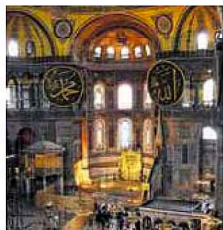




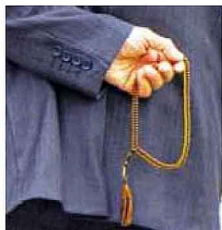
JAMES REEVE /GETTY IMAGES

The traditional city and the Suleymaniye Mosque, an Ottoman imperial mosque built in 1557, viewed from the Galata Bridge, built in 1994.



DAVID LYON FOR THE GLOBE

The 1400-year-old Hagia Sophia is a museum now.



PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE GLOBE

A man fingering his prayer beads is a common sight.



DAVID LYON FOR THE GLOBE

More than 2500 years old, a dragon from Babylon.



DAVID LYON FOR THE GLOBE

Whirling dervishes dance in Sirkeci train station.



PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE GLOBE

A lamp seller in his stall at the Grand Bazaar.

ISTANBUL

A world of spirits

Crossroads marked by an array of cultures for millennia shows signs of them all

BY PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

Turkish Delight is sold on practically every street corner in Istanbul, but the most famous place to buy the gummy candy with chopped dates or nuts is confectioner Hacı Bekir, which opened in 1777. Glass cases in the narrow shop are filled with what Istanbul call “lokum” in a rainbow of colors. When the shopkeeper sensed that we were paralyzed by so many choices, he came out from behind the counter and offered an array of samples — mint, cinnamon, pistachio, even mustard — on a silver tray.

We learned two things in that encounter. First, we don’t particularly like lokum, though we made a small purchase to be polite. Second, and more important, we realized that the details of daily life are the true Turkish delights. Again and again, small acts

of kindness and surprising moments of grace would rescue us from feeling overwhelmed by Istanbul, one of the largest, most dazzling cities in the world.

HISTORY’S CALL

Founded about 2,700 years ago as Byzantium, Istanbul has long been a cultural crossroads linking Asia and Europe. Turkey became a secular country when the republic was established in 1923, but Istanbul retains a strong Muslim heritage. About 3,000 mosques dot the city, ranging from grand royal showpieces to modest neighborhood gathering spots. From sunrise until after the last fading light of dusk, we marked the rhythms of our day by the five