenal, a carpentry atelier, repair shops, kitchen gardens, greenhouses, lakes, grottoes, pavilions, follies, libraries, aviaries, manèges, shooting galleries, and museums had been assembled to satisfy the needs and desires of its occupants.<sup>8</sup>

Although this book does not seek to inventory Yıldız's now-lost spaces, it does recognize the palace's city-like formation at the height of Hamidian rule as one of its staple and most accurate characterizations.<sup>9</sup> The palace's walls were porous for some but not others. The privileged access of some incurred the righteous hostility of those antagonized by the regime, who often inferred the sultan's iniquity from Yıldız's presumed sites of debauchery. Many of their semiapocryphal accounts of the palace during and after Abdülhamid's deposition serve as satirical critiques of his despotism. However, this book is interested neither in qualifying the accuracy of these accounts nor in casting Yıldız as the center of a spy network and international intrigue, no matter how much the sultan enjoyed being read Sherlock Holmes novels before bedtime.<sup>10</sup> Abdülhamid's reign has been the subject of one too many easy metaphors. Instead, *The Accidental Palace* offers granular reconstructions of the site's prepalatine and

palatine archaeologies, remaining as close to its archival sources as possible, to read its Hamidian incarnation not as a single moment in the site's lifetime as Yıldız but as part of a longer trajectory of Ottoman formulations and reformulations of imperial identities. The landscape that housed both Çırağan and Yıldız was constantly reshaped to reflect the political motivations of its owners—first as the physical manifestation of a period of reforms and later, under Abdülhamid II, as the very heart of empire and authoritarian rule.

At the time of this writing, the site is apportioned among various Turkish state institutions. Istanbul's residents experience it as various disconnected spaces, all separated by makeshift walls, doors, and guard posts. It is at once a sprawling university campus, a slick hotel from the 1990s, an adequately preserved municipal park, various underwhelming period museums, and a sequence of dilapidated nineteenth-century structures lining two major and often heavily congested thoroughfares: Barbaros Boulevard, which connects the hilly districts with the Bosphorus shoreline and has since 1973 directed traffic to the Bosphorus Bridge, connecting Istanbul's two sides, and Çırağan Avenue, along the shoreline. Until very recently there were more clandestine, inaccessible sections of the former palace, inhabited by branches of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization and the Turkish Armed Forces.<sup>11</sup> Some peripheral and more dilapidated garden segments are cordoned off from public view.

This complex fragmentation is due in large part to the prominence of Abdülhamid's Yıldız as the last stronghold of the Ottoman dynasty; this formidable site, at least in its most immediate afterlife, had to be conquered and its memory expunged by

the young Republic of Turkey. Ironically, however, Yıldız's layout also offered functional spaces for some of the republic's new institutions. The palace's appendages, which were designed as discreet Tanzimat offices with subtle classical features, were grouped together to form a campus for the military academy. More palatial structures became sites of secular entertainment. In the mid-1920s, while the new Turkish military trained its young recruits on the site's hilltop, the grand and ornate Şale Kiosk—only a few meters away—was operated as a casino by an Italian-Turkish syndicate.<sup>12</sup> To this day the site is characterized by a peculiar combination of complete public accessibility and absolute inaccessibility; on certain days even the segments reserved as museums are, without notice, closed, to serve formal governmental functions. Despite its partial invisibility in Istanbul's urban memory, Yıldız is still a contested site, exposed to the whims of the current government, fungible and fragile.

Structured chronologically from 1795 to 1909, the book's five chapters are each conceived as a window onto a decisive moment in Yıldız's architectural and landscape history, as the site evolved across a century from an imperial backwater into the center of government. While focusing on physical changes in a royal landscape, the narrative also seeks to identify the site's various designers, from dynastic members to commoners, and the motivations for their architectural choices. Each historical snapshot is selected from a politically charged period in the Ottoman court to highlight the expansion of this landscape into the imperial stage on which sovereignty, visibility, taste, and various forms of self-fashioning were articulated. Nominally, the palace may have

belonged to the rarefied realm of the Ottoman elite, but the development of the site was profoundly connected to Istanbul's urban history and to changing conceptions of empire, sovereignty, diplomacy, reform, and the public. The book explores these connections, framing the palace and its grounds not only as a hermetic expression of imperial identity but also as a product of an increasingly internationalized consumer culture, defined by access to a vast number of goods and services across geographical boundaries.

