6. Jahrgang 2025 | Heft 2

DİYÂR

Zeitschrift für Osmanistik,
Türkei- und Nahostforschung

Journal of Ottoman, Turkish
and Middle Eastern Studies

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Advertisements: Verlag C.H.BECK, Anzeigenabteilung, Dr. Jiri Pawelka, Wilhelmstr. 9, D-80801 München; Media-Sales: Phone: +49-89-38189-612, E-Mail: mediaberatung@beck.de

Publisher and Overall Responsibility for Production: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, Waldseestr. 3–5, D-76530 Baden-Baden, Phone: +49-7221-2104-0, Fax: +49-7221-2104-27, www.nomos.de, Geschäftsführer/CEO: Thomas Gottlöber, HRA 200026, Mannheim, Sparkasse Baden-Baden Gaggenau, IBAN DE05662500300005002266 (BIC SOLADES1BAD)

Frequency of Publication: Semi-annually

Customer Service: Phone: +49-7221-2104-280, E-Mail: service@nomos.de

ISSN 2625-9842

Diyâr

Jahrgang 6 · Heft 2 · 2025

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EINLEITUNG / INTRODUCTION

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The concept for this thematic edition emerged organically from the *Artefacts and Identities* lecture series I organized in November 2022 at the Orient-Institut Istanbul. The series aimed to examine in greater depth the dynamics of antiquities, private collections, museums, (Self)Orientalist discourses, within the complex framework of the late 19th-century Ottoman Empire and the newly formed nation-states of Turkey, Romania, and Greece. Additionally, the support I received during my fellowship (2024–2025) at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg 'inherit.heritage in transformation,' Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, funded by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space, was instrumental in developing a conceptual framework for critically engaging with emergent heritage and collecting practices in the late Ottoman Empire and its successor states. I am deeply grateful to the contributing authors, Ayşe Aldemir, Nilay Özlü, Beyza Uzun, Makbule Merve Uca, and Zeynep Simavi, whose stimulating papers not only enriched my understanding, but also significantly advanced research on heritage and museum studies in the late Ottoman Empire and its successor states.

This thematic edition seeks to address a gap in the scholarship by integrating case studies from Ottoman to post-Ottoman Romania into the broader framework of heritage and history of collections studies. It also aims to contribute to existing research by highlighting case studies from the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey that have received comparatively little attention. While the new nation-states employed heritage and artefacts as tools of nation-building, the Ottoman Empire sought to reinforce its imperial identity through Westernizing and modernizing instruments such as archaeology, private collections, and museums.

This historical landscape brought together a range of actors, local and foreign, imperial and national, in contexts further nuanced by the case studies in this volume. Our approach traces not only the material and intellectual transfers within the Ottoman Empire, but also the evolving meanings assigned to objects as they were transformed into artefacts. The studies investigate the agency of collectors and museum directors in selecting specific items, the (re)contextualization of these objects in display, and the ways in which individual, collective, gendered, national, and imperial identities shaped the content of both private and public collections.

Another focal point is the interconnectedness of institutional models and collecting practices. For example, the South Kensington Museum (later the Victoria and Albert Museum) was a source of inspiration for both Osman Hamdi Bey and Antonis Benaki, while Sadberk Koç decided to create her own private museum after visiting the Benaki Museum. Finally, this edition brings together researchers and museum professionals to foster dialogue between these two complementary fields of expertise.

Among the common themes explored in these articles are: the interplay between collecting and heritage practices and the development of object taxonomies of Islamic

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 209–213, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-209

art; the shift from the Orientalist umbrella term 'Oriental' to more specific categories such as Persian, Arab, Turkish, and Ottoman; Europe as a civilizational model for both the imperial capital of Constantinople and provincial regions such as the Danubian Principalities; and the influence of Beaux-Arts principles (e.g., object type, material) on classificatory systems.

Building on Tülay Artan's work on the pre-modern collecting practices of the members of the imperial family,[1] Ayşe Aldemir's article offers much-needed nuance to the context surrounding the imperial collections, particularly the connection between Islamic calligraphy as part of the sultan's education and the private library as a form of collection. Approaching calligraphy as a Gesamtkunstwerk, bridging architecture with the dual roles of sultans as both calligraphers and collectors, Aldemir foregrounds a pre-Tanzimat understanding of collecting practices in the Ottoman Empire. She examines conventional cataloguing practices, particularly under Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), who systematically recorded *levhas* and other works of calligraphy produced by earlier sultans. This practice, observed mainly from the 19th century onwards, appears to have originated in his personal decision to view a *levha* created by his grandfather, Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703–1730). Successive sultans expanded these inventories, reflecting an ongoing institutionalization of cataloguing. Aldemir also explores the deep connections between sultanic calligraphic production and Ottoman concepts of power, where authority was seen as something to be both inherited and cultivated through training. Her analysis further addresses the interplay between communication and the display of sultanic power within sacred spaces, such as mosques, and the centrality of calligraphy in the Ottoman world. The display of sultanic calligraphic panels, often outside the imperial capital of Constantinople, was a deliberate projection of authority, offering a distinct perspective on the concept of exhibiting artefacts.

Beyza Uzun's article opens a discussion on the relationship between the meaning of Islamic art and its valuation within Eurocentric heritage frameworks. In conversation with Aldemir's contribution to this issue and Artan's earlier work on pre-modern collectors, Uzun's approach underscores the importance of redefining what constitutes a collection, what qualifies as collecting practice, and what it means for an object to be considered part of a museum, beyond Eurocentric parameters. Focusing on the European antiquities race, especially the pursuit of Roman and Greek artefacts within the Ottoman Empire's territories, Uzun highlights the negotiation over the value of Islamic objects, shaped both by external pressures and by the political Islam promoted in the late Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909).[2] Engaging with concepts of authenticity and the politics of defining heritage, she critiques Western-centered museology. She also situates the valuation of Islamic art within broader heritage chronologies: compared to the millennia-old antiquities of Mesopotamia, Islamic artefacts were often deemed of lesser significance. Drawing on heritage laws, taxonomies (such as object inventories and classifications within the Imperial

1 Artan 2011.
2 Eldem 2025.

Museum), the agency of key heritage actors, and contemporary travel literature, Uzun maps the fluid meanings and values attached to heritage and the ways in which Ottoman identity(ies) became entwined with it.

Building on the collecting practices discussed in Aldemir's article and the institutional history examined by Uzun, Nilay Özlü turns to the transformation of Topkapı Sarayı from an Ottoman imperial residence into a museum, with a particular focus on three pavilions: the Fatih Pavilion, the Çinili Köşk, and the Privy Chamber. Bringing together the performative and symbolic functions of these spaces, Özlü introduces the concept of 'proto-museal institutions' to highlight the dynamic processes of heritage-making in the Ottoman Empire. She interprets the accumulation of objects in the Fatih Pavilion as potentially constituting a 'private Wunderkammer of Mehmed II' (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), but stresses that Ottoman imperial collecting strategies were distinct in that many objects retained ceremonial or practical functions, often used by successive rulers. The sacred relics collection, for instance, was closely tied to the empire's territorial expansion and to the transfer of the emblems of the Caliphate to the Ottoman dynasty. Özlü traces the changing contexts in which these objects were engaged: from being part of the Sultan's living quarters, to relocation into a dedicated site for worship and political display, to their inclusion in public processions from the newer palaces of Dolmabahçe or Yıldız back to the ancestral seat of Topkapı.

Her paper provides the crucial link between pre-Westernization collecting practices, deeply intertwined with political representation and dynastic legitimacy, and the transformation of spaces like the Çinili Köşk into sites for experimenting with Western display standards and taxonomies. This process involved archaeologists such as Philipp Anton Dethier and Salomon Reinach. As Özlü observes, 'these three collections manifested diverse narratives, they were open to distinct audiences, and each adopted different display strategies, communicating distinct discourses of power, tradition, heritage, and modernity.'

Filling a gap in the study of private collectors during the late Ottoman Empire to early Republican transitional period, and especially focusing on women collectors, Merve Uca's article brings to light previously unpublished and little-known materials about the collecting practices of Sadberk Koç. Uca deftly addresses the political backdrop that shaped both Sadberk Koç's life and her choice of objects, highlighting the expected social roles for women at the time. Political scientist Gizem Zencirci has argued that Sadberk Hanım's husband, Vehbi Koç, played a crucial role in how private foundations came to be seen as partners of the state: 'During the 1960s, vakıfs were expected to support the state's pursuit of economic development by focusing their philanthropic investments on domains such as health, education, and cultural arts.'[3]

Engaging with this particular private collection also provides a valuable opportunity to explore the reference institutions that shaped public and private heritage initiatives in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican era. For example, the South Kensington Museum served as a model for both Osman Hamdi Bey, who envisioned an

3 Zencirci 2015, 543.

arts and crafts museum for Islamic artefacts, and Antonis Benakis, the founder of the Benaki Museum. The Benaki Museum, in turn, became a revelation for Sadberk Koç during her travels, particularly because of its Ottoman-era textiles and metalwork, many of which can be traced back to the Asia Minor population exchange. Uca's approach to collecting practices is sensitive not only to these institutional influences but also to the complex relationship between Sadberk's agency as a woman in this transitional period and the contents of her collection. The Sadberk Hanım Museum explores how objects marked different rites of passage in a woman's life, such as items associated with marriage ceremonies, ritual visits to the hammam, or the circumcision of sons.

Similarly, the private collection of Dimitrie Papazoglu, a figure often regarded as a dilettante in Romanian scholarship and marginal in international academia, presents another case study of private and public entanglement in heritage practices. Additionally, Papazoglu is among the few private collectors to include Islamic and Ottoman era objects among Greek and Roman antiquities, in a collection assembled within the complex transitional period of the Danubian Principalities to a nation state. The complexity of his heritage strategies included the publication of a catalogue of his collection. Papazoglu intended for the catalogue to serve as a tool for knowledge production, and of self-branding as a man of heritage. Consequently, the catalogue facilitates an improved understanding of the agency of a collector in a region that was actively in the process of gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire, in collecting Islamic and Ottoman era objects. To what extent can Papazoglu's collecting practices be seen through Yannis Hamilakis's concept of indigenous archaeologies, given that his (self)identities operated on an inter-imperial level with shifting allegiances? What does it mean that Papazoglu categorized Islamic and Ottoman artefacts as 'Oriental rarities,' and what does this reveal about art historiographical discourses on Islamic art? Dimitrie Papazoglu emerges as a fascinating case study of transitional, inter-imperial, and Westernizing practices in collecting and heritage institutionalization, especially in the marginalized region of Southeast Europe under Ottoman rule.

The interplay between artefacts and the politics of heritage as a tool of soft power is especially significant in the complex context of early Republican Turkey, as the United States assumed a role in 'civilizing' the Middle East. Zeynep Simavi's article, focusing on the 1950s, weaves together cultural diplomacy, knowledge production, and exhibition history to unravel how Ottoman and Turkish art was displayed, categorized, and sometimes reclassified. Simavi highlights the crucial dynamics between the establishment of Islamic art area studies at universities like the University of Michigan (where Mehmet Ağa Oğlu taught in 1935), Princeton, and Harvard, and the history of exhibiting Islamic art in the U.S., what she terms 'the groundwork for Islamic art history.' She shows how these narratives shaped taxonomies that distinguished Ottoman-era art from Republican and even pre-Ottoman (Selçuk) artefacts.

Through detailed analyses of two case-study exhibitions, the 1954 show at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, which complemented a course at Harvard, and a planned traveling exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Simavi reveals a significant nexus in heritage politics surrounding the collection and display of Islamic art. Moreover, drawing on previously unknown archival materials, the article makes a major contribution

to understanding the circulation and politics of Islamic art heritage, including how loan policies, tied to cultural diplomacy and political contexts, led to delays or even cancellations of exhibitions (see also the Bulgarian traveling project for the Louvre, cancelled in 2020).

