FROM IMPERIAL PALACE TO MUSEUM:

THE TOPKAPI PALACE DURING THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on the last century of the Topkapı Palace, which is mostly overlooked. Focusing on the period beginning with the accession of Mahmud II until the foundation of the Republic and official declaration of the Topkapı Palace as a museum (1808-1924), this research chronologically investigates the physical, architectural, institutional, symbolic, and ideological transformations of the palace and documents the new functions it adopted. The Topkapı Palace was transformed with respect to Ottoman modernization that was shaped by the military, institutional, economical, and social reforms of the long nineteenth century, gradually losing its role as an imperial residence. However, the palace also sustained its ceremonial, architectural, and symbolic configuration and significance. This tension between continuity and change underpins the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

The Topkapı Palace holds a significant place in the formation of museums in the Ottoman empire and modern Turkey. The dissertation offers a new, yet critical perspective on the established narratives of Ottoman museology, highlighting the role of the Topkapı Palace and scrutinizing its museumification during the course of the long nineteenth century. The royal collections, treasuries, and sultanic pavilions located in the inner courts of the imperial palace were opened for touristic visits and were performatively displayed to the foreign gaze. During the same era, a modern archeological museum and a school of fine arts emulating the Western model were also established in the outer gardens of the palace. In this respect, the Topkapı Palace became a venue and a medium for Ottoman self-representation.

ÖZET

İmparatorluk Sarayından Müzeye:
Uzun On Dokuzuncu Yüzyılda Topkapı Sarayı

Bu tez, Topkapı Sarayı tarihinde çok az çalışılmış bir döneme, sarayın son yüzyılına ışık tutma iddiasındadır. II. Mahmud'un tahta çıkışından, Cumhuriyet'in ilanına ve Topkapı Sarayı'nın resmen müze ilan edilmesine kadar geçen bir yüzyılı aşkın süre zarfında (1808-1924), Topkapı Sarayı'nın geçirmiş olduğu fiziksel, mimari, kurumsal, sembolik ve ideolojik dönüşümleri ve üstendiği yeni fonksiyonları kronolojik olarak ortaya koymakta ve kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Osmanlı hanedanı için mesken olma vasfını on dokuzuncu yüzyıl zarfında yitiren Topkapı Sarayı'nın Osmanlı modernleşmesi bağlamında uğradığı değişim ve dönüşümlerin yanı sıra sembolik, törensel ve mimari süreklilikler bu tezin kavramsal çerçevesini oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma uzun on dokuzuncu yüzyılda gerçekleşen askeri, idari, ekonomik ve sosyal reformların yansımalarını saray üzerinden okurken, aynı zamanda saray kompleksine eklenen, yenilenen, kaldırılan ve dönüştürülen yapıların da izini sürer ve sarayın edindiği yeni rolleri ve anlamları irdeler.

Topkapı Sarayı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda müzeciliğin doğuşu ve gelişimi bağlamında da kritik bir yere ve önemde sahiptir. Bu tez, Topkapı Sarayı'nın on dokuzuncu yüzyıl süresince gerçekleşen müzeleşmesine ışık tutarken, aynı zamanda Osmanlı müzeciliği alanında yerleşmiş olan söylemleri de eleştirel bir şekilde sorgular ve yeni bir perspektif önerir. Bu dönemde sarayın iç avluları, saltanat koleksiyonları, hazineleri, ve sultan kasırları de yabancı misafirlerin ziyaretine açılmış ve saray koleksiyonları ilhamını eski saray geleneklerinden alan belirli bir törensellik gözetilerek, performatif bir şekilde sergilenmiştir. Aynı dönemde,

Avrupa'daki muadillerinden ilhamla, imparatorluğun ilk modern arkeoloji müzesi ve güzel sanatlar okulu da sarayın dış bahçelerinde kurulmuştur. Bu bağlamda Topkapı Sarayı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun kendini farklı şekillerde temsilinin de mecrası ve mekanı olmuştur.

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For Damla,

my dearest and most precious...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> There is not indeed in all Europe another corner of the earth whose name alone awakens in the mind so strange a confusion of beautiful and terrible images; about which so much has been thought, and written, and divined; which has given rise to so many vague and contradictory notices; which is still the object of so much insatiable curiosity, of so many insensate prejudices, and so many marvelous histories. Now-a-days every body can go in, and many come out with their expectations somewhat chilled. But we may be sure that for centuries yet to come, when perhaps the Ottoman domination shall be but a reminiscence in Europe, and upon that loveliest of the hills, the populous streets of a new city shall cross one another, no traveller will pass that way without seeing in his fancy the image of the Imperial palaces that once stood there, or without envying us of the nineteenth century, who still cold find in those places the vivid and speaking memories of the Ottoman reign. (Edmondo de Amicis, 1878, 12)

