

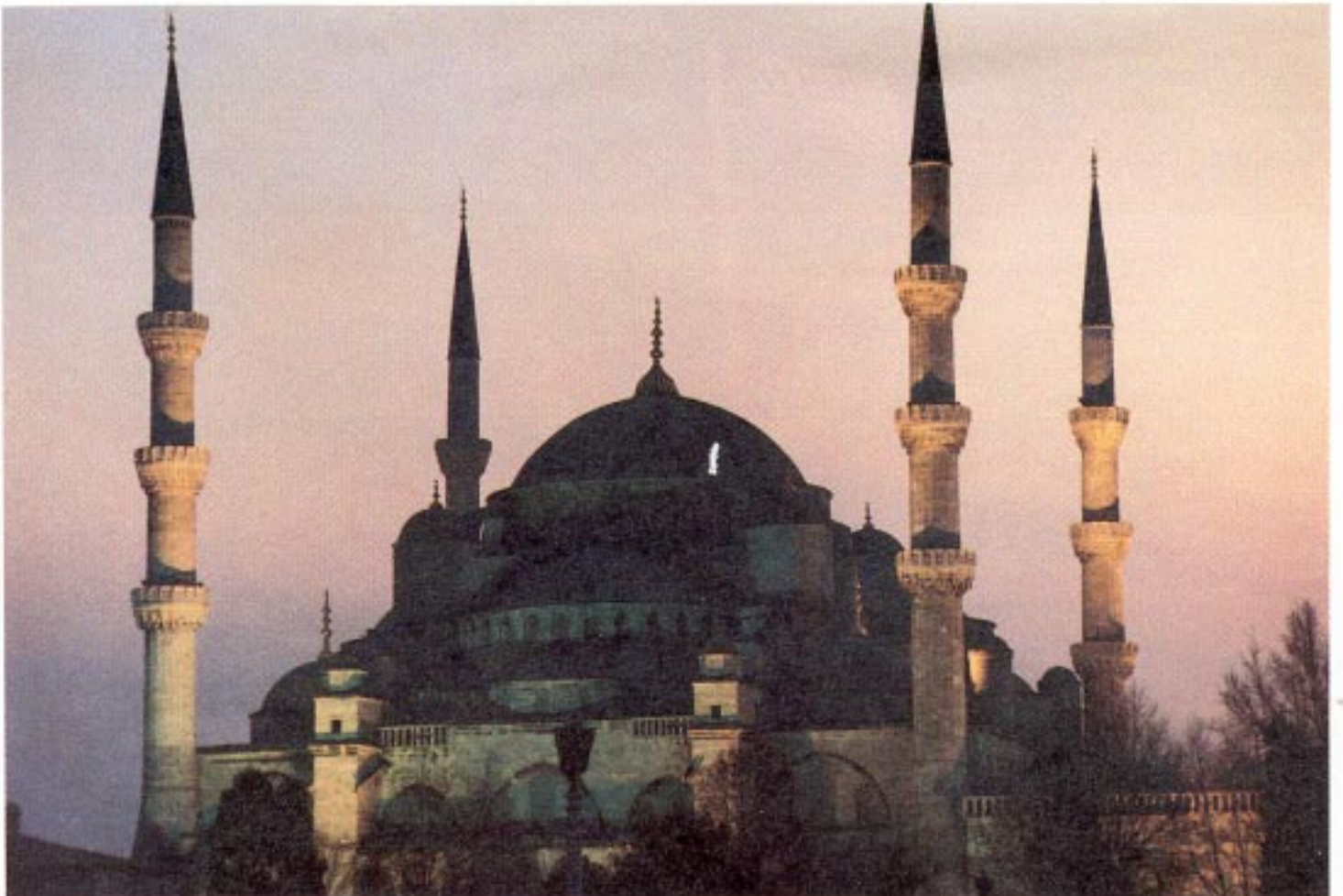
Topkapi *Palace*



by Steve Kurtz

Photography by Karen and Steve Kurtz

Enrich your fantasy castles with a little history



The Ottomans are like unto the sun. Above all they illuminate Europe, but the light of their power shines also on Asia and Africa. They are incomparable to other sultans who are like to stars. All are extinguished in the brilliance of their radiance and splendor. This illustrious, heroic, and intrepid dynasty has been ever victorious, conquering all of Anatolia, Karaman, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, Baghdad, Arabia, Egypt, the Balkans, Hungary, end many other lands, as far as the borders of Germany . . . There is no limit to the power, extent end wealth of their rule.