This special edition aims to further the scholarship on the variety of heritage practices emerging in late Ottoman Empire and its successor states by focusing on the particularities of case studies. This approach could prove productive in understanding the object and building biographies by situating them in the complex transitional contexts they emerge in, in tandem with the agency of the persons involved in their collection, curation, display, research. Moreover, it engages with how heritage practices are embedded in processes of art historiographical discourse and how they shape and are shaped by institutional structures.

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Royal Calligraphers of the Ottoman Dynasty: Insights from the Topkapı Palace Archives[1]

Abstract

This article examines the calligraphic production of Ottoman sultans from the early eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, drawing on a corpus of largely unstudied archival inventories. It argues that royal calligraphy was not only a personal and devotional pursuit but also a form of dynastic self-fashioning, institutional memory, and architectural inscription. Beginning with Sultan Ahmed III and culminating in the reign of Sultan Mehmed VI, the essay traces the evolution of sultanic calligraphy through its material forms, instructional contexts, and spatial deployment in sacred sites. It situates these practices within broader transformations in palace life and Ottoman visual culture.

Keywords: Ottoman calligraphy, sultanic authorship, Topkapı Palace, archival inventories, royal inscriptions, devotional art

1. Introduction

The education of royal children, particularly princes, at the Ottoman court was enriched with lessons in calligraphy (*hüsnühat*), foreign languages, and literature, which formed integral components of their specialised training. As a result, the practices of reading texts in multiple languages and mastering the art of calligraphy became deeply embedded in the lives of dynasty members from an early age. Immersed in a culture of books, these individuals developed a profound appreciation for literary and artistic excellence. They sought to acquire the rarest and most exquisitely crafted volumes; commissioning works from the most prominent artists of their era. These books, adorned with elegant calligraphy, gilded and illuminated with vibrant colours, occasionally illustrated, and bound in ornate covers, were not only treasured possessions but also served as the foundation for private libraries established by the Ottoman ruling elite.[2]

Although Ottoman calligraphy has long been the subject of rich scholarship, studies have tended to privilege celebrated master calligraphers, stylistic genealogies, and the production of Qur'an manuscripts and albums, often treating sultanic calligraphy as an ancillary phenomenon. More recent work has begun to reconsider the sovereign's

1 The earliest documents in the Topkapı Palace Archives regarding calligraphy by sultans dates to the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839). Consequently, this article focuses on calligrapher sultans from Mahmud II onwards.

2 See Tanındı 2019, 21–95.

hand as a site of artistic authorship and symbolic power, particularly in architectural and ceremonial settings.[3] This article advances that conversation by introducing and analysing a group of archival inventories – compiled between the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – that document calligraphic works produced by members of the Ottoman dynasty. These registers, many of which remain unpublished and largely unexamined, bring into focus how sultanic calligraphy was recorded, preserved, and displayed within the imperial palace. By drawing sustained attention to these sources for the first time, the article reveals how royal calligraphy functioned not only as a personal and devotional practice, but also as a medium of dynastic commemoration, institutional memory, and spatial inscription.

This bibliophilic tradition is exemplified by several notable figures and collections: Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) amassed a collection of books in both Eastern and Western languages; Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) maintained a close relationship with his calligraphy instructor Şeyh Hamdullah (d. 1520) and curated a collection of rare manuscripts; Sultan Mustafa II (r. 1695–1703) and his brother Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703–1730) developed strong ties with their tutor Hâfız Osman (d. 1698), with Sultan Ahmed III constructing an independent library within the Topkapı Palace. Sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730–1754) oversaw the establishment of libraries adjacent to the Hagia Sophia Mosque and in front of the qibla wall of the Fatih Mosque. The Nuruosmaniye Library, also initiated by Sultan Mahmud I, was completed during the reign of Sultan Osman III (r. 1754–1757), while Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) created a library within the Yıldız Palace. Additionally, *valide sultan*s such as Hatice Turhan Sultan (d. 1683), Bezmiâlem Valide Sultan (d. 1853), and Pertevniyal Valide Sultan (d. 1884) established endowed libraries that housed rare and valuable books. Collectively, these examples reflect the Ottoman dynasty's enduring fascination with books and their commitment to cultivating literary and artistic legacies that spanned centuries. By the eighteenth century, this bibliophilic culture had begun to leave a visible imprint on the architecture of the court itself, as sultans and *valide sultan*s commissioned freestanding library buildings that embodied both aesthetic ideals and evolving practices of knowledge collection. The relationship between such architectural patronage and the court's literary culture has been the subject of recent scholarship, including studies that explore how these libraries functioned as both intellectual and symbolic spaces.[4]

The integration of calligraphy into palace life was not limited to appreciation or patronage. Members of the royal family who pursued calligraphy – particularly princes – were trained in its technical and aesthetic dimensions, often under the supervision of court-appointed masters. As with other professional calligraphers, their works followed a system of formal apprenticeship, culminating in the awarding of an *icâzet* (calligraphic diploma), which authorised the student to sign their work. These signed compositions – typically *levha*s (calligraphic panels), *kıt'a*s (calligraphic compositions), or entire manu-

3 See Keskiner 2012.
4 See, for example, Sezer 2016.

scripts – often included a *ketebe*, the calligrapher's colophon or inscription, identifying the author and, occasionally, his master or the date and purpose of the work.

For sultanic calligraphers, these *ketebe*s frequently echoed the structure of their *tuğra* (imperial monogram), with the sultan's name followed by his father's name. While some royal inscriptions took the form of simplified *tuğra*-like compositions, others used more conventional script layouts, often in *celî thuluth* or *ta'lîq*. These forms of writing circulated not only within the albums and libraries of the palace but also in architectural inscriptions, mosque panels, and ceremonial settings. Understanding these practices and formats is essential for interpreting the inventories that follow, which catalogue a wide range of such objects and inscriptions.

Among the members of the Ottoman dynasty, those with both talent and inclination sought to produce their own calligraphic works, transcribing their own books, creating *kıt'a*s and *levha*s. A Qur'an manuscript copied by Prince Korkud (d. 1513), the son of Sultan Bayezid II, a calligrapher and bibliophile, is dated to around 1500.[5] Similarly, a Qur'an manuscript transcribed by Prince Mehmed (d. 1756), one of the sons of Sultan Ahmed III, is dated 1167 AH (1754).[6] Although Sultan Ahmed III and Sultan Mahmud II are also reported to have copied Qur'an manuscripts, these works have not survived to the present day.[7] From the reign of Sultan Ahmed III, calligrapher sultans – like other calligraphers of the time – began to frequently produce *levha*s. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, the practice of adorning walls with *levha*s in gilded frames became widespread.

In a portrait album from the period of Mahmud II that survives to this day, Ottoman sultans are depicted in interiors embellished with *levha*s inscribed in *zer-endüd* on black backgrounds, displayed in gilded frames, either hung on the walls in gilded frames or propped against them (Figure 1).[8] From the reign of Sultan Ahmed III onward, and particularly until the close of Sultan Abdülmecid's reign (r. 1839–1861), calligrapher sultans often created these *levha*s, drawing inspiration from those they observed in their surroundings. Numerous *levha*s bearing the signatures of sultans were produced during this period.

Registers documenting works created by sultans from the time of Mahmud II onward shed light on this prolific production. Furthermore, these records represent the initial efforts to establish a distinct sub-collection of sultanic calligraphy within the treasury of the Topkapı Palace.

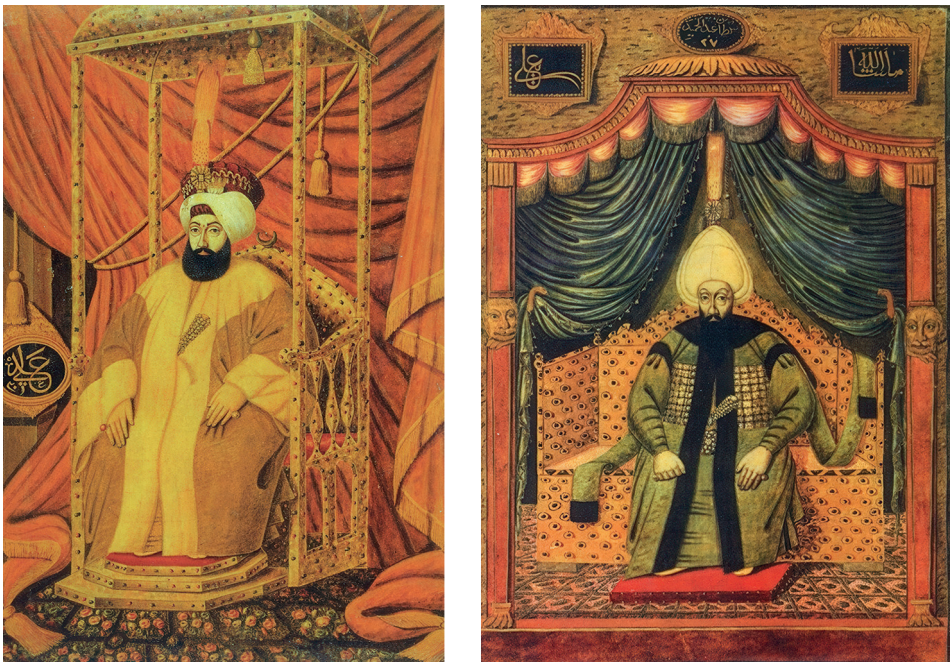
5 Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 100-0279. See Tanındı and Aldemir 2023, 194–5.

6 Süleymaniye Library-Yeni Cami, inv. no. 1. See Derman 2010, 258–9.

7 Müstakîmzâde discusses to whom Sultan Ahmed III presented the Qur'ans he transcribed; however, these copies have not survived. See Müstakîmzâde 2014, 75. See also Derman 2010, 259.

8 For the Kıraç Album, see Renda 1992.

Figure 1. Portraits of Ottoman sultans from an album prepared during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839). Courtesy Kıraç Family