The famous Italian traveller, author, and journalist Edmondo De Amicis wrote these prophetic lines about the destiny of the Ottoman empire and the Topkapı Palace during his visit to Constantinople in 1874. De Amicis was correct in his prediction that the Ottoman domination would shortly come to an end and the Topkapı Palace would turn into a touristic spectacle, rather than reflecting its former imperial glory and magnificence. He also envisaged that modern man would envy the nineteenth century visitors to the royal palace, who could see and encounter the living experience of palace life. In fact, it is not a question of envy but rather curiosity and wonder that defines our approach towards the Topkapı Palace today. As the last century of the palace is still an unknown period for us today, so is its state of being and visitors. How did the contemporaries of De Amicis perceive the royal complex; which vivid memories of the Ottoman reign were still in existence; how were these memories presented and perceived; how could visitors secure access to the palace;

which sections were accessible to them; which collections were displayed; what were the different strategies and discourses of display; and how was the imperial palace transformed into a museum. These are the questions to which I provide answers within the scope of this dissertation. In other words, through this research I give a comprehensive and scholarly answer to the question "What happened to the Topkapı Palace after it was abandoned?"

As foreseen by De Amicis, today the Topkapı Palace Museum is one of the most visited museums in Turkey[1] and a major landmark of Istanbul. It contributes to the renowned silhouette of the city with its spectacular location at the tip of the Seraglio. As suggested by De Amicis "no traveller will pass that way without seeing in his fancy the image of the Imperial palaces". The ancient Ottoman palace, built during the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1481), is one of the largest, oldest, and best-preserved Ottoman heritage sites and the ultimate representation of Ottoman civil architecture. The royal complex, built on an area of 700,000 square meters surrounded by land and sea walls, currently houses several institutions, including the Istanbul Archeological Museums, the Gülhane Park, the Imperial Mints (*Darphane-i Amire*), and military zones in addition to the Topkapı Palace Museum, which is located at the heart of this vast area.

According to official historiography, the Topkapı Palace, which was the seat of the Ottoman dynasty for almost 400 years, was abandoned by Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) during the mid-nineteenth century, was converted into a museum in 1924 upon the order of Mustafa Kemal, and became the state museum of the young Turkish Republic. The museum holds a wide variety of royal collections ranging

[1] According to the statistics of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Topkapı Palace Museum attracted 3,252,000 visitors in 2015. Hagia Sophia was the most visited museum with 3,466,000

http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43336/muze-istatistikleri.html

from imperial treasuries to sacred relics, from paintings to weapons, and from textiles to China porcelains. The Topkapı Palace Library houses more than 20,000 books and manuscripts, and the palace archive holds approximately 300,000 documents: the palace-museum is a major source for academic research as well.

As the main seat of the Ottoman rulers for many centuries, the 550-year-old palace has always been an inspiration for Orientalist literature as a major venue to be depicted in travel accounts and as a topic of great interest to scholarly researchers. There are numerous academic and non-academic publications on the palace that scrutinize its institutional character, spatial composition, and architectural features and depict significant events and its royal collections. Almost all of the modern literature on the Topkapı Palace follows the same spatio-temporal outline, starting with the description of the semi-public areas such as the gates, walls and the first court of the palace (*Birun)*, then focusing on the more private and ceremonial areas around the second court (*Divan Meydanı*), followed by the secluded areas of the third court (*Enderun*) and the private house of the sultan (*Harem-i Hümayun)*, and finally describing its outer gardens and kiosks. The majority of the literature covers a timeframe from the foundation of the palace by Mehmed II until its abandonment by Abdülmecid, particularly focusing on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the royal complex. The architectural, spatial, and institutional character of the Topkapı Palace was established during this period of the so-called "golden age",[2] which is believed to represent the ultimate glory and power of the Ottoman Empire. However, within the current literature, there is a lack of information regarding the last century of the palace, a period that is–consciously or unconsciously–ignored in scholarly and popular literature.

[2] Kafadar, "The Myth of the Golden Age: Ottoman Historical Consciousness in the Post-Süleymanic Era".

Returning to my initial question, "What happened to the Topkapı Palace after it was abandoned?" we can see that it has largely been left unanswered.[3] In fact, current literature generally portrays the Topkapı Palace as deserted, derelict, and neglected, and thus not worthy of systematic analysis or any scholarly work after the relocation of Abdülmecid in 1856. The lack of information and ignorance of the nineteenth century palace within the existing literature triggered my curiosity and brought forth other questions which lay the foundations of this dissertation:

"How did the meaning of the royal complex changed in the eyes of Ottomans after its abandonment?"

"What did 'abandonment' mean in the late-Ottoman context; is the abandonment thesis anachronistic?"

"Were there any architectural, physical, or institutional modifications during this period?"

"How did the palace respond to the changing visual ideologies and the legitimization strategies of the late Ottoman era?"

"How and by whom was the Topkapı Palace being visited?"

"How was the Imperial Museum founded and what was its relation with the palace?"

"What were the mechanisms of continuity and change that shaped the royal complex during the long-nineteenth century?"