—Dedication to Sultan
Suleyman the Magnificent,
by Haci Ahmed of Tunis, 1559

Adjusting the pack on my shoulders, I peered through the misty morning pale-light on my pilgrimage toward the looming minarets. Topkapi Saray, the legendary Seat of Sultans, the Heart of the Ottoman Empire, the magnificent Palace of the Cannon Gate lay before me enshrouded in the early morning fog. While passage beyond the forebodingly massive gates once may have required permission from the Sultan, I entered bearing only a ripped three-dollar ticket. Within its high, fortified walls, a legion of cooks and servants once attended the powerful Sultan and his entire administration of viziers, ambassadors, and sycophants. In the forbidden, blue-tiled changers of the harem, the Sultan relaxed in the company of his wives, children, and countless concubines. At the height of Ottoman power, Topkapi housed over 4,000 people, a small city in its own right within the Imperial capital.

Today, the renovated palace is a fascinating museum at the center of Istanbul, a monumental display of Turkish art and architecture. Topkapi also contains one of the most astounding collections of riches I have ever witnessed, amassed by 32 Sultans over the past five centuries. The treasuries in Western museums do not compare to the staggering opulence of the Sultan's hoard. In retrospect, the Hope diamond and even the Crown Jewels of England are a mere pittance by comparison.

My personal interest in the palace stemmed largely from my work on the ALQADIM® setting for the AD&D® game. In the *City of Delights* boxed set, for example, the Palace of the Grand Caliph in Huzuz was based directly upon the plans of the Topkapi. The palace was already quite vivid in my imagination, long before I set foot in its historic confines. After my visit to Turkey, I looked over the plans of the Grand Caliph's fantasy residence and was amused to note how public chambers were often inter-

preted as private areas of the palace. Sometimes I imagine that Sinan, the court architect of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, would be mortified.

As any Game Master knows, realistic spaces and objects help breathe life into any role-playing fantasy campaign. In this article, I will explore the history and structure of Topkapi, including some of the treasures and ideas for conducting adventures around the palace. At the very least, I hope to shed some light on Middle Eastern architectural philosophy, so that other Game Masters can devise realistic and exotic palaces for their campaigns.

Locus of antiquity

Topkapi Saray sprawls across one of the largest hills along the Sea of Marmara, overlooking the confluence of the Bosphorus Strait and the Golden Horn, a site of unrivaled geographical importance since ancient times. The waters in this region not only link the Black Sea to the Aegean—providing access to the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and therefore, all the world's waterways—they also form a bridge between the continents of Europe and Asia. The armies of myriad empires have fought over this strategic location for millennia.

While bearing all the trappings of modernity—from the tram lines and the car-choked streets, to the coal-fire pollution that cloaks the winter skyline in a velvet brown haze—Istanbul also is a living shrine to the ancient past. The city's current name was derived from a corrupted Greek expression (*stin poli*), meaning "to the city." When "the city" was ruled by last vestiges of the Roman Empire, it was

called Constantinople (from *Konstantinou polis*, meaning Constantine's city). Even before the Romans, as early as the 7th century B.C., the city was called Byzantium—named after the Greek tyrant, Byzas. Although Topkapi was constructed between the 15th and 19th centuries, the structure rests on Byzantine foundations.

By the time the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453, the proud metropolis lay in ruins. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror was responsible for the renaming and rebuilding of Istanbul. Part of his vision included the construction of the Palace of the Cannon Gate, Topkapi Saray, sometimes simply called the "New Palace" by its contemporaries to differentiate it from Eski Saray, Mehmed's first palace (sometimes called the "Old Palace"). Topkapi was first built between 1465-78, but today nothing remains of the original 15th-century wooden construction. Over the past 500 years, fires and whims of the Sultans have drastically altered the face of the palace. Topkapi was occupied by the Ottoman royal family and imperial administration until the mid-19th century, when the structure was considered "old-fashioned" and abandoned in favor of Dolmabahce, a more modern palace constructed along the north Bosphorus shore in continental French style, with golden fixtures and 14-ton Baccarat crystal chandeliers in every chamber. Some say that the bankrupting opulence of Dolmabahce contributed to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The modern Turkish republic was founded in 1923 by Kemal Ataturk, a tremendously popular figure, whose por-