2. Sultanic Calligraphy in the Ottoman Archives

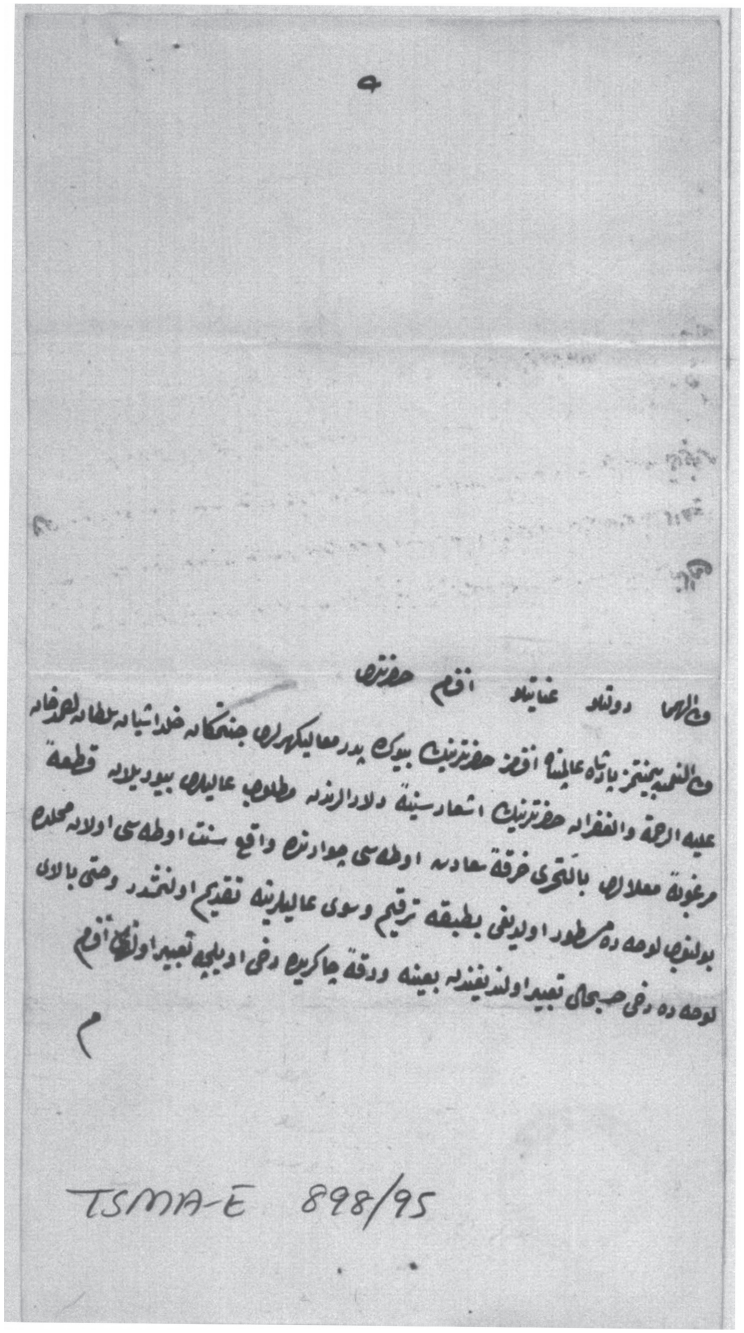
From the nineteenth century onward, archival records not only documented the identification of calligraphic panels within the palace, but also maintained dedicated registers of calligraphic works personally executed by the sultans.[9] A document dated 17 *Rebîülevvel* 1255 AH (31 May 1839) suggests that the impetus for systematically recording these works stemmed from Sultan Mahmud II's request to view a *levha* inscribed by his grandfather, Sultan Ahmed III (Figure 2).[10] The document recounting this event states:

> Our sovereign, the beneficent and unrivalled ruler of the world, His Majesty the Sultan, requested the distinguished and esteemed *levha*s inscribed by his grandfather, the noble and illustrious Sultan Ahmed Han – may he rest in eternal mercy and forgiveness. Upon investigation, the sought-after *kıt'a* was found in the Circumcision Cham-

9 These documents from the State Ottoman Archives have been identified here for the first time. I would like to thank Fuat Recep for his assistance in translating these documents and interpreting certain phrases.

10 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.e. 898-95.

Figure 2. Document dated 31 May 1839, presented to Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839). Directorate of State Archives



ber (*Sünnet Odası*) located near the Chamber of the Holy Mantle (*Hırka-i Saadet Odası*). The *levha* was verified and presented to His Majesty. Moreover, as the panel bore an inscription referred to as 'conversation' (*hasbihâl*), this terminology was preserved in the official report, mirroring the wording on the original manuscript.[11]

According to this account, the search led to the discovery of Sultan Ahmed III's *levha* in the Circumcision Chamber of the Topkapı Palace. A precise copy of the *levha* was made and presented to Sultan Mahmud II. On the same day, presumably in response to or as a continuation of this command, a list was compiled documenting *levha*s created by various calligrapher sultans and other distinguished calligraphers (Figure 3).[12]

The document in question is undated and does not specify the locations where the *levha*s were kept. However, it has been classified along with the record dated 17 *Rebîülevvel* 1255 AH (31 May 1839). Some of the *levha*s listed in this document can still be found in the Topkapı Palace today. The sheer number of calligraphic works enumerated suggests that the list was compiled as part of an effort to document the sultanic calligraphy held within the palace. While the document does not explicitly state which sultan commissioned it, the frequent use of the phrase *şevketli efendimiz* (our glorious sovereign) in reference to Sultan Mahmud II and his works strongly indicates that the list was prepared on his command.

According to the list titled 'The Blessed Imperial Calligraphic Works of Our Glorious, Noble, and Magnanimous Sovereign, the Benefactor of the World and Our Patron,'[13] the recorded items include:

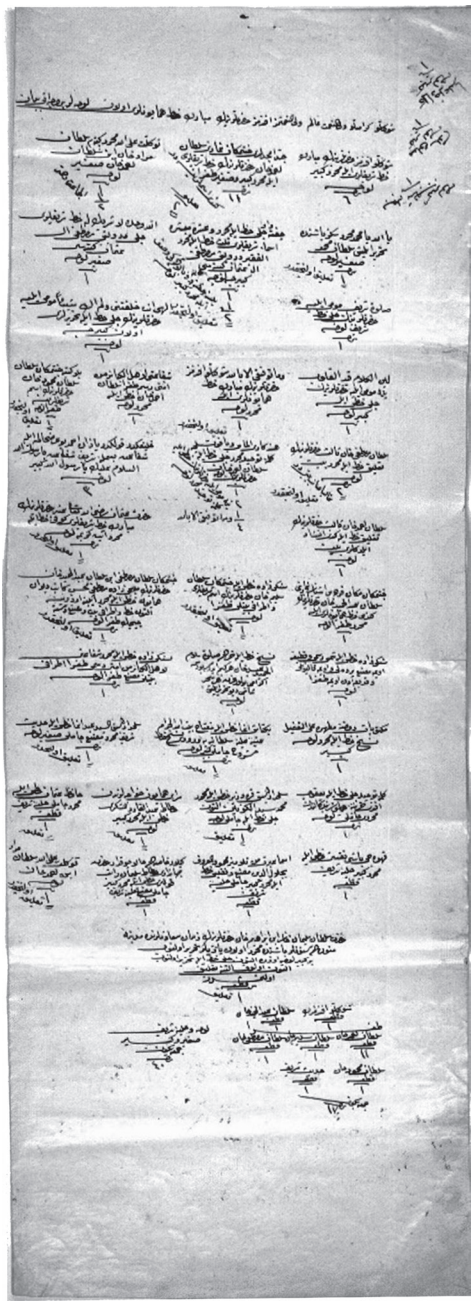
Six large *levha*s inscribed in the blessed calligraphy of our glorious sovereign,
Eleven large and small *tuğra* (imperial monogram) *levha*s inscribed in the blessed calligraphy of his exalted forebear, the late Sultan Ahmed Han, may his soul rest in paradise (recorded under his own name),
One small *levha* inscribed with *Tevekkeltü ʿalā Allāh* (I place my trust in God) by Sultan Murad Han, son of Sultan Ahmed Han,
One small *levha* inscribed with *Al-jamāʿatu raḥmatun* (The congregation is mercy),
One small *levha* inscribed with *Yā Allāh, Yā Muḥammad* (O God, O Muhammad), written by Sultan Mehmed at the age of eight (to be mounted),
One large *levha* inscribed with a double *waw* motif in *celî* script, along with the names of the *Aşere-i Mübeşşere* (the ten companions of the Prophet Muhammad promised paradise) in *thuluth* script, attributed to Derviş Mustafa 'Alî Osman,

11 *'Veliyyi i niʿmet i bî minnetimiz Padişah ı Alempenâh efendimiz hazretlerinin Büyük peder i meʿâlî gevherleri cennet-mekan hallede âşiyân Sultan Ahmed Han aleyhi'r-rahmeti ve'l gufrân hazretlerinin işʿâr ı seniyye i dilârâlarından matlûb ı âlîleri buyurulan kıtʿa i mergûbe i muʿallâları bi't taharrî Hırka i Saadet Odası civarında vaki Sünnet Odası olan mahalde bulunup levhada mastûr olduğu bi tıbkihî terkim ve sûy ı âlîlerine takdim olunmuştur ve hattâ bâlâ yı levhada dahi hasbihal tabir olunduğundan bi aynihî varaka i çâkerîde dahi öylece tabir olundu efendim.'*

12 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 6224.

13 '*Şevketli kerâmetli veliyy i niʿmet i âlem veliyy i niʿmetimiz efendimiz hazretlerinin mübârek hatt ı hümayunları olan levhalar ber vech i âtî beyân*'

Figure 3. Inventory dated 31 May 1839, presented to Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839). Directorate of State Archives



One large *penbe çanta vav levha* inscribed in the same manner,
One small *levha* inscribed in *celî* script with *Innallāha waḥdahu lā sharīka lah* (Indeed, God is One, and there is no partner to him), attributed to Derviş Mustafa ʻAlî Osman,
One large *levha* inscribed in *celî* script with the *Salawāt-i Şerîf* (Blessings upon the Prophet),
One large *levha* inscribed in *celî* script with *Ilāhī anta khalaqtanī wa lam akun shay'an* (O Lord, You created me when I was nothing),
One large *levha* inscribed in *celî* script with *Layyin al-kalām qayyid al-qulūb* (Gentle speech binds hearts),
One *levha* inscribed in celî script with *Wa mā tawfîqī illā bi-llāh* (My success is only through God), written in the blessed hand of our glorious sovereign,
One *levha* inscribed with *Shafāʻatī li-ahl al-kabā'ir min ummatī* (My intercession is for the great sinners of my community) in *resm tuğra* script by Sultan Ahmed Han,
One *tuğra levha* bearing the noble name of the late Sultan Mahmud Han,
Two *levha*s inscribed in *taʻlîq* script with couplets by Sultan Mustafa Han III (likely attributed to Sa'ib) (to be mounted),
One *levha* inscribed in *celî* script with *Kalimat al-Tawḥīd* (The declaration of divine unity), embellished with Indian craftsmanship and diamonds, attributed to Sultan Ahmed Han,[14]
Two additional *levha*s inscribed in the noble hand of Sultan Ahmed Han with *Kalimat al-Tawḥīd*,
Four *levha*s inscribed with *Wa mā tawfîqī illā bi-llāh*,
Three large *levha*s featuring the inscriptions *Shafāʻat* (Intercession), *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), and *Shafāʻat yā Rasūl Allāh, As-salāmu ʻalayka yā Rasūl Allāh* (O Messenger of God, intercede for us; Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God),
One *levha* inscribed with a couplet in *taʻlîq* script by Sultan Ahmed Han III, composed by the sultan himself,
One *levha* inscribed with a Qur'anic verse in *kufî* script in the blessed hand of Caliph ʻUthmān ibn ʻAffān, may God be pleased with him (to be mounted),
One *tuğra levha* in the noble hand of his Majesty Sultan Abdülhamid Han, may he dwell in paradise,
One *levha* bearing a *tuğra* inscribed in the noble hand of His Majesty Sultan Abdülhamid Han, may he dwell in paradise,
One *levha* inscribed with the name of His Majesty Sultan Selim, may he dwell in paradise, surrounded by verses, written in the hand of Sinekîzâde (to be mounted),
One *tuğra levha* inscribed in gold script on a mirror, bearing the name of His Majesty Sultan Mustafa, son of Sultan Abdülhamid, surrounded by verses and an intricate floral design, written in the hand of Mâbeyncizâde Mustafa Muhsin, Court Scribe of the Imperial Council (to be mounted),

14 This *levha* is a *Kelime-i Tevhid [Testimony of Faith]*, adorned with diamonds and rubies, which Sultan Ahmed III commissioned to be hung on the wall of the Privy Chamber in the Chamber of the Holy Mantle, as will be discussed below.