[3] It began with this simple question during the graduate seminar of Dr. Paolo Girardelli in 2009, while we were discussing Abdülmecid's relocation from the Topkapı Palace to the Dolmabahçe Palace and the role of his new palace in the urban context of late-Ottoman Istanbul. Curious about the destiny of the traditional palace, I asked the question "What happened to the Topkapı Palace after it was abandoned?" and ended up being assigned with a research paper investigating this question. Having the illusion that everything about the Topkapı Palace should have been studied and documented in detail until then, I started my research and found out that there is a scarcity of information regarding the last century of the palace. Thus, I decided to continue my research and proposed the title as my dissertation project.

"What was the role and meaning of the Topkapı Palace in Ottoman modernization?"

In other words, all of these questions attempt to understand how studying the "abandoned" Topkapı Palace reveals information about the transformation of the empire, in particular investigating how the royal palaces relate to the changing socio-political structures and ideologies of the late Ottoman Empire, modern Turkey and even our present day?

1.1 The modernization paradigm and the decline theory

As the seat of the Ottoman household and the core of the state for many centuries the Topkapı Palace is more than a royal residence in the Ottoman context. As stated by Gülru Necipoğlu in her seminal book *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, the palace is an embodiment of Ottoman codes of rulership, symbol of dynastic continuity, and a representation of imperial power and grandeur:[4]

> The palace once served as a vast stage for the enactment of a ceremonial, codified down to the smallest detail, whose symbolic language emphasized the elevated status of the sultan vis-à-vis his subjects, his dignitaries, and the representatives of foreign powers who came to his court! This rigid ceremonial, formulated by Mehmed II and elaborated by Süleyman I, emphasized the aloof nature of the sultan's relationship with the outside world and clearly distinguished the accessible from the inaccessible zones of the palace.

This formulation, however, gradually transformed, and the palace adopted new sets of meanings and novel functions during the nineteenth century at the height of Ottoman modernization. According to many scholars, the relocation of Abdülmecid to the Dolmabahçe Palace is a concrete manifestation of Ottoman modernization. In accordance with the top-down Westernization efforts to shape the military, legal, fiscal, educational, and socio-political framework of the empire, the royal family

[4] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, xvi.

appropriated new codes of power and visual strategies to reinforce and to sustain their sovereignty. These strategies ranged from intensified diplomatic relations with the West to the restructuring of the courtly ceremonials, from increased visibility of the ruler to the emergence of novel architectural forms. In this context, the move of the royal family from the traditional Topkapı Palace to the new and modern Dolmabahçe Palace is accepted as a significant break from Ottoman customs.

In the existing literature, the Topkapı Palace, more often than not, is associated with the traditional, archaic, old, and outdated, whereas the Dolmabahçe Palace, with its architectural and decorative features, visibility, and monumental scale, is positioned to signify the new and modern face of the empire.[5] Within this context, in the urban scale, the Historic Peninsula represents the Muslim-dominated, traditional core of Istanbul, and the relocation of the royal family to the newly developing and vibrant northern parts of the city, close to Galata and Pera, which housed the majority of the non-Muslim and European population, illustrates the top-down Westernization and modernization of the empire.

This sharp duality between old and new, traditional and modern, East and West based on the Modernization paradigm, was dominant in the literature until recently. Recent studies are challenging this strict divergence and present a synthetic and interactive relation between these pairs. I too tend to challenge this constructed duality in this dissertation and portray the Topkapı Palace as a social construct that was both an object and subject of modernization. As suggested by Henry Lefebvre, space is a social product that affects spatial practices and perceptions.[6] Thus, while the Topkapı Palace as a traditional institution was transformed and socially reconstructed during the age of modernization, the produced meaning of this

[5] Küçükerman and Konyalı, *Sanayi ve tasarım yarışmasında*; Kahraman, *150. Yılında Dolmabahçe Sarayı Uluslararası Sempozyumu*.
[6] Lefebvre, *The production of space*.

particular space also changed, together with practices and perceptions of the local and foreign contemporaries. So the ancient palace, associated with tradition and the pre-modern world, functioned as an agent disseminating modernity and responding to the internal and external dynamics of the empire and also took part in the transformation of the late Ottoman realm.

According to official Turkish historiography, after its abandonment, the Topkapı Palace was neglected and left to decay until its museumification in 1924. This date symbolizes the rebirth of the deserted palace, its salvation from the hands of the despotic late-Ottoman rulers, and its return to the Turkish nation, the rightful owners of all the properties of the Ottoman dynasty. In fact, this rhetoric goes hand-in-hand with the "decline theory", which divides Ottoman history into periods of rise, height, stagnation, and the decline. In this context, the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries represent the golden age of the Ottoman empire that reached the apex of its power and glory, during which the canons of classical Ottoman art and architecture were defined. On the other hand, the nineteenth century is associated with military, financial, political, and cultural decadence, a period of complete deterioration under the rule of oppressive yet extravagant sultans, which led to the dissolution of the empire.