trait adorns practically every public building in the country. In contrast with many European political upheavals and revolutions, there was no looting and pillaging of the Sultan's palaces. Unlike Versailles, for example, which was stripped clean during the French Revolution, all the imperial residences in Istanbul—including Topkapi and Dolmabahçe—were preserved essentially intact with all their original furnishings after the founding of the Republic. Topkapi was opened as a public museum in 1924 and has been under a process of continual restoration ever since. Topkapi contains a wealth of information for game masters and designers alike.

Topkapi Saray

Topkapi's huge, sprawling complex defies simple characterization. Unlike European palaces, which were surrounded by low-lying gardens that accentuated the beauty of the architecture, the palace of Topkapi is obscured by a series of walls, outlying buildings, and tall trees creating an atmosphere of intrigue. As one moves through the courts of Topkapi, architectural elements—domes and minarets—appear and disappear behind the walls. Unless one views Topkapi from the air (or from a map), the overall layout of the palace is difficult to determine and impossible to

capture with a single photograph.

Walking through Topkapi is like peeling away the layers of an onion or uncovering a series of veiled secrets. While the layout of the palace appears to be a chaotic conundrum, with multiple courtyards surrounded by oddly-shaped chambers and crooked corridors, the palace is a surprisingly ordered structure, consisting of four main sections or layers of increasing privacy: the outer First Court, the Court of Ceremonies, the *Enderun* and the Fourth Court, and the celebrated Harem. The First Court and the Court of Ceremonies were used for public purposes. The *Enderun* and the Fourth Court were reserved for the daily activities of the Sultan and his attendants. Finally, the Harem enclosed the Sultan's family in the most private section of the palace. The organization of these four sections was traditionally employed in the layout of all of the imperial Ottoman palaces, and to a certain extent, reflects the design of Middle Eastern palaces. By understanding the role and function of these sections, a Game Master can more easily and realistically incorporate them into adventures.

The First Court

The First Court acted as a protective barrier between the palace and the rest of

the world. Topkapi guarded the entrance to the Golden Horn, and therefore Mehmed the Conqueror massively fortified the outer walls of the First Court, especially along the seaward side, which historically had been the weakest link in the city's defenses. In the 13th century, a flotilla from the Fourth Crusade pulled up to the sea walls during a siege. Crusaders poured into the city by climbing the masts of their ships and surmounting the low adjacent walls. To prevent such a debacle in the future, Mehmed dramatically strengthened the three miles of walls around the palace with numerous cannon emplacements, for which the palace was aptly named (*topkapi* meaning "cannon gate" in Turkish).

The massive Imperial Gate, the main entrance to the First Court, was always guarded by at least 50 Jannisaries (imperial guards). Eleven generations after Mehmed the Conqueror, Sultan Murad IV enjoyed firing on pedestrians with his crossbow from atop these gates. Beyond the famous portals, the outer court of the palace contained lush gardens, which were sometimes stocked with wild animals for the Sultan's hunting pleasure. Hagia Irene, one of the oldest Byzantine churches in the world, also was enclosed within the First Court and converted into an armory for the palace garrison.

As many as 500 Jannisaries defended the outer fortifications of the First Court in times of peace. These slave warriors, or mamluks, were literally owned by the Ottoman Empire. Hand picked as children from predominantly Christian families and trained in special schools in the art of warfare, they formed the elite corps of the Ottoman army. Despite their official slave status, the Jannisaries held a position of considerable prestige in Ottoman society, especially in the Imperial armed forces. They received a regular quarterly wage and could count on fair promotion within their ranks (and perhaps eventually freedom) in exchange for devoted service to the Empire. Unlike other forms of slavery prevalent in Europe and America, the state-sponsored slavery of the Jannisaries was not hereditary. The Jannisaries could marry, and their children were born free.

The Court of Ceremonies

The inner palace can be reached through the Gate of Salutations, flanked by two octagonal keep towers, where all visitors—including viziers and ambassadors—were required to dismount. Only the Sultan himself could ride a horse into the Court of Ceremonies. Public executions were typically conducted in front of these iron doors, and the severed heads displayed here afterward. In the small fountain outside the gate, executioners would clean the blood from their great scimitars.