The first chapter begins with a concise historiography of Yıldız as Abdülhamid II's imperial residence. Through critical examination of the sparse, contradictory, and often vitriolic texts written on the last Ottoman palace, the chapter paints a clearer picture of the site's physicality, general layout, and use. To describe this complex and little-understood imperial space, the narrative harnesses the published recollections of three distinct types of palace inhabitants: a scribe in the palace administration, a privileged guest of the sultan, and Abdülhamid himself. Collectively, the composite of three perspectives reveals the palace's tripartite role as the royal residence of the sultan, his center of governance, and a site of royal entertainment. Although seemingly irregular in its plan, Yıldız was deliberately split into these three hierarchical domains, aided by the site's natural geography, on the orders of a hands-on sultan. The first, on the hilltop, was reserved for Abdülhamid and his family. The second physically surrounded the first, rather like a moat, and was reserved for the palace and imperial administration. The third was a vast park on the skirts of the hill, providing leisure activities designed to appeal to the sultan's exclusive visitors.

This chapter's visual sources are the understudied maps drawn by military artists of the state for both completed and projected infrastructural changes on the site. While an unremarkable procedural map of the palace's coal-gas pipes (to provide interior and street illumination) provides the clearest breakdown of the palace's structures, plans for an unrealized railway line inside the palace gardens reveal the sultan's conception of a large segment of his imperial complex as the objects of a sightseeing tour. When taking into account the surprisingly limited number of palace structures that he inhabited on a day-to-day basis (between his small residence and office), the sultan's life within this monumental site was not very different in geographical breadth from that of a young palace scribe.

The second chapter traces the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century evolution of the site, looking at the radical transformation of its architecture and landscape from the waterfront to the hillside and extending all the way to the mountaintop. The narrative's principal sources are court chronicles and the records of local diarists attuned to the neighborhood's growth and sustenance. These annals, complementary in their representation of the imperial ceremonies and public events of the time, reveal that the first real owners of this specific geographical space within Istanbul were the powerful mothers of sultans (*valides*). The chapter suggests that before Yıldız became the last imperial palace, it was a singularly gendered—women-only—space. Although none of the royal residences commissioned by the *valides* has survived, a number of poetic inscriptions composed to mark their completion remain among the poetry collections of the scribes

handpicked by the *valides* to compose the lines. The chronological timeline of the chapter helps the reader to imagine the physical changes to the site under each of these female patrons, and the narrative reflects in great detail on the varying degrees of competition that arose between consecutive queen mothers, as well as the *valides*' replication and emulation of their predecessors' modes of patronage and attribution.

Although these women were prolific patrons of charitable institutions, from schools to hospitals and mosque complexes, scholarship has failed to adequately represent them as prominent aristocrats responsible for remarkably visible and grand acts of public philanthropy on par with their early modern predecessors. Through examination of the landscape of Yıldız and the semisecluded yet quite independent lives of the *valides* on this site in the heyday of reform, the chapter offers a way of understanding these women's social position in the long nineteenth century vis-à-vis the patrimonial palatial structure helmed by the sultan.

The timeline of the third chapter coincides with the period of the queen mothers' gardening efforts on Yıldız's hilltop (1830s), but the chapter looks much more closely at an adjacent segment of the site and the transformative work undertaken by the landscape gardener Christian Sester and his successors throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth.<sup>13</sup> Sester managed to forge a long-lasting imperial career during the early and turbulent years of Mahmud II's reforms—a career outlasting those of Mahmud's two successors. Whereas the first two chapters take a royal cast of characters as the principal patrons of the site, the third chapter introduces this European upstart who

had no royal lineage but was well versed in German landscaping techniques and *Sturm und Drang*-infused Romantic literature and leveraged his expertise to gain long-term employment as an Ottoman court official. Even more unusually, he managed to win the trust of a series of sultans and their mothers. In tracing how Sester transformed the barren landscape sandwiched between the water-front palace and the *valides*' estates on the site's peaks into a sprawling, deeply forested Romantic garden, the chapter argues that Sester's multistep conversion of a hill puts nature as imperial artifice on equal footing with any palatial architecture. Through his labors, a man-made landscape, too, became "vibrant matter, an agent of historical change."<sup>14</sup>