Even though the decline paradigm has been seriously challenged by the revisionist theories of recent scholars, the aforementioned periodization is still prevalent, especially in the field of art and architectural history. According to the decline theory, there is nothing authentic or genuine in the art and architecture of the nineteenth century, which are depicted as mere imitations of the West. In this respect, the last century of the Topkapı Palace, associated with the period of decline and degeneration, is completely ignored and portrayed as frozen in time without any

significant development. Almost all the academic, popular, and intellectual interest was directed towards the formative and classical periods of the palace, which were believed to represent the authentic and genuine soul of Turkish art and architecture.

I aim to challenge the decline theory in this dissertation. Hence, contrary to the common belief, according to this research, the Topkapı Palace was an active agent in Ottoman modernization, a stage for self-representative performances, and a venue for meeting the expectations and imageries of the Western gaze. It is a fact that the royal use and the imperial significance of the Topkapı Palace was radically transformed during the nineteenth century, and the palatial complex adopted different roles and functions, gaining new sets of meanings during this turbulent era. On the other hand, a strong sense of continuity on ceremonial, spatial, and symbolic levels was prevalent throughout this period.

By focusing on these continuities and transformations, I aim to understand the internal dynamics and dilemmas of the modernizing empire, which was struggling to position itself as a part of Western civilization while also trying to define a sense of cultural authenticity and historical supremacy. In this context, I believe that the Topkapı Palace is a fruitful ground for investigating the changing political and visual ideologies of the long nineteenth century. I take the Topkapı Palace as a microcosm that epitomized Ottoman modernization, believing that a close investigation of this microcosm provides a solid understanding of the socio-political context of the era, not limited to the perspectives of Ottoman elites or foreign tourists, but in a broader framework which sheds light on the cultural, representational, architectural, technological, and museal developments of the era.

1.2 Literature survey

Literature on the Topkapı Palace is comprehensive and is written by various authors with different agendas. The Ottoman palace was depicted as a locale for Orientalist tales; as the house of the Ottoman dynasty; as the main venue for many real or fictional events and intrigues; as one of the touristic hotspots of the city; as an exotic and mysterious medieval castle to be discovered; and also as a topic for scholarly research.

The earliest historical account depicting the architectural, decorative, ceremonial, and epigraphic aspects of the Topkapı Palace was written by the Ottoman chronicler Abdurrahman Şeref Bey and was published as eight successive articles in *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* between 1910 and 1912.[7] After the foundation of the republic, the director of the Archeological Museum Halil Edhem published a guidebook giving brief historical and architectural information on the palace.[8] Later, the director of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Tahsin Öz, also published several accounts regarding the restoration works, archives, and collections of the palace.[9]

One of the earliest scholarly works on the architectural composition of the Topkapı Palace was written by architect Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, who was responsible for the comprehensive restorations that took place in the palace between 1940 and 1944. His significant work *Fâtih Devri Mimarisi* published in 1953, includes a chapter focusing on the foundational period of the Topkapı Palace and proposes a hypothetical reconstruction of the complex from the period of Mehmed II.[10] Another

[7] Abdurrahman Şeref Bey, "Topkapı Saray-ı Hümayunu."
[8] Halil Edhem, *Topkapı Sarayı*.
[9] Öz, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi arşivi kilavuzu*; Öz, *Hirka-i Saadet Dairesi ve Emanat-i Mukaddese*; Öz, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Onarımları"; Öz, *Topkapı Sarayında Fatih Sultan Mehmet II. ye Ait Eserler*.
[10] Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimarisinde Fatih devri 3 1451-1481*.

detailed account, documenting the restorations held at the Harem during 1960's was published by architect Mualla Anhegger-Eyüboğlu.[11]

Reşad Ekrem Koçu's epic *Topkapı Sarayı* (1960) portrays the palace life, adorned with historical narratives and famous personas of the palace.[12] *Topkapı Sarayı: Bir mimari araştırma* published in 1982 by the eminent architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem and Feridun Akozan could be accepted as the first comprehensive architectural analysis of the Topkapı Palace.[13] This major publication not only provides measured drawings and hypothetical reconstructions of the apartments, kiosks, courts, and wards of the palace, but it also brings together excerpts from Ottoman chronicles, presenting its transformation over centuries. This work is also one of the rare sources that does not exclude the architectural modifications of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however it fails to create a meaningful and consistent relation between the architectural drawings and the text.