A number of Imperial functions were performed in this courtyard, including

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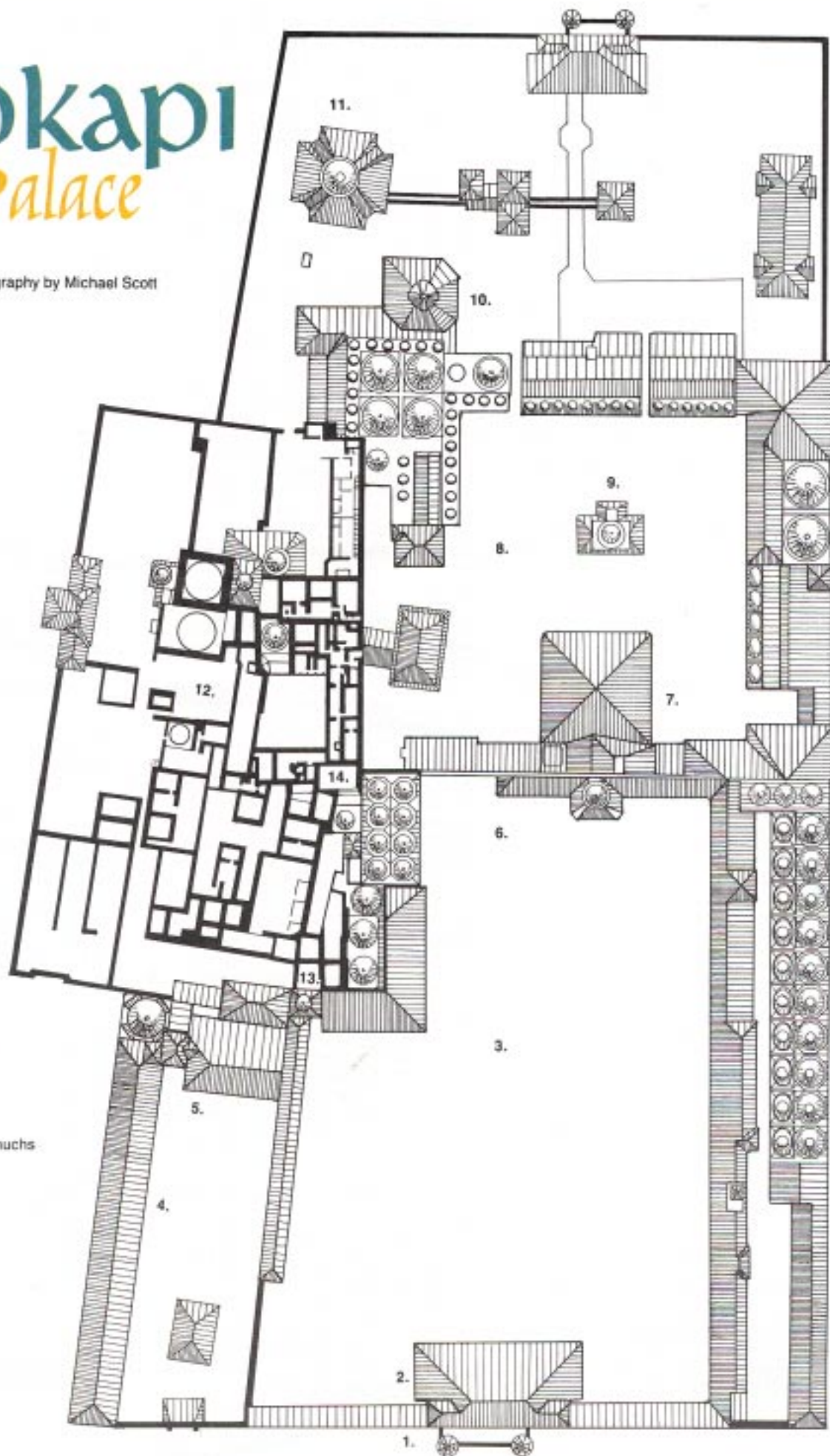
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Topkapi Palace