Sester's political astuteness—his awareness of the central role of a head gardener in the Ottoman administrative structure—allowed him to reshape the post according to his needs by recruiting and training a large and diverse body of gardeners.<sup>15</sup> Some were from Albania and the Black Sea, and others were renegade revolutionaries of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848–49. Sester's Herculean landscape designs in the imperial gardens of the capital were portrayed in the period's foreign press as the face of a "reforming" empire. His gardener recruits were responsible for maintaining his legacy through the nineteenth century and into the next. Sester and his gardeners reignited a fad for botanical and horticultural competition among the city's higher-level officials, who sought to outdo one another by constructing small-scale versions of Yıldız in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The main sources for this chapter are the official gardening expenses and gardeners'

registers now stored in the Presidential State Archives (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri) in Istanbul. These documents, although bureaucratic in structure, cast light on the ways in which Yıldız as a garden complex was conceived, compartmentalized, and managed across half a century. On Sester's orders, each segment was assigned to a chief gardener who in turn oversaw a group of novices, and the overall structure of the new corps of gardeners was modeled on Ottoman military rank and file, borrowing relevant army terminology to designate the divisions and individual posts.

The fourth chapter turns to Yıldız's architecture, especially its Alpine aesthetic, which was favored due to the site's unique landscape of hills and ravines. From its earliest appearance in archival documents, Yıldız was described as a mountain, a characterization that appears to have shaped the decisions of all of its subsequent inhabitants.<sup>16</sup> This chapter also traces the history and material sources of Yıldız's disparate yet eccentrically flamboyant timber structures, which were adopted to convey a sense of the Alps, the period's most fashionable tourist destination. Abdülhamid II, the site's ultimate patron and a skilled carpenter in his own right, was familiar not only with the chalet type made popular by the colonial-inflected World's Fairs but also with the Continental appeal of the cottage style, which had already affected his domestic environment; as crown prince, he had been appointed a country residence to which extensive cultivated land and gardens were attached.

This chapter looks simultaneously at the development of the country-house, or cottage-style, aesthetic on the European continent and its traces in Yıldız's building

archives and extant buildings, situating a newly emerging domestic aesthetic and distinct architectural vocabulary in the palace and in Istanbul at large.<sup>17</sup> It explores the nature, use, and adaptation of visual sources that found their way into the libraries of Ottoman tastemakers and consumers, while taking note of imported flat-pack homes inside the palace gardens. It also formulates a relationship between Yıldız and the public space outside the palace walls: certain features of this new palatine domesticity were quickly appropriated by the capital's local builders to cater to the demands of a burgeoning consumer class, whose members competed with one another in a vibrant, if flashy, public sphere through the distinctiveness of their homes. The sources for the chapter's exploration of the architectural features of the Ottoman fiction of country life (in an otherwise rapidly urbanizing environment) are pattern books and mail-order prefabricated-building catalogues. Meanwhile, the preferences of Ottoman homebuyers are most clearly revealed in the period's illustrated novels as well as in local home-management encyclopedias. As a microscale parallel to Suzanne Marchand's study of porcelain's cultural history,<sup>18</sup> this chapter mobilizes the history of the nineteenth-century prefab house, a particularly unusual international consumer good, its transference from the global to the local market, and its Ottomanization.

The fifth chapter brings chronological closure to the study of Yıldız. It centers on a previously unknown photograph album from 1905, whose images constitute the last photographic representations of the palace before its wholesale dismantling in 1909 in the aftermath of Abdülhamid II's deposition. The

majority of the album's photographs depict the final expansion of the palace's architecture and landscape under Abdülhamid's initiative to improve the area dedicated to his select guests. The remaining photographs are a deliberate selection of architectural shots of other imperial residences in the capital that were of particular importance to the sultan.