Gülru Necipoğlu's remarkable book *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*: *the Topkapı palace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* published in 1991 could be accepted as the most comprehensive scholarly work on the history and spatial composition of the Topkapı Palace, and is based on Ottoman and foreign archival documents, eyewitness accounts, and primary visual and textual sources.[14] Necipoğlu limits her research to the foundational period of the palace and the classical era, during which the Ottoman ceremonial and spatial canons were established and formulized. Godfrey Goodwin's 1999 publication of the *Topkapı Palace: An illustrated guide to its life & personalities* provides brief historical account of the successive courts, Harem and outer gardens of the palace, along with maps and

[11] Anhegger-Eyüboğlu, *Topkapı Sarayı'nda padişah evi*, 1986.
[12] Koçu, *Topkapu Sarayı*, 1960.
[13] Eldem and Akozan, *Topkapı Sarayı: Bir Mimari Araştırma*.
[14] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*.

illustrations, however the book lacks academic references.[15] Necdet Sakaoğlu's volume *The Imperial Palace with its history, locations, inscriptions and memoirs: The Topkapı Palace* provides original images and historical information about the architectural departments of the palace, starting from its outer walls and gates moving towards the inner courts and ending with the Harem.[16]

This spatial taxonomy for depicting the Topkapı Palace is relevant to almost all modern literature, which analyzes the royal complex in resonance with its hierarchical spatial configuration. In this respect, the historical analysis goes hand-in-hand with the architectural layout of the palace. The volume by İlber Ortaylı, the previous director of the Topkapı Palace, is no exception. In *Mekanlar ve olaylarıyla Topkapı Sarayı* (2007), apart from repeating the abovementioned outline, Ortaylı briefly highlights noteworthy events and rituals that took place within the palace.[17] Ahmet Şimşirgil, in *Taşa yazılan tarih: Topkapı Sarayı* (2005), while following the same spatial outline, focuses on the inscriptions located at different parts of the palace, which provide valuable information regarding the history of the palace and its renovations.[18] In short, it could be stated that almost all historical surveys and even touristic guidebooks written on the palace tend to follow the same spatial outline and focus on the same time period, repeating more or less the same information and deliberately ignoring its last century under Ottoman rule.

Another significant theme that is relevant in this dissertation is the museumification of the Topkapı Palace, which was gradual and took place throughout the nineteenth century. There was a constant and increasing demand from European tourists to visit the military collections, Janissary costumes, and the royal

[15] Goodwin, *Topkapı Palace: An Illustrated Guide to Its Life & Personalities*.
[16] Sakaoğlu, *The Imperial Palace: Topkapı Palace*.
[17] Ortaylı, *Mekânlar ve Olaylariyla Topkapı Sarayı*.
[18] Şimşirgil, *Taşa Yazılan Tarih Topkapı Sarayı*.

treasuries of the palace. The opening of the palace grounds and the Imperial Treasury, first to distinguished diplomatic guests, later to prominent visitors, then to foreign tourists, and eventually to Ottoman subjects was not previously studied. However, there are some recent works on the emergence of museums in the Ottoman empire, focusing on the Imperial Museum, the first archeological museum of the empire, which was also established within the Topkapı Palace. However, the Imperial Museum and the Imperial Treasury adopted different strategies of self-display and were operated by diverse institutions with distinct agendas until the Second Constitutional era. Thus, in my research I included a detailed survey of both the palace museum (Imperial Treasury) and the archeology museums (Imperial Museum) and highlight their disparities and correspondences. Even though the palace museum has never been studied in depth, an increasing number of scholarly works focuses on the foundation of the Imperial Museum and its progress after Osman Hamdi.

Mustafa Cezar's *Sanatta Batı'ya açılış ve Osman Hamdi* (1971) is a major work that skillfully uses archival sources and Ottoman periodicals to historicize the foundation of the School of Fine Arts and the Imperial Museum under the direction of Osman Hamdi.[19] Edhem Eldem's *Osman Hamdi Bey Sözlüğü* (2010) is a comprehensive study, bringing together a wide range of textual and visual sources from Ottoman and foreign archives and shedding light on internal dynamics of the Imperial Museum.[20]

Ferruh Gerçek, in *Türk Müzeciliği* (1999), provides detailed information on the foundation of various museums during the Ottoman era, however he did not mention the Topkapı Palace—even as a proto-museum—until 1924. The book fails

[19] Cezar, *Sanatta Batı'ya açılış ve Osman Hamdi*.
[20] Eldem, *Osman Hamdi Bey Sözlüğü*.

to provide archival sources, documents, and references as well.[21] In a similar manner, Wendy Shaw's *Possessors and possessed: Museums, archeology, and the visualization of history in the late Ottoman empire* (2003) provides a detailed and comprehensive history of the foundation of the museums in the Ottoman Empire and offers an anti-orientalist narrative conceptualizing, and even praising, these efforts with proto-nationalist lenses. However, Shaw completely ignores the relation of St. Irene, the School of Fine Arts, and the Imperial Museum with the Topkapı Palace, whose grounds housed these institutions, and does not include the inner courts of the palace in her research.[22] Zeynep Çelik's latest book, *About antiquities: politics of archaeology in the Ottoman Empire,* evaluates the Imperial Museum in comparative perspective with Western museums of the time and scrutinizes the visitors of the museum and its scientific achievements based on travel accounts, foreign and local newspapers of the era.[23]

Pelin Öngören's unpublished doctoral dissertation *Displaying Cultural Heritage, Defining Collective Identity: Museums from the Late Ottoman Empire to The Early Turkish Republic* (2012), also focuses on the formation of the Imperial Museum, including architectural details about the new museum building based on primary visual and archival sources.[24] The unpublished doctoral dissertation of Bilge Ar, *Osmanlı Döneminde Aya İrini ve Yakın Çevresi* (2013) portrays a comprehensive picture of St. Irene and highlights its role as a museum, but did not offer any meaningful relation between the Topkapı Palace and St. Irene.