Cartography by Michael Scott



1. First Court
2. Gate of Salutations
3. Court of Ceremonies
4. Royal Stables
5. Barracks
6. Gate of the White Eunuchs
7. Audience Chamber
8. Enderun
9. Library of Ahmed III
10. Fourth Court
11. Baghdad Pavilion
12. The Harem
13. Entrance to Harem
14. Harem exit

accessions to the throne, declarations of war, religious festivals, and royal circumcisions. The Janissaries were paid their quarterly wages from the treasury in this court. On the occasion of a foreign ambassador's visit, the Sultan would delight in paying the soldiers himself during a public ceremony. Hundreds of soldiers lined up in formation as the viziers brought forward massive trunks, brimming with gold. The display no doubt impressed visitors with the tremendous wealth and military prestige of the Ottomans.

Also known as the Court of Justice, or the Council Square, this section of the palace formed the nucleus of the administration for the Ottoman Empire. The viziers (ministers of state) and the chief vizier (the prime minister) conferred with the Sultan on a weekly basis in the council chambers. One of the meeting rooms was fitted with a large circular window, called the Eye of the Sultan, where the Sultan would sit and eavesdrop on his ministers. In addition to its administrative role, the courtyard always was teeming with visitors, soldiers, and servants who maintained the stables, carriage houses, pantries, food cellars, mosques, barracks, bath houses, and officers lounges located along the periphery of the court.

The Enderun and the Fourth Court

The entrance to the Enderun from the Court of Ceremonies was guarded by the Gate of White Eunuchs. Crowded with trees and tiny, intricate pavilions, the Enderun gives the impression of intimate privacy. Literally "the Inside" of the palace, the Enderun contained the residence for the Campaign Pages, or Aghas, trained since childhood in courtly arts such as music, poetry, dance, and calligraphy and serving as body servants, guards, and messengers for the personal needs of the Sultan. In this section of Topkapi, one also can find the baths and massage rooms for the Sultan and the Aghas, the lavish Imperial treasuries (detailed later in the article), and the central audience kiosk, where the Sultan would greet visitors of great importance from his wide, golden throne. Aside from the audience chamber, however, the Enderun was typically the exclusive domain of the Sultan and his attendants.

Two stone ramps descend from the Enderun to the tiled terraces of the Fourth Court, the most private of the Sultan's daily living quarters, located farthest from the bustle of Council Square and the confines of the Harem. The court's prominent patio, built around a rectangular pool with a fountain, is surrounded by a number of ornamental kiosks or pavilions, covered with ornate blue, green, and red tiles. From the opulent Baghdad pavilion, the Sultan could sip hot tea from a tulip-shaped glass while contemplating the spectacular panorama of Istanbul spread out below. Other pavilions, perfect sites for reading or reflection, were designed to overlook the tulip gardens and marble

fountains of the courtyard. The Fourth Court was like the royal living room, where the Sultan could withdraw to escape from the responsibilities of Empire and family. Together Enderun and the Fourth Court comprised the personal daily living quarters of the Sultan.

The Harem

In Arabic, the word *harim* means forbidden, and referred specifically to the women's quarters in the household. In Turkey, the harem evolved under somewhat broader lines, consisting of a location reserved exclusively for the family. The harem in Topkapi contained not only the living quarters for the Sultan's wives, servants, and concubines, but also his children and himself. During the Ottoman Empire, the harem developed into a formal, structured institution, with its own strict rules and established hierarchy. After the Sultan, Black Eunuchs were at the summit of the harem hierarchy. Recruited as children in Africa and surgically operated upon in Egypt, they were brought to the harem as children and educated in their duties, which involved not only service and protection, but also the punishment of their female charges. The most powerful Chief of the Black Eunuchs could promote or demote the social standing of any concubine or wife within the harem.

The most powerful of the Sultan's wives, at the summit of the female hierarchy, stood the Valide Sultan, sometimes called the Sultana, the Sultan's Mother, or the First Wife. The Valide Sultan was promoted to her exalted position after giving birth to the Sultan's first male heir. She presided over the harem from the largest suite of apartments, totaling as many as forty rooms, with the best location, ventilation, and sunlight in the palace.

After the Valide Sultan, the Kadineffendis (or Kadins, for short) enjoyed the long-lasting, personal favor of the Sultan. These "Royal Ladies" were ranked by the Chief Eunuch in the Sultan's order of preference, and numbered between four and seven individuals. They shared multi-storied, wooden quarters overlooking a high terraced swimming pool in the harem. Sometimes the Sultan married one or more of the Kadins; more often, however, they remained his most exalted consorts.