This final chapter's focus on the third function of the palace, imperial sightseeing, complements the first chapter's discussion of the sultan's sightseeing tour, especially in demonstrating his desire to show off his palace as a space of gentlemanly erudition replete with a well-stocked library, a museum, a manège, greenhouses, aviaries, zoos, and artisanal and industrial ateliers. The possible identity of the album's owner opens up room for discussion of late nineteenth-century decorum, imperial access and restriction—in other words, of the ways in which the visibility of the palatial site was controlled.<sup>19</sup> Most importantly, however, the album's photographs, when read together, construct a biography of Abdülhamid II through the imperial spaces he inhabited. The album's storyline is all the more pertinent given that Abdülhamid was the only sultan not to employ a court chronicler with the sole task of glorifying his reign. The album's materiality and its collection of photographs also provide another opportunity to emphasize how much imperial actors were cognizant of new media's layered metamorphic qualities.

Through examination of two buildings, Yıldız's minuscule theater and royal mosque, the book's coda highlights the conception of diplomacy that bolstered Abdülhamid II's thirty-three-year reign. Although archival materials on these buildings are strangely

sparse, we do know that their constructions were supervised, at least, by the one-time court architect Yanko Ioannidis, son of one of the most important building contractors in the empire, Vasilaki Kalfa (*kalfa*, "master builder").<sup>20</sup> These two spaces not only showed remarkable physical commonalities but also were the two principal settings for Abdülhamid II's construction of visibility. While the theater was reserved for intimate diplomatic relations, the prayer ceremonies held each Friday in the mosque were intended to display sultanic grandeur. Yet both spaces were designed to entertain carefully selected groups and were thus intimately bound up with the sultan's diplomatic choreography.

*The Accidental Palace* offers a reflection on late Ottoman visual and textual archives. Each chapter hinges on a set of previously unknown or underused documents, seeking not only to read them against the physical spaces for which they were often blueprints but also to reveal the modes in which they were drafted and used. The Ottoman reforms of the nineteenth century ignited a near obsession with documenting and archiving.<sup>21</sup> Yıldız's imperial library sheds light on the various functions of these newfound practices, administering a dynamic archive in which items such as photographs, lithographs, sketches, and newspapers, along with various other novel media, were continually repurposed to promote the sultan and state as patriarchal protectors.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not they came to fruition, the architectural projects for Yıldız illustrate the ways in which the newest technologies of home building, landscaping, horticulture, and even railway design were incorporated into the complex. Therefore, the book also highlights the ways in which

industrial technology was aestheticized and drawn into the domestic sphere.

Although the book's visual sources are undeniably appealing, Yıldız's textual archives seem at first glance disappointingly bureaucratic. On closer inspection, however, they support the nonimperial strand of landscape history that is traced throughout the book. For instance, the minutely kept registers of Yıldız's gardeners not only function as pre-photographic descriptions of individuals for the purpose of state identification but also reveal the history of hundreds of laborers of various ethnic and geographical origins who worked on the palatial land for more than a century. These underused archives also reveal the lasting influence of these individuals on the extrapalatial horticultural networks of Istanbul as well as Cairo, even after Yıldız was fully dismantled following Abdülhamid II's dethronement in 1909. In presenting both the architectural history and, of equal significance, the garden history of Istanbul's imperial fulcrum, the book also underscores the many subimperial actors that contributed to its making.

No academic monograph dedicated to Yıldız's architectural history has previously been published. Like most late-period Ottoman imperial residences, Yıldız has long been overlooked by scholars, who have assumed that its forms are completely alien to vernacular traditions and do not resemble early Ottoman monuments. Yıldız and its nineteenth-century predecessors, such as the palaces of Beylerbeyi, Dolmabahçe, and Çırağan, are featured at the end of architectural surveys as representatives of a contaminated and thus declining imperial taste. Just as unfruitfully, Yıldız is prolifically represented in historical

biographies of Abdülhamid II, who had the longest proprietorship over it, as a mysterious Stygian set piece reflective of the sultan's contested rule; it is cast as the shadowy fortress of a hermitic despot, its uneven layout linked with Abdülhamid's various paranoias.