As explained above, the majority of the literature on museum studies, let alone analyzing the museumification of the Topkapı Palace, tends to ignore the fact

[21] Gerçek, *Türk müzeciligi*.
[22] Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*.
[23] Çelik, *About Antiquities*.
[24] Gürol Öngören, "Museums from the Late Ottoman Empire to The Early Turkish Republic."

that the Archeological Museum was founded within the precincts of the royal complex. The Topkapı Palace is mentioned as a museum only after the foundation of the Republic. Hence, within the scope of this dissertation, I aim to portray the Topkapı Palace as a venue where the first museal institutions of the empire were established: The double collection of arms and antiquities (St. Irene), The Imperial Museum (Tiled Pavilion and the Archeological Museum), The Military Museum (St. Irene), and the Topkapı Palace Museum. I also argue that the royal and military collections of the Topkapı Palace established the foundation of museums in the Ottoman empire, rather than the archeological collections.

1.3 Methodology and sources

As I studied the Topkapı Palace after its abandonment, one of the major challenges was to define the temporal boundaries of this project. It was difficult to limit my research within a certain time frame, given the strong sense of continuity that characterizes the palace. The declaration of the Topkapı Palace as a state museum in April 1924, just six months after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, marked a major break in its history, and thus, defines the later limit of my period of study. However, to designate a specific time for its initial "abandonment" is more of a challenge within the context of the gradual desertion and continuous transformation of the royal complex.[25] Based on the common chronology, the relocation of Abdülmecid to the Dolmabahçe Palace in 1856, was a natural choice to define the starting point of this dissertation in the beginning phases of my research. However, as I progressed in my studies, under the light of the primary and secondary sources, it

[25] In fact, the earliest abandonment of the Topkapı Palace could be dated to the second half of the 17th century, with the relocation of the Ottoman sultans to Edirne for almost 50 years. Similarly, the 18th century could be accepted as the beginning of a break from tradition, as the shore palaces by the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn became residences for the Ottoman rulers for longer periods of time, in parallel with the changing visual regime that led to the increasing visibility of the ruler.

became increasingly evident that it was the reforming sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), who actually stopped residing at the Topkapı Palace and who reshaped the institutional character and administrative mechanisms of the palace especially after the abolishment of the Janissaries. The eventful enthronement of Mahmud II marks the beginning of a new era both for the empire and for the palace. Hence, the temporal frame of this dissertation covers a long and complicated era lasting from 1808 to 1924.

Within this time frame, I intend to depict the chief socio-political developments of the period that shaped and influenced the architectural, institutional, ceremonial attributes of the Topkapı Palace. Thus, not only focusing on architectural modifications, administrative reforms, or its museumification during this turbulent era, I also aim to portray a holistic picture of the palace and investigate its role in Ottoman modernization.

In this research, some major themes and concepts establish the theoretical structure of this research: continuity and change, rituals and ceremonials, monument and heritage, memory and identity, tourism and museology. To elaborate these themes, I used a chronological methodology, beginning with the reign of Mahmud II until the collapse of the empire. Within this chronological framework, the aforementioned concepts are scrutinized under specific periods and in particular chapters where they are the most evident. However, this does not mean that a specific concept that is elaborated under a particular era is not valid during other periods. On the contrary, these concepts carried a certain continuity throughout the century and shaped the character, meaning, and function of the Topkapı Palace in various degrees at different time periods.

As for the sources, I used a wide variety of textual and visual sources from a large variety of archives, libraries, and private collections. The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry and the Topkapı Palace Museum Archives are the two major institutions that I benefited from throughout my research. Thousands of documents from these two archives, which were transcribed, classified, and indexed, established the backbone of my dissertation. Apart from the archival documents, the renovation registers (*tamirat defterleri*) from Ottoman archives also provided first hand information on the never-ending repairs and architectural modifications of the palace. Thousands of petitions demanding entrance permits to the Topkapı Palace and decrees granting access for foreign and domestic visitors are systematically analyzed and converted into statistical data showing the numbers and nationalities of the visitors from 1804 to 1920 were also from the archives of the Topkapı Palace Museum and from the Ottoman Archives.

Apart from the aforementioned archives, the Turkish Republic Archives (*Cumhuriyet Arşivi*), Archives of the Turkish Parliament (*TBMM Tutanakları Arşivi),* Archives of the Istanbul Fourth Committee of Preservation (*İstanbul 4. Numaralı Kültür Valıklarını Koruma Kurulu Arşivi*), French Diplomatic Archives at Nantes (*Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes*), British Archives, Archives of the Paris School of Fine Arts (*Ecole des Beaux Arts),* Thomas Cook Archives, and Albert Kahn les Archives de la Planète were also consulted during my research.