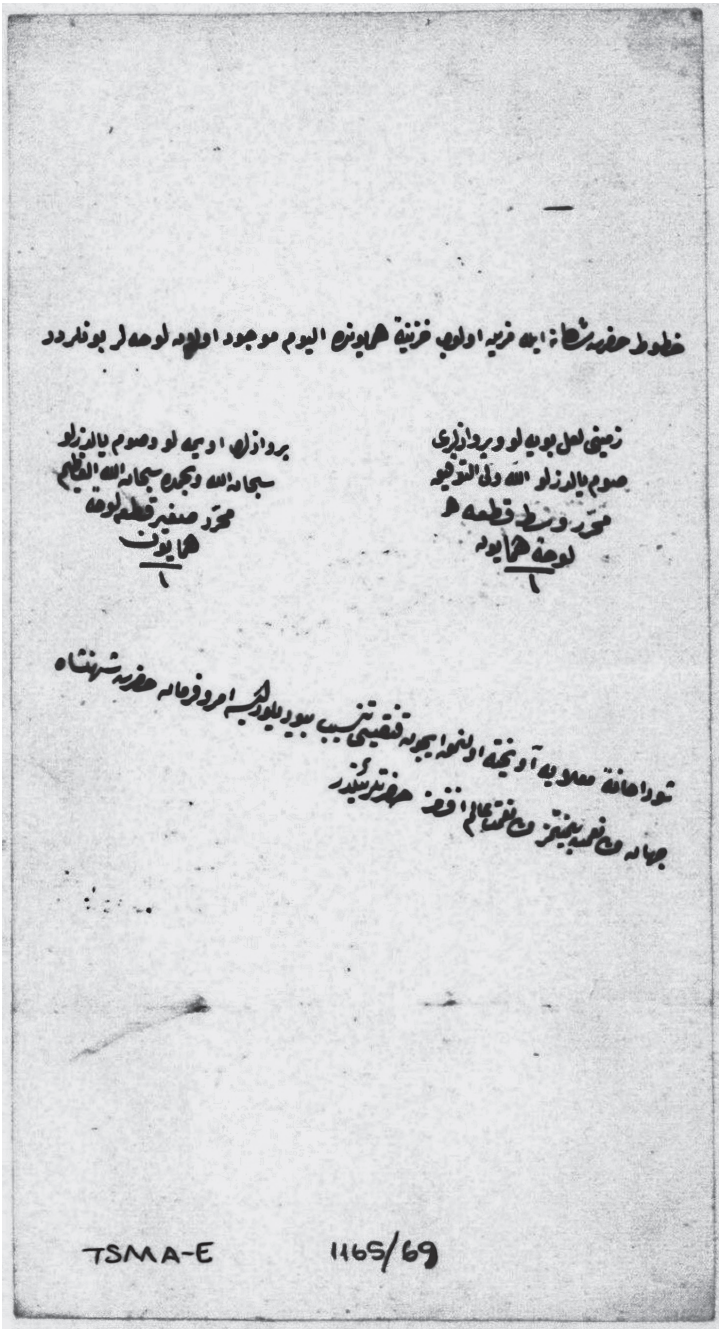
One *levha* featuring a sun motif, an elaborately carved velvet curtain, and an embossed *tuğra*, created with stencilled and cut-out velvet, written in the hand of Sinekîzâde,
One *levha* inscribed in *naskh* script with a prayer of blessings: 'El-Hamîd Abd Han – Whoever recites this image every morning shall find steadfastness and be immersed in intercession,'
One *tuğra levha* elaborately designed and surrounded by verses, bearing the inscription: 'My intercession is for those among my community who commit grave sins,' written in the hand of Sinekîzâde,
One *levha* inscribed with 'I place my trust in God,' written for Sultan Murad, son of Sultan Ahmed (to be mounted),
During the blessed era of His Majesty Sultan Süleyman, son of Sultan Ibrahim, inscriptions recorded on the columns of Medina were transcribed onto a large *levha* in gold *celî* script and mounted beneath the golden eaves.
One couplet by our glorious sovereign,
One couplet by Sultan Abdülhamid Han,
Eleven couplets by Sultan Ahmed Han,
One couplet by Sultan Selim Han,
One couplet by Sultan Mustafa Han,
One couplet by Sultan Mahmud Han,
One couplet containing a hadith,
Total: 17 pieces.
*Levha*s and *Hilye-i Şerif*s, both large and small.
Total 40 pieces.

It is highly probable that, when the *levha* by Sultan Ahmed III that he wished to see was only found as the result of extensive searching, Sultan Mahmud II ordered the comprehensive inventory of the *levha*s housed within the Topkapı Palace. This directive was issued just a month before his death on 28 June 1839, and the aforementioned *levha* may well have been the last to which he devoted particular attention. Two months later, within the same Circumcision Chamber, the ceremonial beard-growing ritual, known as the *tesrîh-i lihye*, was performed as part of his son Sultan Abdülmecid's enthronement. Shortly thereafter, a new list of the *levha*s created by the sultans, housed in the Imperial Treasury, was presented to Sultan Abdülmecid.[15]

The short inventory titled 'Calligraphic panels adorned with His Majesty's handwriting currently held in the Imperial Treasury,'[16] dated 29 *Zilhicce* 1256 AH (21 February 1841), details two sultanic calligraphic works housed in the Treasury. These are described as follows: 'A central imperial panel, inscribed with '*Allahü Veliyyü't-Tefvîk*,' set against a red enamelled ground with borders gilded in solid gold,' and 'A smaller panel, inscribed with '*Sübhânallah ve bi-hamdihî Sübhânallâhi'l-Azîm*,' featuring ornamental borders and gilding in solid gold' (Figure 4). The concluding statement of the document, 'To be

15 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.e 1195-69.
16 '*Hututı hazreti şâhâne ile müzeyyen olup Hazinei Hümayunda elyevm mevcud olan levhalar bunlardır*'

Figure 4. Inventory dated 21 February 1841, presented to Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861). Directorate of State Archives



placed in the exalted council chamber, whichever is deemed suitable by His Majesty, the Shah of the World, our gracious benefactor, the most compassionate master of the World,' implies that the official drafting the document was presenting the Sultan a choice regarding which of the two *levha*s should be displayed in the council chamber. This further illuminates the sultan's purpose in commissioning the inventory.

A subsequent inventory, prepared at the behest of Sultan Abdülmecid, is dated 16 *Rebîülâhir* 1277 AH (1 November 1860).[17] This is a more detailed record, cataloguing the *levha*s within the palace. Notably, the list includes the entry '*Esmâ-i Şerîfler* in His Excellency's handwriting,' signifying a work executed by Sultan Abdülmecid himself.

Another register, dated 17 *Teşrinisani* 1292 AR (12 *Zilkade* 1293 AH / 29 November 1876) appears to have been prepared at the command of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Figure 5).[18] This extensive list includes, among other entries, panegyrics to the sultans as well as *tuğra*s. The *levha*s created by the sultans are catalogued as follows:

> One *levha* in *ta'liq* script, emanating from the pearls of Sultan Mahmud Han's noble handwriting, one *levha* inscribed with the *hadith* '*Shafâ'atî*' in the handwriting of Sultan Mahmud Han, one *levha* inscribed with '*Hazret-i Halid*' in the handwriting of Sultan Abdülmecid, one *levha* inscribed with *Wa mā tawfiqī*.[19]

While the document does not specify the exact palace to which these *levha*s belong, it is reasonable to infer that they are among the calligraphic works housed in the Topkapı Palace, given that the document itself is part of the Palace's archives.

An additional, undated inventory, also found among the archival materials, offers another detailed record (Figure 6).[20] Notably, it references a calligraphic work from the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876), dated to 1283 AH (1866–1867). This suggests that the inventory was likely compiled after Sultan Abdülaziz's reign, most probably under Sultan Abdülhamid II. Unlike the earlier lists, this document specifies the dates of composition for each of the works.

> One small *levha* inscribed with *Yâ Allah Yâ Muhammed*, written by Sultan Mehmed Han at the age of eight,
> One *levha* inscribed with a couplet recited by Sultan Ahmed Han III upon receiving his robe of honour,
> One *levha* in *ta'liq* script inscribed with *Tevekkeltü alallah* by Sultan Murad b. Ahmed Han (year 1040),
> One *levha* inscribed with a couplet written by Sultan Mustafa Sâlis Han (year 1188),
> One *levha* inscribed with a couplet composed by Sultan Mustafa Sâlis Han (year 1180),

17 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 10429-1 and 10429-2.
18 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.e. 613-73.
19 The *levha* written by Sultan Abdülmecid, known as *Hazret-i Halid*, was written for Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (d. 669), commonly known as Eyüp Sultan. The sultan's calligraphy in the Eyüp Sultan tomb will be discussed further below.
20 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 10705.

Figure 5. Inventory dated 29 November 1876, presented to Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). Directorate of State Archives

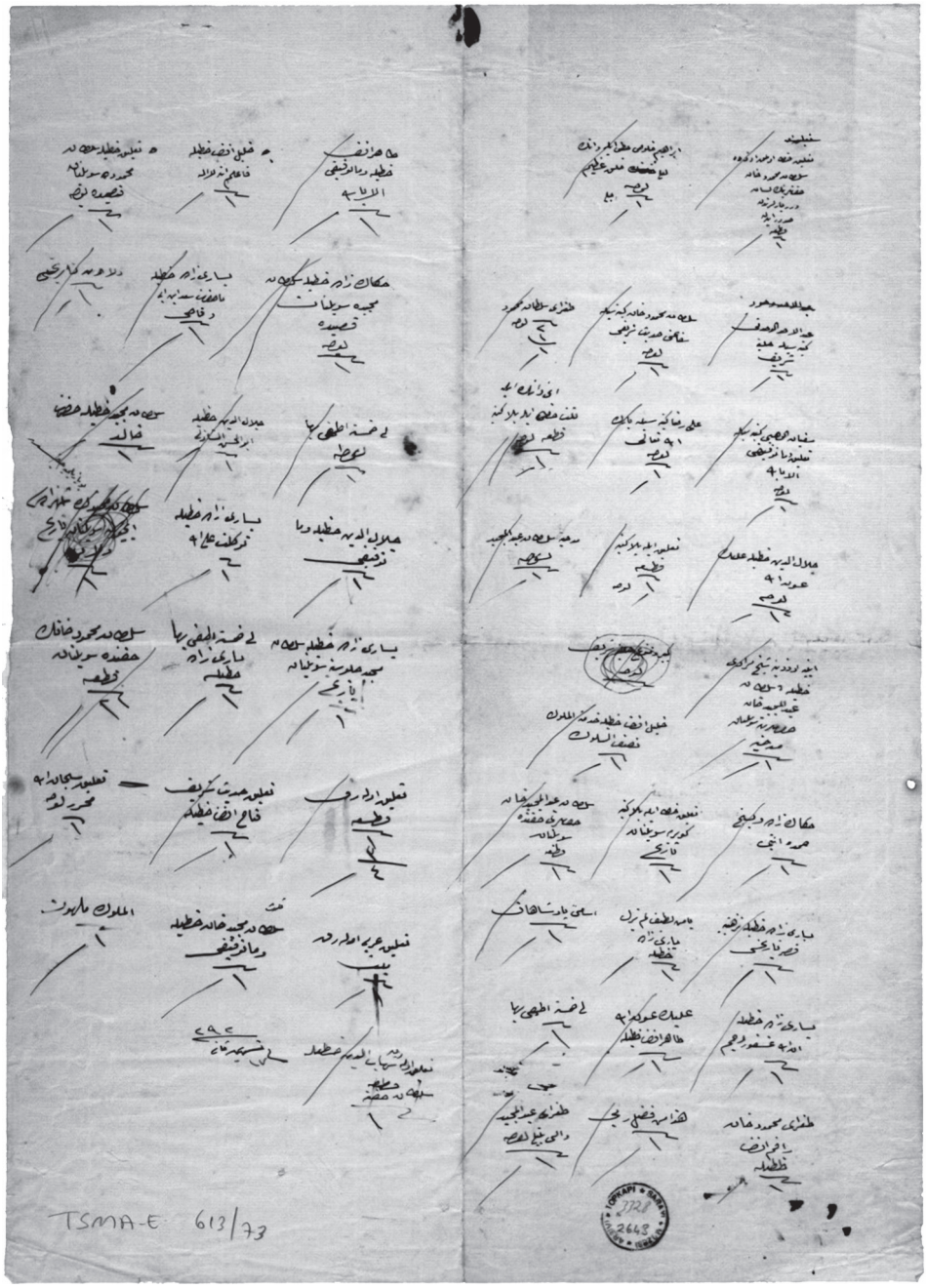
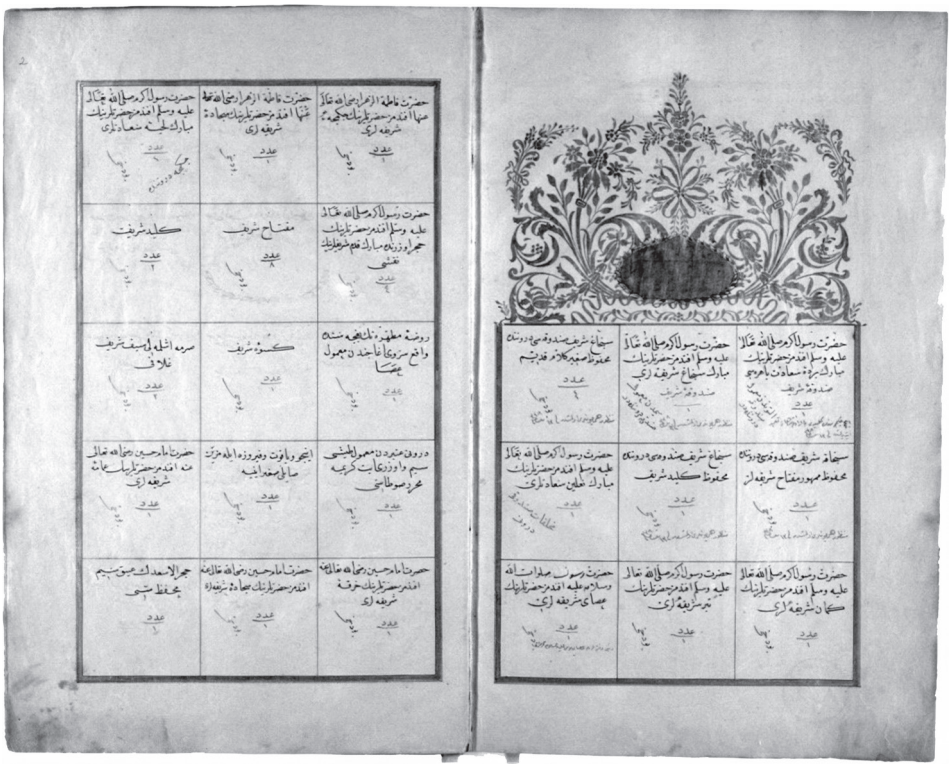