Nevertheless, certain formative texts on Islamic visual cultures and Ottoman cultural history help to establish the book's temporal and methodological framework. As the last palace of a six-hundred-year-old empire, Yıldız serves as a bookend to the Ottoman building of imperial residences. Therefore, the book's natural conceptual model and methodological predecessor is Gülru Necipoğlu's groundbreaking 1991 study of Topkapı Palace, the Ottomans' first royal residence in the imperial capital, Istanbul.<sup>23</sup> My study is indelibly influenced by Necipoğlu's rendering of the interdependence of Ottoman rule and architectural patronage as its prized symbol—the nature of rule made legible in the structure, layout, and ceremonial use of its representative buildings. Of course, Necipoğlu is neither the first nor the last to formulate this relationship. Sussan Babaie conceives of a paradigm that frames early modern Islamic palatine complexes as ideal cities in microcosm.<sup>24</sup> Although a distinctly modern, even protoindustrial site, Yıldız was deliberately constructed to carry echoes of its preceding models: multiple courts that differentiated public from private; gardens and their ephemeral structures designated for the cultivation of various imperial pastimes; ceremonial spaces that substantiated the otherwise elusive body of the ruler; and myriad artisanal facilities to promote the court's artistic patronage.

In differentiating early modern Ottoman imperial patronage from its incarnations



in later centuries and situating Yıldız in its urban, cultural, and historical context, *The Accidental Palace* is indebted to the scholarship of Tülay Artan, Shirine Hamadeh, Zeynep Çelik, and Ahmet Ersoy. I position Yıldız—as a space both physical and discursive representing late Ottoman sovereignty—within the urban, architectural, and intellectual histories of Istanbul highlighted in the work of these scholars. Their conscientious and reflective approach to portraying Ottoman patrons' encounters with the new and the nonlocal has helped me to evaluate the syncretic patronage choices of Yıldız's owners. These scholars recover the intellectual rigor behind the deliberations that reformulated the modern visual repertoire of the empire under successive sultans.

Artan's graduate work on the eighteenth-century transformations along the Bosphorus shoreline, although unpublished, remains a staple source for architectural historians of the late-Ottoman empire.<sup>25</sup> Complementing Artan's research, Hamadeh brings a close typological focus to the narrative of urban expansion.<sup>26</sup> The fountains, heavily landscaped public promenades, and manifold commemorative stone inscriptions that strategically populated Yıldız's early incarnations became prominent markers of increased courtly visibility. Both Artan and Hamadeh also laid the eighteenth-century groundwork for discussion of the gendered patronage patterns that orient my study of queen mothers as tastemakers in the early nineteenth century, specifically through their construction and design in Yıldız.<sup>27</sup>

The desire of the court's male and female members to make Istanbul's European shoreline their new residential zone ignited successive infrastructural transformations in

this area as well as its immediate hinterland. Yıldız emerged from this very zone, and its shape and use were continually affected by the court's urban restructuring projects. The radical changes in Istanbul's nineteenth-century fabric, especially in this new imperial neighborhood, are the focus of Çelik's guiding study.<sup>28</sup> Examining the dramatic and at times fanciful industrial projects undertaken to "regularize" Istanbul, Çelik writes an infrastructural history of Istanbul during the reform period, into which I insert Yıldız as the capital's last imperial complex.

If Çelik's volume evaluates the nature of the mostly civic (and Western-influenced) structures constituting Istanbul's piecemeal yet grand-scale reformulations, Ersoy's recent study of the visual culture of the late Tanzimat period centers on the rigorously intellectual agency and output of Ottoman bureaucrats, historicizing and defining an imperial architectural idiom "from within."<sup>29</sup> Ersoy's restoration of agency to local actors balances out Çelik's Eurocentric focus on foreign actors and the ideas for projects that they brought with them to Istanbul.