Ottoman and foreign language newspapers and journals of the era were also significant sources reflecting contemporary perceptions of the palace. The digital collections of the SALT Archives, the National Library (*Milli Kütüphane*), Atatürk Library, Hakkı Tarık Us Collection, Gallica, Rice University Library, Bonn

University Library, and the Oxford University Library are the main portals for accessing numerous foreign and domestic periodicals.

Travel accounts and guidebooks from the nineteenth and early twentieth century are also among the prominent sources that reveal contemporary perceptions. I refer to these sources throughout this dissertation, as they give crucial information on the spatial composition, administrative functioning, and architectural layout of the royal complex. A careful scan of around 150 travelogues and guidebooks gave me insight into the questions: which parts of the palace were accessible, when, and to whom.

Apart from textual documents, I benefited from a wide variety of visual sources, ranging from engravings to postcards, from photographs to paintings, from maps to illustrations. Apart from numerous digital and non-digital archives, illustrated books and journals, private photographic collections and auctions were among the major sources for accessing these images, which give me insight into the spatial and architectural configuration of the Topkapı Palace and document its transformations throughout the century. As understood from this brief summary, the challenge of this study is not finding necessary material on the subject matter, but on the contrary, selecting the relevant ones from among abundance of sources and to build meaningful data out of the thousands of textual and visual documents. Hence, I selectively used and attempt to create statistical data out of this accumulation of repetitive sources in this research.

Last but not the least, the palace itself—a spatial entity composed of interconnected courts, gardens, kiosks, wards, apartments, and treasuries was a major source for this research. The physicality of the palace reflected the architectural and decorative transformations, the administrative character, and ceremonial codes

embedded within the complex. By tracking the spatial program of the palace and its palimpsest architecture, I could observe and portray a robust theme of continuity and change. My position as the art and architectural history consultant at the Topkapı Palace restoration projects gave me the chance to access almost all parts of the palace, including those that are closed to public. In this respect, professionally working for the restoration projects for a year and a half gave me the privilege of accessing, studying, and documenting the most secluded parts of the palace. I also had the chance to witness the on-site evaluations of distinguished restoration experts, including Dr. Gülsün Tanyeli, Dr. Can Binan, and Dr. Kutgün Eyüpgiller within the scope this project.

However I have to admit that there is still a large amount of sources waiting to be analyzed and studied. I also believe that new materials will be revealed as new archives are digitalized and opened for access. Thus, this research in no ways claims to put an end to the discussion, but on the contrary, aims to open it for further contributions.

1.4 Chapter outline

This dissertation is composed of four chapters: The Age of Reforms, the Reign of Abdülaziz, The Hamidian Era, and the Second Constitutional Period. This chronological outline also relates to the conceptual framework of the research. Thus, within the scope of each section, certain chapters elaborate specific concepts or depict major developments that shaped the institutional, architectural, or symbolic formation of the palace.

Within this context, "Chapter 2. The age of reforms: Mahmud II - Abdülmecid" focuses on the reigns of two reforming rulers, who put an end to the

residential function of the Topkapı Palace. The first part of the chapter focuses on the architectural modifications that were commissioned by Mahmud II and portrays the impacts of his reforms on the administrative, institutional, and physical structure of the Topkapı Palace. Within this context, I propose that both the reforms of Mahmud II and the Tanzimat reforms held during the reign of Abdülmecid found their reflections in the grounds of the Topkapı Palace, and marked the virtual existence of the rulers, who stopped residing in the royal complex. The second section of the chapter scrutinizes the architectural additions and reconfigurations undertaken during the reign of Abdülmecid, under the light of the archival and visual documents. This part sheds light on the novel additions at the most visible parts of the Topkapı Palace, which were erected after Abdülmecid's move to the Dolmabahçe Palace; elaborates the emergence of a new imperial language; and challenges the abandonment thesis as well.

The last section of the chapter, "The Gradual Abandonment of the Palace and the Emergence of Tourism" argues that the desertion of the Topkapı Palace was gradual and went in hand-in-hand with its opening to tourism. Always a point of curiosity for the foreign gaze, the doors of the palace opened to selected diplomats in the beginning of the century. As the Ottoman sultans stopped using the palace as their main residence, it became more accessible for foreign visitors. A systematic and detailed survey of Ottoman archival documents and travel accounts from the era illustrates this transformation and portrays the systemization of touristic visits.

Chapter 3 focuses on the reign of Abdülaziz, and aims to depict the tension between the past and the present as the aftermath of the staggering reforms of the previous eras. In this context, the imperial meaning and imagery of the Topkapı Palace, after witnessing several catastrophic fires and a ruinous railway construction,

went through another period of transformation. During this era, the imperial significance of the Topkapı Palace as the seat of the empire was undermined and its representative, historic, and touristic value began to be emphasized. As a response to the intensifying interaction with Europe and taking part in the Universal Exhibitions of the era, Ottomans began exploring new methods for representing themselves, their culture and their past. While the Topkapı Palace started being associated with the early Ottoman past, its imperial pavilions and the royal collections were utilized as a rich repertoire for self-representation.