Figure 6. An undated inventory, probably presented to Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). Directorate of State Archives



One *levha* inscribed with *Seyyidü'l kavmi hâdimühüm*, written by Sultan Abdülmecid Han,
One *levha* inscribed with *Bismillah teyemmünen bi zikrihi'l celîl*, written by Sultan Abdülaziz Han (year 1283),
One large double *waw levha* written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II (year 1105),
One *levha* with a *tuğra* written by Sultan Ahmed Han,
One large double *waw levha* written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II,
One large *levha* inscribed with *Besmele-i Şerif*, written by Sultan Mahmud Hân II,
One large *levha* inscribed with *Salât-i Şerîf*, written by Sultan Mahmud Hân II (year 1226),
One *levha* inscribed with *Allah vahdehû lâ şerike lehû*, written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II (year 1105),
One *tuğra* written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han (year 1121),

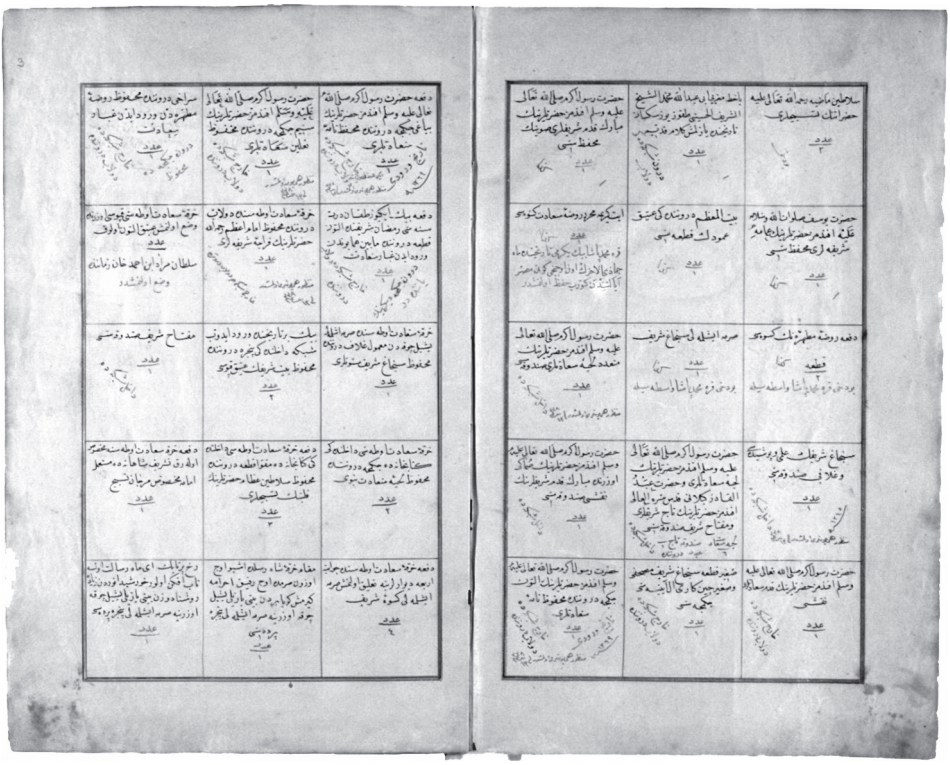
One *levha* inscribed with the *kelime-i tevhîd*, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han,
One small *levha* inscribed with *El Cemâʿatü rahmetün*, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han,
One large *levha* inscribed *with Şefâʿat Yâ Rasûlallah*, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han,
One *levha* in *naskh* script inscribed with Six Verses from the Holy Qur'an, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han
One *levha* inscribed with *Ve mâ Tevfîkî illâ billâh*, written by Sultan Mahmud Hân II (year 1222),
One large *levha* inscribed with *Leyyinü'l-Kelâm Kayyidü'l-Kulûb*, written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II (year 1103),
One *levha* inscribed with *Elhamdülillah alâ niʿamihî*, written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II and illuminated by Sultan Ahmed III,
One *tuğra*-shaped *levha* inscribed with the hadith *Şefâʿatî li ehli'l kebâir min ümmetî*, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han (year 1123),
One *levha* inscribed with *Ve mâ tevfîki illâ billâh*, written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han,
One geometric *levha* made using a compass, written by Sultan Mehmed IV ibn İbrahim Han
One *tuğra levha* written by Sultan Mehmed IV ibn İbrahim Han (year 1160),
One short *tuğra levha* written by Sultan Mustafa II ibn Mehmed Han (year 1109)
One *tuğra levha* inscribed with the noble name of Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han
One *levha* inscribed with *Muhammed Nebiyyü'r-rahme*, written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II (year 1106)
One *tuğra levha* written by Sultan Ahmed III ibn Mehmed Han (year 1115)
One *levha* inscribed with *İlâhî Ente Halaktenî*, written by Sultan Mustafa Hân II

The document indicates that it was reviewed by Sultan Mehmed VI Vahîdeddin (r. 1918–1922) with the recorded date 13 *Nisan* 1338 AR (15 *Şâban* 1340 AH / 13 April 1922) (Figure 7). While the preparation of the list was not commissioned by him, it is noteworthy that, in the final year of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Vahîdeddin personally examined a register of sultanic calligraphy housed in the palace.

The inventories compiled by the Imperial Treasury do more than record calligraphic holdings; they reflect an enduring tradition of royal authorship. From childhood, many princes received formal training in calligraphy, producing works that would eventually enter the palace collections. These documents, in turn, offer rare insight into the institutional and educational structures that sustained calligraphic practice within the court. While much of the surviving documentation centres on the nineteenth century, the roots of this tradition can be traced to the early eighteenth century, when Sultan Ahmed III studied under Hâfız Osman and cultivated a distinct sultanic style.

The following section turns to this courtly context, moving beyond a strictly chronological account to trace three overlapping phases in the evolution of royal calligraphy.

Figure 7. A later note recording that the inventory was examined by Sultan Mehmed VI Vahideddin (r. 1918–1922) on 13 April 1922. Directorate of State Archives



First, under Ahmed III, calligraphy emerged as a central practice of princely formation, closely tied to architectural patronage and devotional labour. In the nineteenth century, figures like Mahmud II and Abdülmecid refined and institutionalised the art, transforming it into a disciplined courtly genre shaped by standardised training and intensified visual circulation. By the late Ottoman period, the practice had taken on more commemorative and symbolic dimensions, shaped by changing palace rhythms and the pressures of imperial decline.

3. The Calligraphy Masters at Court

The prominence of royal calligraphy in the registers suggests that numerous sultans actively engaged in the production of *levha*s, both during their princedoms and after ascending the throne. Princes in line for succession underwent specialised training within the palace to cultivate the attributes of rulership.[21] Their instruction was over-

21 İpşirli 1995, 185–7.

seen by members of the *Enderun Mektebi* (Palace School), the elite imperial school tasked with educating future statesmen, soldiers, and sovereigns. Alongside military and administrative preparation, the curriculum emphasised activities that embodied princely virtue: horseback riding, archery, foreign languages, and the mastery of calligraphy. Some princes, having demonstrated notable skill, sustained their calligraphic practice into their reigns. Sultan Ahmed III was one such figure.

As a prince, Ahmed III, alongside his brother Mustafa II, studied under the esteemed calligrapher Hâfiz Osman, who had been appointed as the court's calligraphy instructor.[22] Sultan Ahmed III's reputation as a calligrapher during his reign is further substantiated by a detailed section dedicated to him in Müstakimzâde Süleyman Sâdeddin's (d. 1788) seminal work, *Tuhfe-i Hattâtîn* (a comprehensive treatise on calligraphy and calligraphers), which he began writing in 1173 AH (1759–1760).[23] This account is part of a broader picture that has increasingly come into focus in recent scholarship, which highlights the sultan's engagement with calligraphy not only as a personal artistic pursuit but also as a means of shaping the aesthetic and devotional environments of the court and its architectural spaces.[24] The section, which recounts the sultan's tutelage under Hâfiz Osman, is recorded as follows: 'The calligraphy of Sultan Ahmed III, formed through his study of *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts under various esteemed instructors, notably includes his instruction by Hâfiz Osman Efendi, whose teachings he graciously accepted.'[25] According to Müstakimzâde, several other renowned masters, whose names are also listed, participated in Sultan Ahmed III's calligraphy circle, and the dates related to the sultan's works were subsequently recorded.[26]

These dates, inscribed by the divan poet and author Seyyid Vehbî Efendi (d. 1736), also the author of the *Surnâme of Ahmed III*,[27] and the divan poet Nedîm Ahmed Efendi (d. 1730), are found in a *murakka-ı hümâyûn* (imperial album). This *murakka*, held in high esteem, is most likely the renowned album containing Sultan Ahmed III's *tuğra*s.[28] Two of these monograms, engraved in stone, were later transferred to the walls flanking the entrance of the Chamber of the Holy Mantle, which Sultan Ahmed III had restored. This act exemplifies a significant moment in the process of transferring *celî* script from the pages of books and albums to architectural surfaces.