The ikbals, or "Lucky Ones," were the Sultan's favored concubines, who shared important duties within the harem. The ikbals received honorific titles, such as the Sultan's Food Taster, the Sultan's Barber, the Sultan's Coffee-maker, etc. which were appropriate to their administrative role. They served the Valide Sultan and cared for the royal children.

Any of the ladies, even the youngest concubine, could look forward to promotion within the harem to the dignified position of the Valide Sultan. If not, after seven years of service in the harem, they were typically married to a powerful

ambassador or a minister in the government. The Sultan's concubines reached the harem from many sources. Some were given as gifts from leaders within the Ottoman Empire, others were presented by foreign ambassadors (blonde-haired girls from Russia were especially favored gifts by the Sultan).

While admittedly fascinating from a male perspective, the harem clearly had its darker aspect. The future of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of women depended entirely on the whim of a single man, with possibly tragic results. One night, Sultan Ibrahim the Mad decided to replace all but one of his 300 concubines. The unfortunate 299 ladies were bound in cloth sacks, wrapped in iron chains, and tossed into the Bosphorus within hours of the Sultan's decision. In the event of a Sultan's death, the entire harem was vacated to the Old Palace (Eski Saray), where they either lived out the remainder of their lives in opulence or were married to eligible public officials.

While the Sultan could leave the harem, his hundreds of concubines were virtual prisoners. All the windows were covered with ornate iron grates. These bars were decorated with intricate honeycomb or octagonal patterns, but they were bars nonetheless. The inhabitants of the harem recognized this fact. One of the harem chambers, for instance, its walls decorated with pure gold, was called the Golden Cage by its inhabitants. The Sultan surrounded the concubines with wealth and showered them with gold, but they could never leave the harem to spend their treasure. If they wanted to go shopping, they had to rely on servants to choose the best goods from the bazaar to suit the tastes of their mistress. In addition, the women of the harem were forbidden male visitors (except doctors and teachers). It was said that even a male fly could not enter the harem without the Sultan's permission. There were rarely exceptions to this rule, since the penalty for adultery according to Islamic law was quite harsh (death by beheading for the man, death by stoning for the woman).

Structurally, the harem is a confusing but intriguing place. Dark, narrow corridors twist at unpredictable junctures and open into bright narrow courtyards. At every turn, stairs lead upward and downward into darkness. After centuries of building, at least two floors of the harem are now completely underground, linking storerooms and cisterns with outdoor pools and fountains. Above the gardens, built upon the terraced roofs of the harem's lower stories, another three levels of predominantly wooden structures were erected in the 18th century. One can become hopelessly lost within the harem's warren of 400 chambers. The stone walls, covered with brightly painted tiles, were recessed with countless alcoves and niches for books, boxes, vases, and turbans. In a few chambers, loud gurgling fountains

were installed to foil eavesdroppers, and secret passages were hidden behind some walls, concealed by panels or revolving mirrors. The entire harem whispers of secrecy, intimacy, and intrigue.

Treasures of the Sultans

In addition to the quarters for the Aghas, the Enderun also contained the repositories for the Sultan's innumerable wealth, a magnificent hoard accumulated by the Ottomans over five centuries. The trade routes of Eastern Europe and Russia were obliged to pass through the Bosphorus Strait, en route to their home ports of call from the Mediterranean Sea. The legendary Silk Road, linking distant China with Persia and Arabia, terminated in Istanbul. Being the inevitable crux of commerce and trade, the Ottoman Empire became fantastically wealthy. One of the Chief Viziers once boasted that the state easily could afford to refit their Imperial Armada with anchors of silver, ropes spun from silk, and sails sewn from satin. The trove on display in Topkapi affirms such arrogance.