To elucidate Yıldız's expanding role as the empire's administrative center, which culminated in Abdülhamid II's autocratic rule, *The Accidental Palace* crosses disciplinary boundaries to read the period's architectural output through Ottoman political and institutional histories. For my work, the two most enlightening volumes on late-Ottoman imperial symbols, from court ceremony to the language of the chancery and law, which were either revived selectively from old dynastic traditions or originated by sultans themselves to legitimize their regime, are *The Well-Protected Domains*, by Selim Deringil, and *Padişahım Çok Yaşas!*, by Hakan Karateke.

Two earlier but equally groundbreaking studies, Şerif Mardin's *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* and Carter Vaughn Findley's *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*—by examining the structural transformations of the state's administrative bodies through a multitude of sources, both archival (mostly bureaucratic) and biographical (therefore surprisingly intimate)—collectively lay the historical groundwork for exploration of the Ottoman reform era.

As these scholars note, palace structures were not immune to the demands of the period's reforms. Evinced by Yıldız's various physical transformations, such structures and the various functionaries appointed for their upkeep underwent radical makeovers. The Tanzimat also produced a novel bureaucratic system, which created a new type of civil servant. In turn, this new bureaucratic class emulated and replicated the emerging tastes of the court, especially in the design of their homes and gardens. The scholarship of Mardin and Findley, in particular, helps me to trace the relationship between the domestic lives of palace employees and those of members of the court, previously underexplored, through Pierre Bourdieu's sociological constructs of taste, emulation, and adaptation, a method already anticipated by Olivier Bouquet in *Les pachas du sultan*.<sup>30</sup> These studies prompt further examination of what constituted the private material world of this new class of office-goers, whose consumption behavior is often aligned in scholarship with the European bourgeoisie.<sup>31</sup>

Mardin and Findley show that prominent members of this new class were prolific writers of sociopolitical tracts and memoirs. These texts encourage a more nuanced engagement with the notable, if already well-understood,

topic of the Ottomans' presumed Western leanings in the nineteenth century. In short, the writings of members of this class of state administrators provide contexts for the mindsets of Yıldız's various imperial patrons. To assume that Christian Sester's recruitment into court employment in the 1830s reflects the same kind of Eurocentrism as the circulation of international pattern books in Istanbul at the century's end is to assume that Westernization is atemporal, unidirectional, and immune to local contingency. *The Accidental Palace* also considers the very intimate, personal spaces in which these bureaucrats, with overt consumer habits, reflected on and wrote about their experiences.

In a happy coincidence, Darin Stephanov has recently published a study that forms the contextual backbone for my own book, covering roughly the same time period (from Mahmud II to Abdülhamid II).<sup>32</sup> Fortifying my argument that the royal dwelling was an important armature for the new identity of the nineteenth-century sovereign, Stephanov reads the reformulated role of the sultans as authoritarian reformists, and the regnal aura they wanted to project to their Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, primarily through the freshly invented celebrations commemorating the ruler's birth (*velâdet*) and accession (*cülûs*). Expanded and altered, these empire-wide celebrations continued to be orchestrated by Abdülhamid II, the most spectral of sultans, as his ultimate proxies. Stephanov also highlights the radical changes in the sultan's dress (pared-down military garb), the emergence of imperial portraiture (*taşvîr-ı hümayûn*) and a state newspaper, the officialization of the Friday prayer ceremonies (*selâmlık*), and, most important, the royal country trips (*memleket gezileri*) with which

the now conspicuously visible ruler aimed to reach a much larger audience. Mahmud II's conception of his palatial garden complex, Abdülmecid's unabated investment in the site, and Abdülhamid II's panoptic retreat into its vastness were all part and parcel of a conscious imperial rebranding that emphasized the sultan's body politic, whether structured on direct visibility or conjured through carefully crafted signifiers of sovereignty.

Yıldız's lifespan also coincides with the historical period addressed by Şükrü Hani- oğlu in his *Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*. A visual corollary to the period of imperial reforms, the Yıldız of *The Accidental Palace* complements his thematically arranged historical survey of the modern Ottoman era. In writing the history of the palace's syncretic forms, I take as a central tenet Hanioglu's rendering of Ottoman Westernization as a "complex process of acculturation."<sup>33</sup> Essentially, each of the chapters here unpacks the multiple instances of acculturation through exploration of the architectural, photographic, and landscape design features of Yıldız.