As princes, Ahmed III's grandsons and Abdülhamid I's sons, Sultan Mustafa IV (r. 1807–1808) and Sultan Mahmud II, studied calligraphy under Kebecizâde Mehmed Vasfi (d. 1831), one of the palace's most esteemed calligraphy masters. Several practice sheets (*meşk kıt'aları*) penned by Mahmud II for his instructor have survived to the pres-

22 For more on Hâfiz Osman and Sultan Mustafa II, see Müstakîmzâde 2014, 276, 481; also see Serin 2010, 158.
23 Müstakîmzâde 2014, 73–6.
24 See Keskiner 2012.
25 Müstakîmzâde 2014, 74.
26 *ibid*.
27 Vehbî's illustrated edition of the *Surnâme*; Topkapı Palace Library, III. Ahmed, inv. no. 3593.
28 The facsimile of the *murakka* has been published. See Derman 2009.

ent day.[29] Although undated, these sheets, along with the written exchanges between the prince and his tutor, provide valuable insight into the structure of their lessons. While the nature of their correspondence suggests that some instruction may have taken place remotely – almost in the manner of written exchange – it is likely that they also met in person, given Kebecizâde's role as a court calligraphy instructor at the time.[30]

In 1807, Mahmud II received his *icâzet* from Kebecizâde.[31] The diploma's certification statement explicitly acknowledges the legacy of Şeyh Hamdullah, a seminal figure in Ottoman calligraphy. The text, penned by Kebecizâde Mehmed Vasfi, reads as follows:

> Henceforth, this refined script and eloquent composition, executed in accordance with the principles and conventions established by the esteemed Şeyh Ibnü'ş-Şeyh Hamdullah Efendi, have been deemed worthy of approval. In recognition of this accomplishment, permission is granted for the transcription of *hilye*s and inscriptions to His Imperial Highness, the sovereign of exalted dignity, majesty, and power, Prince Mahmûd Adlî, son of Sultan Abdülhamid Han and grandson of Sultan Ahmed Han. Hüve'l üstâd Mehemmed Vasfî, 1222/1807

At the time, Prince Mahmud was seventeen years old; one year later, he would ascend the throne.

After ascending to the throne, Sultan Mahmud II pursued the study of *thuluth* calligraphy under the tutelage of Mustafa Râkım (d. 1826) and produced *celî thuluth levha*s in Râkım's distinctive style (Figure 8).[32] A surviving draft reveals that Râkım himself arranged the phrases the sultan would inscribe.[33] In this draft, Râkım not only compiled selected passages from Mahmud II's earlier writings but also reorganised them into a new composition, adding explanatory notes before presenting it to the sultan. This document provides invaluable insight into the collaborative working process between the two. It is likely that the phrases, once refined in this manner, were subsequently transcribed onto *levha*s, with the sultan's *ketebe* (signature) inscribed upon them. Indeed, an inscription at the Grand Mosque of Bursa closely follows the composition of this draft.[34]

Sultan Abdülmecid, the son of Mahmud II, embraced the calligraphic style of another prominent master of the period, Mahmud Celâleddin (d. 1829). He received his *icâzet* from one of Mahmud Celâleddin's leading students, Mehmed Tâhir (d. 1845), as well as Kazasker Mustafa İzzet (d. 1876). Mehmed Tâhir's most profound influence on the sultan's writing appears to have been his guidance in emulating Mahmud Celâleddin's

29 Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. H. 2238. See Derman 2019, 328–33.

30 M. Uğur Derman also notes the unusual nature of the communication between the prince and his tutor, who, despite the court's cultivated appreciation for the arts, only corresponded through practice sheets rather than meeting in person; see Derman 2019, 329.

31 Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. GY. 1353. See Derman 2019, 332, 334.

32 For Mustafa Râkım see Berk 2003.

33 Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. GY. 322/19. M. Uğur Derman has provided a detailed publication of this draft, see Derman 2019, 337–9.

34 *ibid*., 339.

Figure 8. Calligraphic panel by Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) in Mustafa Râkım's (d. 1826) style. Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 130-0109

compositions.[35] Kazasker Mustafa İzzet, a prominent calligrapher during the reigns of both Mahmud II and Abdülmecid, had studied under the esteemed masters Çömez Mustafa Vâsıf (d. 1853) and Yesârîzâde Mustafa İzzet. Invited to the *Enderun Mektebi* by Mahmud II, Mustafa İzzet (d. 1849) went on to serve as a calligraphy instructor to princes and sultans alike.[36]

Kazasker Mustafa İzzet also transcribed copies of the Qur'an and prayer books for members of the imperial family, including Pertevniyal Vâlide Sultan, the mother of Sultan Abdülaziz; and Bezmiâlem Vâlide Sultan, the mother of Sultan Abdülmecid. His multifaceted role in the cultural life of the palace and his contributions to the artistic and intellectual milieu of the period cement his status as a defining figure.[37] The close working relationship between Mahmud II and Mustafa Râkım finds a parallel in the bond between Sultan Abdülmecid and Kazasker Mustafa İzzet. Abdülmecid, following the calligraphic style of his master, inscribed Qur'anic verses as well as *kelâm-ı kibâr*

35 Sultan Abdülmecid's work featuring the verse from the Surah Al-Baqarah (II:137) which translates to 'Allah is sufficient for them. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing,' appears to have copied Mahmud Celâleddin's style precisely, as seen in one example at the Eyüp Sultan Tomb and another at the Topkapı Palace. Abdülmecid's *levha*: Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. GY. 386. See Derman and Çetin 1992, 120, 212. For Mahmud Celâleddin's work, see Yazır 1981, 133.

36 For the calligrapher's biography, see İnal 1955, 154–62.

37 Aldemir Kilercik 2018, 35–46.

Figure 9. Kıt'a *in* sülüs *and* nesih *scripts by Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861). Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 110-0084*

(wise sayings) on themes of just rulership and victorious leadership. He also commissioned the illumination of his calligraphic compositions and presented them as gifts to his viziers.[38] The fact that several of these compositions share identical content suggests that the sultan systematically produced multiple copies for distribution (Figure 9–10).[39]

38 One of the very similar calligraphic compositions designed and illuminated by Sultan Abdülmecid: Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 110-0084. See Tanındı and Aldemir 2023, 353. For the Khalili Collection, inv. no. CAL.26 see Özsayıner 1999, 63; Safwat 1996, 156, 159; Turkish Foundation Calligraphy Museum, inv. no. E-541. For the *kıt'a* in the former Emin Barın Collection, see Derman 2006, 2:85. TIEM 3255; unpublished. Galata Mevlevihanesi, inv. no. 488; unpublished.

39 The *kıt'a* in the Khalili Collection, inv. no. CAL.26 and the Turkish Foundation Calligraphy Museum, inv. no. E-541 are identical in both content and illumination. See Özsayıner 1999, 63 and Safwat 1996, 156, 159.

Figure 10. Kıt'a *in* sülüs *and* nesih *scripts by Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861). Turkish Foundation Calligraphy Museum, inv. no. E. 541*

Unlike *celî levha*s, which could be reproduced through stencil techniques by illuminators, each of Sultan Abdülmecid's *thuluth* and *naskh* compositions represents an independent, personally inscribed work. Similarly, his handwritten *Amme cüzü* (the final section of the Qur'an), executed with a reed pen, was illuminated in a manner that reflects both the artistic sensibilities of the period and the sultan's personal taste, adorned with gracefully curving *saz* leaves and large floral bouquets.[40]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, this model of sustained, hands-on practice began to shift. While some later sultans continued to receive training in calligraphy, their engagement was often more intermittent, shaped by ceremony and dynastic image rather than regular production. The identity of the master calligrapher who instructed Sultan Abdülaziz at the palace remains uncertain, though it is possible that he benefited from his elder brother Sultan Abdülmecid's calligraphy sessions with

40 Topkapı Palace Library, env. no. H.S. 3. See Tanındı 2019, 76.

Figure 11. Levha *by Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876). The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Accession no. CAL 0403, © The Khalili Family Trust*

Kazasker Mustafa İzzet. Compared to other sultans, Abdülaziz appears to have had little interest in calligraphy, with only a few surviving examples of his writing (Figure 11). Moreover, these surviving pieces were likely not his original compositions, but rather copies of *levha*s inscribed by other calligraphers.

Sultan Abdülmecid's son, Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was skilled in woodworking, is also believed to have studied under Kazasker Mustafa İzzet during his time as a prince. However, despite his well-documented passion for books and manuscripts, as evident in the library at the Yıldız Palace, Abdülhamid II did not pursue calligraphy further (Figure 12). Similarly, Sultan Abdülmecid's youngest son and Abdülhamid II's brother, Sultan Mehmed VI Vahîdeddin, likely received calligraphy lessons at his father's behest while he was still a prince. It remains uncertain whether his tutor at the palace was the aging Kazasker Mustafa İzzet, who was in his seventies at the time. Even if this was not the case, it is evident that Vahîdeddin's instructor had him copy compositions from Kazasker's works. Indeed, one of the few surviving *levha*s bearing Sultan Mehmed VI Vahîdeddin's *ketebe* is a direct reproduction of a *celî thuluth* composition by Kazasker Mustafa İzzet (Figure 13).[41] In this piece, Vahîdeddin inscribed the phrase *Aleyke Avnullâh* ('May God's aid be upon you'). Both Kazasker's original and Vahîdeddin's reproduction are dated 1288 AH (1871–1872). At the time, Vahîdeddin was around ten or eleven years old, while Kazasker Mustafa İzzet was around seventy or seventy-one. The *ketebe* on the

41 Turkish Foundation Calligraphy Museum, inv. no. E-583. I would like to thank Halet Uluant for drawing my attention to this *levha*.

Figure 12. Levha *by Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). National Palaces Collection, inv. no. TS GY. 325/70*

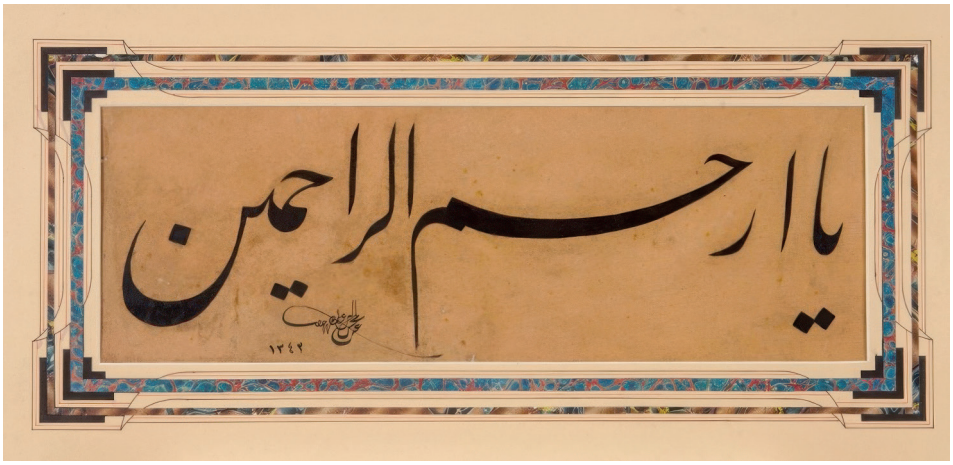
levha reads: *ketebehû necâbetlü Vahîdeddin Efendi hazretleri* ('Written by the noble Vahîdeddin Efendi'). At this point, he was still a prince.