This chapter also challenges the foundation narratives of museums in the Ottoman empire. It argues that the actual museums that attracted the attention of foreign visitors were the royal and military collections, imperial pavilions, and the royal treasuries that were opened for visits in the palace grounds, rather than the Imperial Museum, which held the newly emerging archeological collection.

The following chapter focuses on the long reign of Abdülhamid II. Chapter 4, titled "A Regime of Signs, Symbols, and Rituals" elaborates the ceremonial and symbolic use of the Topkapı Palace during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and develops a theoretical framework centered around the concept of continuity. Even though the palace has always been a major venue for royal ceremonials, some of those rituals attained special significance during the critical times of power exchange and continued to be held in the Topkapı Palace. The military buildings and police stations erected during the reign of Abdülhamid II also communicated the ideologies of the regime and strategies of legitimacy, visibility, and control in response to the changing meaning of the palace.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the strategies of self-display, a concept that shaped the royal complex during the late Ottoman era. The foundation

of the Imperial Museum and the School of Fine Arts within the precincts of the palace and their development under the direction of Osman Hamdi are analyzed within the framework of Ottoman modernization and Westernization. Thus, this autonomous entity composed of an archeological museum, a modern library, and a fine arts school following the Ecole des Beaux Arts model, represented the Western face of the empire and is discussed under the title "Presenting the Occidental-self".

During the same period, visits to the inner courts of the palace and to the Imperial Treasury became standardized following a pre-set route. The greeting and hosting ceremonies that took their inspiration from ancient palatial rituals were also performed as a touristic spectacle. This section entitled "Performing the Oriental-Self" includes a detailed analysis of the palatial tours, investigates the nature of the collections, and offers a hypothetical reconstruction of the displays at the Imperial Treasury. This section emphasized different epistemes and techniques of display between the Imperial Museum and the Imperial Treasury. In this respect, apart from depicting the self-representative performances that characterized the palatial tour, a hypothetical reconstruction of the treasury collection under the light of photographs, travel accounts, and treasury registers of the era is also offered. Within the scope of this chapter, the concept of museum and narratives of display in the Ottoman context is analyzed with respect to the contemporary museum theory.[26]

Chapter 5 focuses on the "Second Constitutional Period" and revolves around the themes of nationalization and militarization of the palace. In other words, the Topkapı Palace was detached from its imperial and dynastic connotations during this

[26] Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion : An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*; Gürol Öngören, "Museums from the Late Ottoman Empire to The Early Turkish Republic"; Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum : History, Theory, Politics*; Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals : Inside Public Art Museums*; Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*; Macdonald and Fyfe, *Theorizing Museums : Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*; Preziosi and Farago, *Grasping the World : The Idea of the Museum*.

era, and the royal collections and the grounds of the palace were opened to public and utilized for military purposes. The new constitutional regime and ongoing wars shaped the ideological context of the era, where different forms of propaganda were utilized for the legitimization of the new regime. The reorganization of St. Irene as the Military Museum and the conversion of the Gülhane Gardens into a public park are studied in detail within this framework. The last section of the chapter sheds light on the restorations held during the early twentieth century and discusses the emergence of a modern consciousness for conservation in the late-Ottoman context. The Topkapı Palace, no longer the imperial residence of the Ottoman household, is positioned as a historic monument, as a national heritage site, and as a representation of Ottoman art and architecture that had to be studied and preserved.

The last chapter, focusing on the post-war era, covers the traumatic period during the collapse of the empire, the occupation of Istanbul, and the foundation of the new republic and discusses the symbolic and ideological role of the Topkapı Palace and the royal collections during this period of struggle. Eventually, the Topkapı Palace was declared as a national museum by Mustafa Kemal in 1924. The concepts of continuity and change are reconsidered in relation to this significant turning point, which completely transformed the ideological and symbolic role of the Ottoman palace after the abandonment of sultanate. In this context, I argue that the ambiguous and multi-layered structure of the Topkapı Palace today was laid during the course of the late-Ottoman era. There are multiple institutions within the walls of the palace—the Istanbul Archeological Museums, the Imperial Mints, the Gülhane Park, the military areas, and the Topkapı Palace Museum—that have different narratives and diverse audiences. The museal narrative of the Topkapı Palace Museum itself is ambiguous as well, communicating multiple, and often conflicting,

discourses regarding national pride, historical detachment, architectural patrimony, secularism, and religiosity. I argue that the developments of the turbulent nineteenth century shaped the paradoxical and multi-layered museum narratives of the Topkapı Palace today. Thus, this dissertation sheds light to the ongoing ideological and spatial transformations and uses of the palace-museum.