More often than not, novel markers of empire are sought first in a sovereign's image and his immediate surroundings. Predictably, *The Accidental Palace's* precursory layers trace these most obvious and conspicuous representations. However, the book is emphatic on the notion that the site was equally molded by the accrued expertise, conscious desires, and arduous (physical) labor of others (adopting here the full extent of this designation); the site's image was also later retooled in diverse iterations by nonimperial classes. The potent artistic agency of these men and women can be conceived in Laura Doyle's fertile theoretical construct of the

"inter-imperial," a performative domain or attribute—separate from the ruler's body—through which "the laboring man [or woman] develops a cloaked awareness of the master's dependence on him [her] but also of his [her] own making and laboring powers."<sup>34</sup> Every chapter retains these "inter-imperial" identities in order to expand the list of those who qualify as meaning makers of the nineteenth-century empire's heart and to support the claims of those previously ignored to a place within it.

Lastly, this book does not claim to be the final word on this site or the multiple palaces and imperial residences housed there, and it is especially indebted to the many unpublished Turkish-language theses and dissertations written on Yıldız (see the bibliography). In the way that these scholarly efforts instigated mine, *The Accidental Palace*, through its case-based chapters, hopes to spark further research on the wider and definitively diverse Tanzimat networks of art and architectural patronage, which have until now been eclipsed by the sultanic one.<sup>35</sup> The visual historiography of the empire's last two centuries needs to be populated. Women of the court, who have suffered most from this historiographic oversight, served as prominent civic philanthropists. While they may have been relatively quiet about their personal lives, enough of them recorded their daily lives with descriptive precision, offering insights into their environments unrivaled in the narratives of their male counterparts. Most of this book's visual sources are especially enlivened by the recollections of individuals like Leyla Saz, Ayşe Osmanoglu, Georgina Müller, Princess Djavidan Hanım (née Marianna Török de Szendrő), Enid Layard (née Guest), Anna Bowman Dodd,

and, to an extent, Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan. Furthermore, the history of the Tanzimat is often narrated as a sequence of administrative changes helmed by a lineup of Ottoman statesmen; more attention should be paid to the interior worlds of these individuals, the physical environments on which they cast their official identities as state employees, especially because they showed such brio and personality in their home-building choices.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, then, *The Accidental Palace* offers inroads into the material culture of the nineteenth-century Ottoman bureaucratic class, exemplifying the recent scholarly attention to non-Western bourgeois cultures, whether or not such sociological designations can be so neatly administered in this context.<sup>37</sup> In this comparative vein, each chapter—whether focusing on patterns of urban patronage, garden and landscape models, the form and function of urban dwellings, bureaucratization of courtly professions, or the imperial court's scaling down into a Victorian family—speaks to such nineteenth-century histories of places outside the Ottoman domain. Besides these thematic global connections, *The Accidental Palace* is designed to encourage scholarly approaches to Ottoman material culture that think through the

nature of visual sources not simply to prove the onetime existence of people (names as tallies of foreign versus local) or things (a building, wall, door, garden, or pool) but to reanimate them as documents whose very compositions are worthy objects of scrutiny. The era's bureaucratization, coupled with feverish new forms of record keeping, catalyzed archival production; increasingly, written descriptions were accompanied not only by drawings but also by photographs and other forms of representational media. This awareness that a visual source might have accompanied a written record underlies the book's handling of its primary sources. One is sometimes fortunate enough to find a complete set of records, exemplary of this particular archiving practice, a file in its original multimedia format, but most of the time sources are broken up and dispersed among various repositories, often irreparably so—not unlike Yıldız itself. However, each and every one of these documentary remains signals the possibility of capacious visual histories, providing a clearer sense of how they were created, seen, and used: as versatile, imminently repurposable representational canvases of the constantly shape-shifting modern age, again analogous to Yıldız's centurial making.<sup>38</sup>