Prince Abdülmecid, the son of Sultan Abdülaziz, is primarily celebrated for his paintings. However, his refined calligraphy is also noteworthy. Although there is no formal record of a master calligrapher instructing him, it is believed that, during his confinement in the palace, he may have developed his calligraphic skill by copying existing *levha*s, possibly under the guidance of an unrecognised tutor. His compositions include works in both *ta'liq* and *thuluth* scripts, and he often depicted *levha*s within his paintings (Figure 14).[42] These depictions reveal that while Prince Abdülmecid did not master the craft, he was capable of writing in different calligraphic styles. A notable

42 A *levha* written in *ta'liq* script is preserved in the Dolmabahçe Palace, inv. no. 11/1717.

Figure 13. Levha *by Sultan Vahideddin (r. 1918–1922). Turkish Foundation Calligraphy Museum, inv. no. E. 583*

Figure 14. Levha *by Prince Abdülmecid Efendi (d. 1944), dated 1923–1924. National Palaces Collection, inv. no. MS 11/1707*



example can be found in a large oil painting titled *Mosque Entrance* (*Cami Kapısı*) dated 1339 AH / 1337 AR / 1920, in which he painted the door of an unidentified mosque, incorporating a *levha* adjacent to it.[43] The Arabic inscription on the *levha*, meaning 'O Allah, the opener of all doors, open to us the doors of goodness,' was likely inscribed by himself in *celî thuluth* script.

In another of his oil paintings titled *Beauty Serving Coffee* (*Sarayda Kahveci Güzeli*) from 1311 AH (1893–1894), Prince Abdülmecid inscribed a *Bismillah* in bold Kufic script on the door behind the central female figure.[44] Two stacked borders along the wall further feature calligraphy: the upper border bears the Arabic inscription *Allâhü lâ ilâhe illâ hüve'l-hayyü'l-kayyûm* ('There is no god but Allah; He is the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence') in Kufic script, while the lower border displays the phrase *Lâ gâlibe illâ Allâh*, meaning 'There is no victor but Allah,' in a rounded script resembling *celî thuluth*. The prince's Kufic script, known as *el-hattü'l-mağribî*, is a rounded form widely used in North Africa, Al-Andalus, and the Maghreb. In his famous painting *Goethe in the Harem (Study)* (*Haremde Goethe (Mütalaa)*), a *levha* bearing a large *ta'liq* inscription hangs on the wall behind the reclining female figure (Figure 15).[45] This *levha* features the phrase *Mûr der hane i hod hokm e Süleyman dared*, which translates to 'The ant has dominion over its own house, according to Solomon's decree.'[46] Unlike the inscriptions in his other paintings, Prince Abdülmecid includes his own *ketebe* on this *levha*. Taken together, these examples reflect a dynastic tradition that evolved from deeply personal devotional practice to a more commemorative and symbolic form of artistic authorship.

Namık İsmail (d. 1935) made a similar painting, titled *Woman Reclining on the Sofa* (*Sedirde Uzanan Kadın*), in 1917 (Figure 16).[47] In this piece, a woman is depicted reclining on a low couch, her legs extended, wearing a wide-neck black dress that leaves her shoulders bare. Behind her is a library filled with books, with a mother-of-pearl inlaid table in front. A small tray with cups of coffee and water rests on the table. Parallel to the woman's legs and the sofa, a horizontal *levha* draws the viewer's attention. The wood-framed *levha* bears the inscription *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, in *ta'liq* script. As his father, İsmail Zühdü, was a calligrapher, Namık İsmail was well-versed in the art of calligraphy. Namık İsmail and Prince Abdülmecid shared a friendship, and in photographs taken during the prince's visit to İsmail's Şişli Atelier in 1917, the two are seen together. It is likely that

43 Sakıp Sabancı Museum Painting Collection, inv. no. 200-0099.

44 Türkpetrol Foundation Collection.

45 Ankara Museum of Painting and Sculpture collection, inv. no. R-0195.

46 This inscription may be related to certain verses from Surah An-Naml (XXVII:17–8) of the Qur'an. According to the verses, when Solomon's army, composed of humans, jinn, and birds, arrived in the Valley of the Ants, an ant warned the others to go into their homes to avoid being trampled by Solomon and his army without their noticing. It is also reported that Sultan Sülyeman I (r. 1520–1566) had a conversation on a similar matter with Şeyhülislâm Ebüssuûd Efendi (d. 1574). It is not known to which of these references Prince Abdülmecid was alluding.

47 MFAU Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture Collection.

Figure 15. Prince Abdülmecid Efendi (d. 1944), Goethe in the Harem (Study), 1918, oil on canvas, Ankara Museum of Painting and Sculpture, inv. no. R-0195

before painting *Goethe in the Harem (Study)*, Prince Abdülmecid had seen Namık İsmail's painting and been inspired by the *ta'liq* inscription hanging on the wall of the room.

Several master calligraphers who taught at court have proudly documented their esteemed roles in the inscriptions of their works. Often, their titles within the palace were added later as supplementary lines to the margins of their *ketebe*. One such calligrapher was Mustafa Anber Ağa (d. 1684), who served as a *meşk* instructor during the reign of Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687). The son of Mehmed Ağa, one of the palace attendants, Anber Ağa's connection to the palace is highlighted by Müstakîmzâde in *Tuhfe-i Hattâtîn*, where it is noted that he was among those who '*Sarây ı Hümâyûn'da perveriş yâfte i kemâl*' ('attained mastery at the imperial court').[48] An addition was made in the inscription of a Qur'an manuscript dated 1085 AH (1674–1675) stating: '*Saray-ı Hümâyun hocası olup Anber namıyla maruftur*,' indicating his role as a teacher at the palace.[49]

48 Müstakîmzâde 2014, 480.

49 Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 100-0267. See Tanındı and Aldemir 2023, 122.

Figure 16. Namık İsmail (d. 1935), Woman Reclining on the Sofa*, 1917, oil on canvas, MSFAU Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture*

Kebecizâde Mehmed Vasfî, an instructor during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, left a noteworthy inscription in a Qur'an manuscript completed in 1204 AH (1790). On the last page of the manuscript, he wrote: 'This *mushaf* [Qur'an] was written by the weakest servant of Allah, known as Kepecizade, who served as the *meşk* instructor at the Saray-ı Âmire and prayed for the continued prosperity of the imperial state. The completion of the manuscript took place in the month of Rajab in the year 1204.'[50] Mehmed Şefik (d. 1880), a prominent calligrapher during Sultan Abdülmecid's reign, similarly mentions his teaching role at the palace. In a 1263 AH (1846–1847) copy of the *Amme cüzü*, he notes that he served as the calligraphy instructor at the Imperial School of Music (*Muzika-yı Hümâyun*).[51]

50 Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 100-0259. See Tanındı and Aldemir Kilercik 2013, 53–4.
51 Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 102-0304. See Tanındı and Aldemir 2023, 154–5.

4. Sultans' Inscriptions

Apprentices who completed their training were traditionally granted an *icâzet*, allowing them to sign their work independently.[52] Upon signing their pieces, calligraphers would often use the Arabic phrase '*ketebehû*,' meaning '… wrote this.' These *ketebe* inscriptions usually appeared at the end of manuscripts or on single-page calligraphic compositions such as *kıt'a*s or *levha*s. They typically included the calligrapher's name, title, date of completion, and occasionally additional details such as the work's location, the names of their teachers, or the person for whom the work was created.

Calligrapher sultans also occasionally included *ketebe* inscriptions on the last pages of their manuscripts, as well as independent pieces. However, these inscriptions have seldom survived to the present day. At times, they would also include the date in Arabic numerals. In many surviving examples, sultanic *ketebes* not only identify the calligrapher but also reflect formal parallels with the *tuğra*. These compositions often feature the sultan's name paired with that of his father and adopt layouts that echo the structural logic of the imperial seal. The stylistic interplay between these formats – especially in the works of Sultan Ahmed III and Sultan Mahmud II – suggests an effort to merge personal authorship with dynastic symbolism. The central part of the *ketebe*, similar to the *kürsü* or *sere* of the *tuğra*, would feature a composition that mirrored the structure of the seal. In both the *ketebe* and the *tuğra*, the sultan's name, paired with his father's, was written in a similar format, further underscoring the connection between the two.

Sultan Ahmed III is particularly notable not only for his calligraphy but also for his role as a *tuğrakeş* (calligrapher who drew the imperial monogram). He occasionally signed his calligraphic works with his *tuğra* and at other times with an *istifli ketebe* (composed colophon). It appears that the tradition of simplifying the *tuğra* into a stylised *ketebe* for use on calligraphic works began with Sultan Ahmed III. Since the sultan was capable of drawing his own *tuğra*, it is likely that the design of his *ketebe* was his own creation. Sultan Ahmed III's *ketebe* reads 'Ahmed, son of Mehmed,' in Arabic as '*Ahmed bin Mehmed*.' Sultan Mahmud II also adopted this practice in his calligraphy. His inscription, 'Mahmud, son of Abdülhamid Han wrote this,' in Arabic as '*ketebehû Mahmud bin Abdülhamid Hân*,' is known to have been designed in collaboration with his master calligrapher, Mustafa Rakım. The *ketebe* at the end of the *kıt'a* works, which have rarely survived, is the same inscription written in plain text: '*ketebehû Mahmud ibn-i Abdülhamid Hân*.'[53]

Sultan Abdülmecid's *istifli ketebe* reads 'Mahmud Khan's son Abdülmecid,' written in Ottoman Turkish as '*Mahmud Hân'ın oğlu Abdülmecid*.' Unlike his father, Sultan Mahmud II, Abdülmecid inscribed his *istifli ketebe* under the *naskh* lines of his *kıt'a* works as well. In addition to his calligraphy and *kıt'a* pieces, an inscription added to the end of his *Amme cüzü* reads: '*ketebehû Abdülmecid Hân ibn-i Sultan'ül fâni Mahmud Hân*,' meaning 'Abdülmecid, son of Sultan the mortal, Mahmud Han.' A small num-

52 Derman 1997, 493–9.

53 A *kıt'a* by Sultan Mahmud II dated 1249 AH (1834) is today housed in a private collection. See Derman 2019, 336.

ber of surviving calligraphic works from other sultans also feature similar *istifli ketebe* inscriptions. Sultan Abdülaziz's *ketebe* reads 'Mahmud Han's son Abdülaziz,' while Sultan Abdülhamid II's *ketebe* reads 'Abdülmecid Han's son Hamid,' both of which are also written in *istif* style.

Since Prince Abdülmecid never ascended the throne, he did not possess an official *tuğra*. However, until the late sixteenth century, princes who served as provincial governors would also have *tuğra*s bearing their names.[54] These princely *tuğra*s shared a similar structure and design with those of the sultans. After the abolition of the custom of princes going on military expeditions and with the beginning of their confinement to the palace, *tuğra*s were only designed for princes once they became sultans. In contrast, Prince Abdülmecid, with his strong artistic inclinations, began designing his own *tuğra* and coat of arms even while still a prince.[55] The *tuğra* in these works follows the classical *tuğra* form. However, his calligraphic inscriptions and signatures on his *levha*s and paintings, while reminiscent of the *tuğra* form, are an original design. In his signature and inscription, he used the phrase '*Abdülmecid bin Abdülaziz Hân*,' meaning 'Abdülmecid, son of Abdülaziz Han,' and included one of the *tuğra*'s distinctive dagger arms crossing over his name. Additionally, the prince employed this same signature in his letters and in the *hatt-ı meşâhir* (memoir books) known as *defter-i meşâhir*, in which he signed his writings.[56]

5. Calligraphy by Sultans in Sacred Spaces

For calligrapher sultans, writing inscriptions on the walls of mosques and other sacred spaces – particularly those they constructed or renovated – was regarded as a spiritual duty. Among these sacred sites, the Chamber of the Holy Mantle in the Topkapı Palace holds particular significance. For Ottoman sultans, serving in this chamber, considered the spiritual resting place of the Prophet Muhammad, was a great honour. The tradition of calligrapher sultans placing their *levha* in these rooms, particularly in the Privy Chamber, where sacred relics were housed, became an integral part of their esteemed role.