The Sultan's hoard contained the following treasures, which the Game Master may care to gradually adapt and perhaps slowly introduce into a campaign to augment monetary booty:

* Collections of antique Chinese porce-

lain with white, green, blue, and red designs, depicting geometric, radial, floral, or animal motifs (over 15,000 pieces, including huge rose medallion serving platters, smaller individual plates, 5' tall vases, and slender decanters);

* Ancient illuminated manuscripts from China and Persia; paper tapestries of religious calligraphy; a writing box and pen holder of carved jade; a coral-hilted pen knife; the first copies of the original 7th-century *Quran*, the holy book of Islam;

* Gilded clocks and music boxes (gifts from European ambassadors); gold and lacquer jewelry coffers inlaid with ivory tortoise shell or mother of pearl and decorated with clover-leaf and floral patterns; a golden box carved in the shape of a fish with ruby eyes;

* Gold-embroidered and gem-studded ceremonial clothing; a jade rose water sprinkler and hand-mirror; egg-shaped perfume vials; golden candle snuffers; spoons carved from tortoise shell, coral, or mother of pearl; zinc flasks and jars inlaid with tortoise and bloodstone; a gold water pipe (narghile) set with intricate floral emblems and geometric designs; a gold-plated cradle for the Imperial heir, massive golden candlesticks measuring 4' tall and weighing over 100 pounds; a collection of five royal thrones;

* Magnificent carriages fashioned from

precious woods and adorned with gold (a fad introduced from Europe in the 19th century); gilded stirrups encrusted with opals, aquamarines, and pale garnets; an emerald-studded horse-crest plumed with white ostrich feathers;

* Ancient religious artifacts of Islam, such as the footprint, hair, tomb soil, and tooth of the Prophet Mohammad; a jeweled case containing the Sword of the Prophet and the scimitars of the first Caliphs, the early political leaders of the Islam; a few Christian artifacts, such as the silver-encased hand and gem encrusted skull of John the Baptist;

* Arms and armor, often engraved with serpent and peacock or eagle motifs or inscribed with elegantly gilded inscriptions from the *Quran*;

—a fabulous jeweled jambiya, the famous Topkapi Dagger, its golden grip studded with brilliant diamonds and adorned with seven huge emeralds;

—a wavy-bladed scimitar with an ivory grip;

—daggers with red coral hilts and grips of carved alabaster, crystal, or horn;

—silver-chased javelins, spears, and halberds;

—a silver-hafted flail with five spherical quartz heads of differing hues;

—a black iron mace from Egypt, topped with a crude lion figurine;



—a gilded *yatagan* (a Turkish short-sword, with a light, single-edged cutting blade);

—lamellar armor with gold-engraved plates and arm guards;

—a mahogany box quiver (for a dozen flight arrows) inlaid with mother of pearl;

—a gilded wooden shield, embossed with rose floral patterns and inlaid with rubies and emeralds;

—a lacquered leather shield, studded with 10 jeweled flowers;

—an embroidered silk bow case, sewn with tiny pearls;

—ivory-inlaid antique firearms, including wheel-lock pistols and heavy arquebuses;

—a heavy footman's mace with a carved head of mottled green jade;

—a black-hafted battle axe, decorated with ripping birds' beaks;

* Vast collections of gems and jewelry: a golden platter heaped with cut peridots and emeralds; the famous Spoon-Maker's diamond (the pear-shaped jewel is almost 2" across and weighs 86 carats); carved jade rings; star-shaped pendants; carved emerald covers for coffee cups; a golden brooch set with a huge mottled pearl; a four-winged turban pendant, set with rubies, emeralds, pearls, and diamonds; a blue enamel pendant shaped like an egg and encrusted with diamonds; wide red velvet belts, covered with amethyst-studded golden buckles; and an ebony walking stick, studded with diamonds.

Certain treasures could be adapted easily into new, exotic magical items. A circular iron shield, covered with four wickedly-spiked bosses and nine blade-catching iron rings, could become a *shield of blade-breaking*, which has the ability to destroy an enemy's weapons. A set of ivory-inlaid bath clogs could provide the wearer with *fire resistance*, and an enchanted rose-water sprinkler, shaped like a perforated egg, might be used to detect the presence of poison in food and beverages. The Game Master is encouraged to adapt the list of treasures to suit the particular needs and flavor of a campaign.

