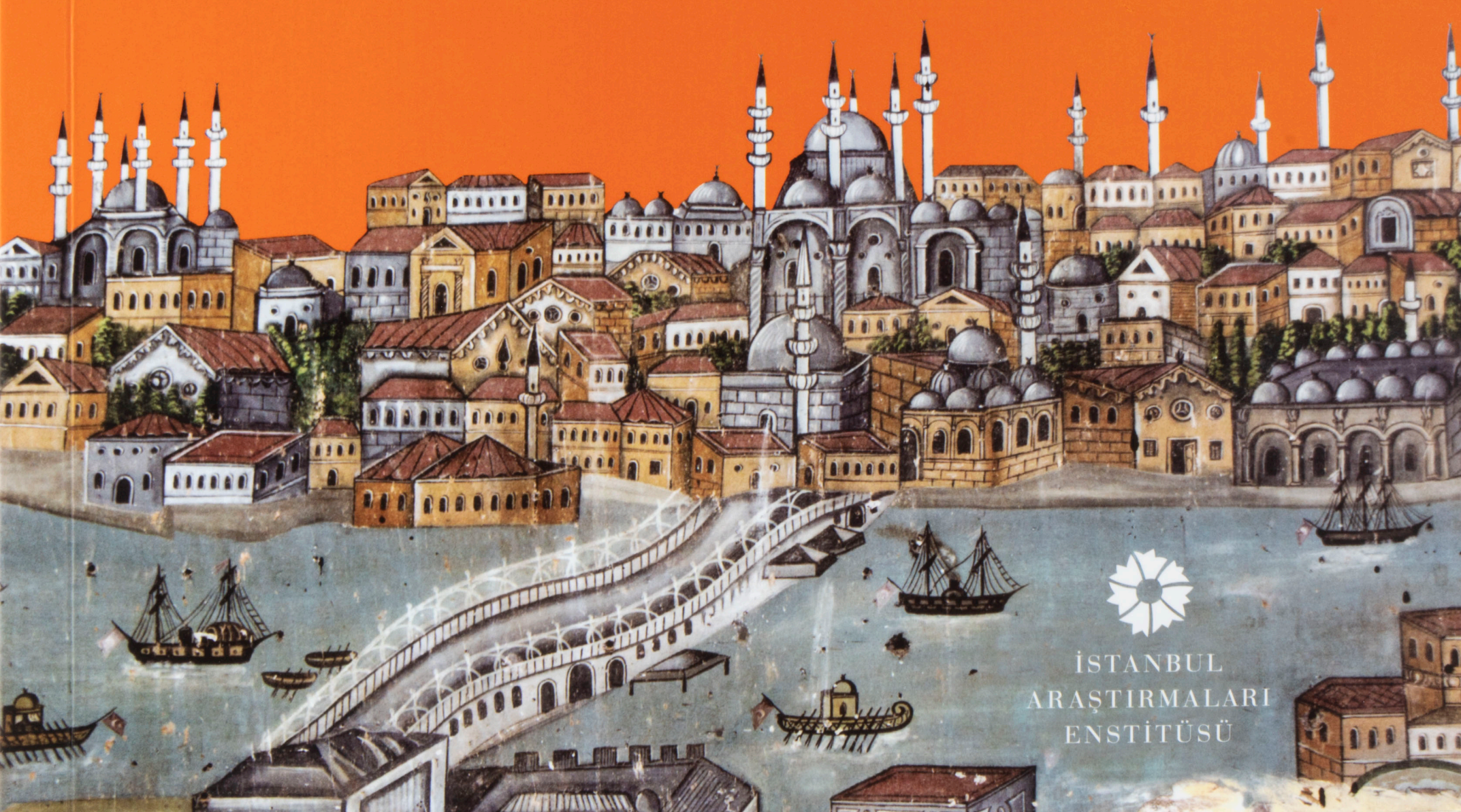
Hayal ve Gerçek Arasında

Osmanlı Resminde İstanbul İmgesi

18. ve 19. Yüzyıllar

TARKAN OKÇUOĞLU



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Detailed Abstract

This book is predominantly a study of how Istanbul is depicted in murals, steel trays, and maps, all of which may be considered at the intersection of art and craft. In Ottoman visual arts, murals come in greater numbers due to their spatial link to residences, unavoidably making them the primary object of analysis. As a result, murals adorning religious and civilian architecture within the extensive borders of the Ottoman state—from palaces to mansions, mosques to shrines, and *han*s to *şadırvan* domes—constitute the focus of this study. These paintings demonstrate considerable variety, from naïve depictions by folk artists to technically sophisticated paintings with advanced use of perspective. The study begins with the early attempts at naturalist painting in Ottoman art and extends to the periods where a European style comes to dominate oil painting.

Images of the capital city were very popular and were used in a variety of ways and meanings in the murals, trays, and textiles produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the literature of the period is full of descriptions of the capital, making these images a favorite subject of miniature art as well as the paintings and engravings of foreign artists. Beginning with the eighteenth century, artists of the period painted promenades on the shores of streams like Göksu and Kağıthane, depicting the new and "joyful" lifestyle seen in these areas. In my research I analyze images of the capital mostly in terms of the logic of depiction, the dimension of meaning, and iconography; I also try to understand these within the framework of the changing mentality of the Ottoman world rather than any particular style or technique. In Ottoman paintings of the eighteenth and nine-

teenth centuries, we see images of Istanbul being reproduced as if from a template, albeit one employing different methods. It is possible to classify the various manifestations of this image. Sometimes a single building that symbolizes the capital (Sultan Ahmed Mosque, Beşiktaş Palace, Beyazıt Watchtower, and Leander's Tower) is used to create this image. Another type of representation is based on images that refer to Istanbul indirectly, such as those showing the city's environment and architecture (crowded urban spaces, *yalı*s, mansions, sultanic mosques with central domes and multiple minarets) or depictions of the capital reminiscent of topographical maps. The image of the capital found in visual arts can be examined in a variety of ways, such as being the administrative and religious center of the empire, a symbol of modernization for the periphery, or an aesthetical high point in terms of architecture and urban planning.

