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seraglio

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(səˈrɑːljəʊ) Also 6 **sarralia**, **seralyo**, **serraqlio**, 7 **seraglia**, **seralia**, **seralio**, **serraglio**, **serralia**, **surralia**, **-ya**, **zereglia**, *pl.* **seragli**. [a. It.

serraglio:—popular L. **serrāculum* enclosure, place of confinement (cf. med.L. *serrāculum* fastening of a door), f. **serrāre* (whence It. *serrare*, F. *serrer*, Sp.

cerrar) for *serāre* to lock up, close, f. *sera* lock or bolt. The It. word was, from similarity of sound, used to render the Turkish *serāi* lodging, palace (see [SERAI](#)).

The applications of the word which have been adopted in Eng. all relate to Turkey and the East, but some of them represent merely the etymological sense of the It. word, while others owe their meaning wholly or partly to the Turkish word. Cf. [SERAI](#)¹, [SERAIL](#).]

I. Enclosure, place of confinement.

1. The part of a Muslim dwelling-house (esp. of the palace of a sovereign or great noble) in which the women are secluded; the apartments reserved for wives and concubines; a harem.

1581 RICH *Farew.* Pj, The kyng of Tunise..caused her to be put in the Cube, whiche is a place where he keepeth his Concubines (as the Turke doeth his in his Serraglio [*sic*].) **1588** HICKOCK tr. *C. Frederick's Voy.* 30 One principall wife, which is kept in a Seralyo. **1610** B. JONSON *Alch.* II. ii, Thou shalt be the master Of my seraglia. **1624** MASSINGER *Renegado* I. i, Can I know my sister Mewde vp in his Serraglio..and not haste to send him To the Deuill his tutor? **1625** PURCHAS *Pilgrims* I. 553 A kinswoman of his, liuing in the Zereglia. **1653** RAMESEY *Astrol. Restored* 145 In this our age we build more Serralias then Churches. **1788** *Gentl. Mag.* LVIII. I. 100/2 Shutting up women in seraglios, and degrading them into an inferior class of beings. **1879** FARRAR *St. Paul* (1883) 233 The secrecy of Oriental seraglios.

b. The inmates of the harem; a polygamous household.

1634 SIR T. HERBERT *Trav.* 115 Each house top spred with Carpets, wheron slept a man and his peculiar Seralio. **1847** C. BRONTË *J. Eyre* xxiv, I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio.

c. *transf.* and *fig.*

1672 DRYDEN *Assignment* IV. i, This Key will admit me into the *Seraglio* of the Godly [*sc.* the Nunnery]. **1691** *Comedy, Win Her & Take Her* II. i. 15 He'll make the Drawing-Room his Seraglio. **1709** *Tatler* No. 50 ¶1 Woman was his mistress; and the whole Sex his Seraglio. **a1711** KEN *Urania* Poet. Wks. 1721 IV. 478 There I a whole Seraglio met Of flatt'ring Lusts, which me beset. **1773** WILKES *Corr.* (1805) IV. 141 One grand-signior cock, with a seraglio of seven hens. **1820** SCOTT *Monast.* i, The mighty bull moved at the head of his seraglio and their followers. **1860** MOTLEY *Netherl.* ii. (1868) I. 48 A seraglio of maids of honour ministered to Henry's pleasures. **1881** H. W. ELLIOTT *Seal Isl. Alaska* (1884) 38 The same indifference is also exhibited by the male [fur-seal] to all that may take place..outside of the boundary of his seraglio.

†2. *gen.* An enclosure; a place of confinement.

a1668 R. LASSELS *Voy. Italy* (1698) I. 136 Near to the Stables stands the Seraglio where the wild beasts are kept. **a1700** EVELYN *Diary* 15 Jan. 1645, I went to the Ghetto, where the Jewes dwell as in a suburbe by themselues... I passed by the Piazza Judea, where their Seraglio begins.

II. = [SERAI](#)¹.

3. A Turkish palace, *esp.* the palace of the Sultan at Constantinople. Now *Hist.*

1599 HAKLUYT *Voy.* II. I. 290 The..dayly paiments..by the Grand Signior..to the Officers of his Seraglio or Court. **1600** DALLAM in *Early Voy. Levant* (Hakluyt Soc. 1893) 57 The surralia..which doth joyne close to the Cittie. *Ibid.* 61 The Grand Sinyors Courte, Called the surralya. **1630** R. JOHNSON *Kingd. & Commw.* 559 The pleasantest of any Palace on the face of the earth, termed by them the Port, or Seraglio. **1682** WHELER *Journ. Greece* I. 80 All about these parts are the Serraglioes, or Countrey-houses of the great Men among the Turks. **1728** ELIZA HEYWOOD tr. *Mme. de Somez's Belle A.* (1732) II. 251 He was immediately order'd to come to the Seraglio, where he was receiv'd by the Grand Visier with all imaginable tokens of Friendship and Esteem. **1877** *Encycl. Brit.* VI. 304/2 The remains of the Seraglio, former palace of the Ottoman sultans.

†4. A place of accommodation for travellers.

1617 PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* (ed. 3) 606 At euery tenth course a Seraglia or Place of lodging for Man and Horse. **1659** EVELYN *Let. to R. Boyle* 3 Sept., At the other back front a plot walled in of a competent square for the common seraglio disposed into a garden.

†5. A warehouse. *Obs.*

1628 in Foster *Eng. Factories India* (1909) III. 230 Depositing those intended

for Cambay and Ahmadabad in the 'seraglia'. **1676** COVEL in *Early Voy. Levant* (Hakluyt Soc.) 168 On the shoar towards the factory seraglio is a fair large fountain. **1682** WHEELER *Journ. Greece* I. 42 The Currans..are..put into Ware-houses they call Seraglio's. **1712** tr. *Pomet's Hist. Drugs* I. 160 They are thrown thorow a Hole into the great Magazine, call'd the Seraglio.

†**6.** ? A barrack for a particular corps of the Turkish army; hence, a corps or grade of Turkish soldiers. *Obs.*

1600 PORY *Leo's Africa*, etc. 386 They are called home againe to the Seraglios of the Zamoglans (for so are they termed, till they be enrolled among the Ianissaries). **1613** WOTTON *Let. to Sir E. Bacon* 21 Mar., The Turk..having made a leavy..of 5000 youths out of the Seragli. **1656** EARL OF MONMOUTH tr. *Boccalini's Advts. fr. Parnass.* I. xxxii. 57 To give the command of Armies..to men of the first or second Seraglio.

III. 7. attrib. and Comb.: *seraglio-guard, lady, window, seraglio cake*, a name given to a kind of fancy bread.

1842 MERLE *Dom. Dict.* 46 *Seraglio Cake.

1821 SHELLEY *Hellas* 114 Man the *Seraglio-guard!

1717 LADY M. W. MONTAGU *Lett.* (1893) I. 294 This is the chief guardian of the *seraglio ladies.

Ibid. 323 The Grand Signior was at the *seraglio window.