Palaces in a fantasy setting

A palace such as Topkapi would make an ideal setting for a number of adventures and perhaps the focus of an entire campaign. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the palace is its foundation in an ancient historical context. Excavations in the Court of Ceremonies, for instance, have uncovered huge porphyry sarcophagi, buried since the Byzantine age. The palace was built upon Constantinople's ruined acropolis—what dark, subterranean chambers still remain entombed beneath Topkapi? Some scholars have suggested that Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror abandoned his first palace because it was built on the ruins of a Byzantine monastery and graveyard. Suppose Topkapi were erected over such a site, and unwarranted excavation (for a new well, for instance) disturbed an

ancient vizier's undying repose! Perhaps expansion beneath the harem uncovers a forgotten door, leading to cobwebbed vaults and other mysteries better left undisturbed. In either case, a group of adventurers might be called into the palace to investigate the unusual discovery. Besides ancient tombs, the courageous might discover an abandoned section of the palace, once used as a laboratory or a storeroom for fiendish experiments.

Of course, adventures in Topkapi certainly do not require such subterranean delvings. In one campaign, the characters could be enlisted by one of the Sultan's pages, entrusted with expanding the Imperial collection of exotic treasures or the menagerie of rare monsters. The player characters might even be sucked into a harem intrigue, when the Valide Sultan has a genie or another magically inclined servant collect the party for a special mission against an archrival.

Alternatively, the Sultan can be portrayed as an archnemesis or evil figure in the campaign, in which the Palace becomes a hive for corrupt viziers, vicious mamluks, and depraved executioners. The party might be enlisted by one of the Sultan's enemies in a plot to rescue one of the concubines from the Imperial harem or salvage an important artifact from the treasury. One of the Sultan's victims, before her execution outside the palace, might try to slip one of the PCs a cryptic note: "Tell Kethuda that the Horse has Twenty Fingers and the Moon Sings over a Summer Sky." As the party tries to unravel the enigma of Kethuda's identity, they become embroiled in a conspiracy to destroy the wicked Sultan and replace him with a benevolent prince, who mysteriously disappeared after a "hunting accident" three years ago.

Finally, out in the wilderness, the party might come across the palace in the wreckage of an ancient city. The palace itself might be crumbled into ruins, or somehow been preserved by powerful magic. The littered courtyards, timeworn pavilions, and dark chambers might still contain some remnants of the Sultan's former riches, scattered about the tiny alcoves and secret vaults where mad, gibbering horrors lurk in the darkness. Topkapi can be adapted to each of these visions, baleful and benign, providing a detailed setting for countless adventures in a Middle-Eastern campaign.

Traveling to Topkapi

As Allen Varney pointed out in his article about the Underground Cities of Turkey (DRAGON® issue #201), traveling to Istanbul is relatively easy (Newark-Istanbul fares range from \$750-\$900, depending upon whether you want a direct flight or stop-overs in Europe). Topkapi is located in the Old City of Istanbul, called Sultanahmet, surprisingly close by other major attractions, including the Blue Mosque, Suleymanyen Mosque the Basilica

of Hagia Sophia, the Basilica Cistern, the Museums of Archaeology and Turkish and Islamic Art, and (of course) the spectacular Covered Bazaar. For the economically minded, check out the Frommers Guide (Turkey on \$40 a Day), which despite its lousy maps and occasionally poor directions, does manage to highlight cheap locales to eat and sleep.

My wife and I stayed at one of the small bed-and-breakfast hotels in Sultanahmet called the Berk Guest House (\$24 single, \$32 double), which was located within two minutes' walk of Topkapi and eight minutes from the Grand Bazaar. In addition to its wonderful location, the proprietor of the *pension*, a charming young woman named Yeshim, provided us with helpful advice and even included us in her circle of intimate friends for Christmas and New Year's Eve. Yeshim was not the only example of warm Turkish hospitality we encountered during our two weeks in Turkey. In general, we found Turkish people to be exceedingly warm and friendly, perhaps because they have had a long history of dealing with travelers.

Outside the Ottoman and Byzantine heritage of Istanbul, one can explore the underground cities of central Turkey (as reported by Allen Varney) and visit the excavated remains of the Hittite Culture, which dominated central Anatolia many thousands of years before the Byzantines rose to power. Otherwise, one might investigate the western Aegean coast, where ruined Greek cities sprawl magnificently across the acropoli of barren mountains and secluded valleys. Even more ruined cities lie along the southern, Mediterranean coast of Turkey, interspersed with Crusader castles and modern vacation resorts. For the historically and archaeologically inclined, a sojourn in Turkey promises to be a fascinating experience.

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