Topographical depictions of the capital present a comprehensive body of urban portraits. These are rooted in the topographical maps that go back to the early modern representations of the city by Buondelmonti, Vavassore, and Matrakçı Nasuh. Artists of these topographical representations rendered the Golden Horn, Historical Peninsula, Galata, and Üsküdar, all surrounding the Bosporus, as a virtual layout for the city. On the three main land masses surrounding the Bosporus, a number of buildings that have become symbols of the city can be found—Sultan Ahmed Mosque, Galata Tower, Leander's Tower, Beyazıt Watchtower, Topkapı Palace, the city walls, and the bridges on the Golden Horn. Occasionally, one (e.g., only Leander's Tower) or more buildings are added to the template view defined by these three land masses to create the desired image of Istanbul. These buildings, along with the entire composition, are representations of the image of the capital. Such topographical depictions of Istanbul adorn the walls of the mansions of the *ayanlar* (local notables) and other Ottoman elites growing politically and economically more powerful in the periphery. This representation repeats a certain layout and thus may be easily regarded as a blueprint, though there are always variations. In addition, the stretch of time from the reign of Mahmud II to that

of Abdülaziz and the stretch of land extending from the Balkans to the Middle East change not only the form or representation but the meaning as well. The depictions found in these residences span a wide cultural expanse and contain layers of meaning that go beyond the simple glorification of the court. While images adopted in different provinces in the Balkans, Anatolia, and Arabia appear similar, they have the potential to convey different meanings. For instance, some of the depictions of Istanbul found in Greece and the Aegean islands have skylines without domes or minarets as a result of the newly arisen nationalist movements, while detailed depictions in houses in Damascus contain elements of modernity and newness, which imply aspirations to be like the capital.

The *selatin* mosques with two or four minarets emphasized the good deeds of the Ottoman dynasty, which was developing the city through newly established foundations. These buildings were also used as emblems of the continuity of the dynasty and religious patronage.

Pavilions and kiosks, almost all of which were *yalı*s (seaside mansions), began to be built during the Tulip Age (1718–1730), and depictions of these buildings reflect the new jovial lifestyle in Istanbul brought on by this age in all its glory. In the impressive depictions of waterfront palaces in which the court was made more visible to the public, a new image of the empire was reinforced.

In addition, there were other elements of modernity arriving from Europe and finding their expression in paintings: technical innovations of the nineteenth century (railroads, horse-drawn trams, steamboats, and clocks), objects used in daily life (Western furniture such as tables and chairs), clock towers symbolizing the Tanzimat era, masonry military buildings making a monumental presence on the skyline of the city, and images of factories representing the budding industrialization of the period.

Despite all the westernization efforts of the administrative apparatus, the underlying religious mentality that was preserved within the traditional social fabric and shaped the worldview of Ottomans held an important place in the creation of these paintings. When one considers the landscapes and architecture found in murals as part of a context determined by the ornamental nature of art using symbols and metaphors, it becomes clear that a painting not only covers a surface for a merely ornamental purpose but also conveys a religious-cultural meaning. It must be considered at this point that some of the landscape paintings, especially those in religious buildings, intersect with certain images in the shared consciousness of the public. Because these landscapes often include such elements as pavilions, kiosks, bodies of water, bridges, trees, and fountains, this intersection is most probably a depiction of "paradise," the most common theme in Islamic art.

Research about Ottoman murals has included the analysis of certain questions, such as the stylistic differences and identity of the artists. The main focus of this study does not address these questions, having been only shortly discussed to the extent they contribute to the analysis here. It can be stated that each region has its own socially, economically, and geographically determined technique and style, but that the content and raison d'être of the paintings are mainly dictated by the influence of Istanbul. In other words, any innovation appearing in Istanbul spread throughout the vast empire and was put into practice after being blended with the local culture that was already there, keeping alive the cultural tradition predating Ottoman rule. It can be said that the themes emerging in the capital were reinterpreted by the local or traveling masters of the provinces. Izmir and its environs, as well as Aegean islands like Chios and Mytilene, however, had close ties with Italy and especially Venice, and the works of art that resulted from this connection proves that Istanbul was the primary but not the sole center. Even though there are stylistic differences in these paintings, a naïve and schematic style of painting constitutes the mutuality of this large group.

This book attempts to examine these paintings by keeping in mind the sociocultural context of the period and questioning certain relations like painting-space, painting-patron, and center-periphery while also studying the layers of meaning in order to comment on the composition of the paintings. Because information concerning the painters, patrons, and web of relations between them is sparse, comments regarding the center-periphery dynamic were kept to a certain minimum.

One of the conclusions of this study is that the murals from Europe may have found their counterparts in social memory in terms of the form and elements contained, thus becoming internalized and taking on new sets of meaning. It is argued that the Ottomans created a syncretic idiom based on a stylistic, visual, and thematic synthesis of local painting traditions and the traditions of Western culture.

The painters of the late Ottoman period were not after realistic images but of the image of reality that kept changing with different perceptions. Oscillating between imagination and reality, these paintings were the product of the process of change that began in the eighteenth century, reflecting this change with their content.