The practice of displaying sultans' calligraphy on the walls of mosques and sacred spaces began with Sultan Ahmed III. One of the most significant inscriptions from this tradition is a *kelime-i tevhid* (Testimony of Faith) *levha* from 1138 AH (1726) placed on the entrance to the Chamber of the Holy Mantle during its renovation (Figure 17).[57] This inscription, framed in the shape of a *tuğra*, bears the phrase *Şah Ahmed bin Mehmed Hân el muzaffer*. On either side of the entrance, two *tuğra*-style inscriptions are engraved into marble. One reads *Cihan mâliki Hâkân ı Emced*, while the other states *Şerîat Sâliki*

54 Umur 2011, 54–6.

55 A *tuğra* by Prince Abdülmecid from 1920, MSRK, inv. no. 64/1153-3. Also see Yağbasan 2004, 83.

56 For the prince's memoirs: Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, inv. no. T. 2219 and the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, inv. no. 153.

57 Ağca 2013, 225–9.

Figure 17. Kelime-i Tevhid *by Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703–1730) in* celi sülüs *script, in the Apartment of the Holy Mantle at the Topkapı Palace*

Sultan Ahmed, both written in the same *istif* format. Together, these inscriptions translate as 'The highly honoured sovereign, the ruler of the world, Sultan Ahmed, who walks on the path of Islam.'[58] In addition to these inscriptions, the sultan also penned another *kelime-i tevhid* adorned with diamonds and rubies, to be placed in the Privy Chamber of the Chamber of the Holy Mantle.[59]

Ahmed III also sent his *levha*s to be placed in sultanic mosques (*selâtin camileri*). Müstakîmzâde Süleyman Sâdeddin, in *Tuhfe-i Hattâtîn*, mentions that Sultan Ahmed III's mother, Gülnûş Râbia Sultan (d. 1715), commissioned a *levha* featuring the *hadith* 'Paradise is under the feet of mothers' (*el Cennetu tahte akdâmi'l ümmehât*) for the mosque she built in Üsküdar.[60] Sultan Ahmed III also wrote the inscriptions for the monumental fountain he constructed between the Hagia Sophia and the *Bâb-ı Hümâyûn* (Sublime Porte) in 1728–1729. This fountain, frequently portrayed by painters, was always featured with these inscriptions. One such depiction was painted by Şevket Dağ in 1910.[61]

When Sultan Mahmud II restored the Chamber of the Holy Mantle, he ensured that *levha*s of his own calligraphy were placed on the walls (Figure 18).[62] Sultan Mahmud II's calligraphy can be found in several mosques, including the Hagia Sophia, the

58 The same *tuğra* styles are found in Sultan Mahmud II's *tuğra* album from 1140 AH (1727–1728). Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. A. 3653. See Derman 2009, 22–3.
59 Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. 21/220. Ağca 2013, 160–1.
60 The mosque in question is the Yeni Vâlide Sultan Mosque. The *levha* is still in place. See Müstakîmzâde 2014, 75.
61 Sakıp Sabancı Museum, inv. no. 200-0285.
62 Ağca 2013, 252–3, 245–5, 261, 266–7, 271, 273.

Figure 18. Levha *by Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), on the walls of the Privy Chamber at the Topkapı Palace. Photograph: Bahadır Taşkın*

Fatih Mosque, the Beyazıt Mosque, the Süleymaniye Mosque, the Yeni Valide Mosque in Üsküdar, the Valide Mosque in Aksaray, and the Emirgan Mosque, as well as the Grand Mosque of Bursa and the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne.[63] Like his grandfather, Sultan Mahmud II primarily had his calligraphic works placed in sultanic mosques. In 1809, he undertook significant repairs to the Hagia Sophia Mosque, and the Hamid-i Evvel Mosque in Emirgan was rebuilt under his auspices in 1838. The *levha*s bearing his calligraphy were likely sent following these construction projects. Another noteworthy practice, akin to the widespread distribution of *levha*s across mosques in Istanbul, Bursa, and Edirne, was Sultan Mahmud II's commissioning of portraits after the clothing reform. These portraits were ceremoniously sent to state offices and embassies abroad.[64]

Sultan Abdülmecid's inscriptions can be found in the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque in Fatih, the Ortaköy Mosque, the Bezmiâlem Vâlide Sultan Mosque in Dolmabahçe, and the

63 Derman 2019, 339.

64 For the practice of distributing portraits of the sultan to Ottoman statesmen, foreign rulers, and embassies, which began with Sultan Selim III and continued with Mahmud II, see Renda 2000, 442, 449.

Kılıç Ali Paşa Mosque.[65] The Hırka-i Şerif Mosque, constructed by Sultan Abdülmecid in 1851, was designed to house and facilitate the visitation of the Prophet Muhammad's mantle, which is believed to have been entrusted to Veysel Karani.[66] The inscriptions within the mosque were penned by Sultan Abdülmecid himself, alongside his instructor, Kazasker Mustafa İzzet. Similarly, the *çehâryâr-ı güzîn* inscriptions adorning the walls of the Ortaköy Mosque, which the sultan had commissioned in 1854, as well as the inscription of the *kelime-i tevhid* on the pulpit, are also his work.[67] The construction of the Dolmabahçe Mosque was initiated by Sultan Abdülmecid's mother, Bezmiâlem Vâlide Sultan, and he completed it after her death in 1853.[68] The walls of this mosque, bearing his mother's name, also feature inscriptions in Sultan Abdülmecid's hand.

In a practice reminiscent of his father, Sultan Mahmud II, Sultan Abdülmecid also sent his inscriptions to mosques outside of the capital. An archival document dated 18 *Zilhicce* 1266 AH (25 October 1850) records that, upon the sultan's command, a special envoy was dispatched to deliver eight of his inscriptions to the Emîr Sultan Mosque in Bursa. After prayers were offered for the Sultan, the inscriptions were hung on the mosque's walls. The letter accompanying these inscriptions, sent by İbrahim Sarım Paşa (d. 1854), Governor of Hudâvendigâr and the Director of the Bursa Waqf,[69] described the work as 'adorned with the blessed handwriting of His Majesty the Emperor, marked by miraculous artistry.' The Emîr Sultan Complex, dedicated to the venerated figure of Emîr Sultan (d. 1429), was regularly renovated by Ottoman sultans.[70] Its endowments were augmented through additional grants, with particular gifts sent to the mausoleum. The complex, which had often been damaged by earthquakes, underwent significant restoration during the reigns of Mahmud II, Abdülmecid, Abdülaziz, and Abdülhamid II. Sultan Abdülmecid, having overseen repairs to the Emîr Sultan tomb in 1845, likely decided these *levha*s after this restoration.[71]

Sultan Abdülaziz's inscriptions can also be found at the Vâlide Mosque in Aksaray, built in honour of his mother, Pertevniyal Vâlide Sultan, and completed in 1871. An archival document dated 12 *Zilkade* 1288 AH (23 January 1872), shortly after the mosque's completion, provides an inventory of items to be placed within.[72] Among these are listed 'two inscriptions in imperial handwriting,' which must belong to Sultan Abdülaziz. Furthermore, a note later added to the list of sacred objects preserved inside the silver grille of the Privy Chamber at the Topkapı Palace, dated 23 *Şevval* 1269 AH (30 July 1853), reads: 'A *levha* by His Majesty Sultan Abdülaziz, inscribed

65 Subaşı 1999, 58.
66 Tanman 1998, 378–82.
67 Gündüz 2007, 408–9.
68 Kalfazade 1994, 502–3.
69 State Ottoman Archives HH.İ. 1-50. İbrahim Sarım Paşa was also a grand vizier known for his calligraphy. He served as the governor of Bursa from 1849 to 1851. See Toksoy 2008, 642.
70 Tanman 1995, 148–51.
71 *ibid*., 150.
72 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 8205-4.

"*Bismillahi teyemmünen bi zikrihi'l celîl*".'[73] It appears that, following in the footsteps of his father Mahmud II, and grandfather, Ahmed III, Sultan Abdülaziz also placed one of his own inscriptions while performing services in the Privy Chamber. Abdülaziz also commissioned the grille, which holds the mantle of the Prophet, along with two nested wooden chests gilded in gold, and a pouch for the mantle, embroidered with gold thread on green velvet. The casing for the mantle is dated 1282 AH (1866).[74] One of Sultan Abdülaziz's rare inscriptions can be found at the mausoleum of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (d. 669), known as Eyüp Sultan, who participated in the first Muslim siege of Istanbul and died there.[75] The sword girding ceremonies performed at the time of Ottoman sultans' ascensions to the throne were conducted in front of Eyüp Sultan's mausoleum. For this reason, the Eyüp Sultan complex, particularly the mausoleum, has been one of the most sacred sites, meticulously maintained by successive sultans. Among the many Ottoman sultans who sent inscriptions to the mausoleum were, naturally, Ahmed III, Mahmud II, and Abdülmecid.

Though Sultan Abdülhamid II did not send an inscription to be displayed in a mosque, he is known to have commissioned Ebüzziyâ Tevfik (d. 1913) to decorate the Yıldız Mosque – the foundations of which were laid in 1881 and completed in 1885 – with Kufic calligraphy.[76] As a testament to the sultan's admiration for Kufic script, Ebüzziyâ Tevfik adorned the prayer hall of the mosque with a panel bearing the entire *Surah al-Mulk*, inscribed in large Kufic letters. The inscription's border features round cartouches bearing the names of the *aşere-i mübeşşere* (the Prophet Muhammad's ten companions promised paradise), arranged in Kufic script. Between these round cartouches, he placed rectangular, segmented cartouches decorated in an arabesque style. On the mosque's dome, Ebüzziyâ Tevfik inscribed the first three verses of *Surah al-Najm*, the Arabic word for 'star,' also in Kufic script. Around the edge of the dome, alternating rectangular panels bear the inscription *al-hamdu lillahi ve ala ni'mat al-Islam* in Kufic script. Above the mihrab, the inscription *Bismillah* was also rendered in Kufic. While Sultan Abdülhamid II himself did not possess the skills of a calligrapher, he ensured that the Yıldız Mosque, which became a symbol of his reign, was adorned with this beloved script.[77]

The only inscription by Abdülmecid Efendi to be found in a mosque is located in the Fâtih Mosque, which holds a privileged position as the first sultanic mosque built after the conquest of Istanbul. According to Semavi Eyice, after the conquest, Sultan Mehmed II specifically chose the site of the Church of the Twelve Apostles, one of the most significant Byzantine sites, for the complex he intended to build in his name.[78] Immediately after the conquest, the church was first assigned to the Orthodox Patri-

73 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 900.
74 Ağca 2013, 148, 150, 244, 308, 310.
75 Algül 1994, 123–5.
76 Ebüzziyâ 1907, 99–108.
77 For the revival of Kufic script during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II and its political motivations, see Schick 2013, 119–38.
78 Eyice 1995, 244–9.

Figure 19. '...Help from God and present victory (conquest of Mecca). Give good tidings (O Muhammad) to believers' (Saf surah: 13). Levha *by Prince Abdülmecid Efendi (d. 1944), dated 1922–1923. Fatih Mosque. Photograph: Hadiye Cangökçe, 25 February 2022*

archate. However, shortly thereafter, another location was provided to the Patriarchate, and the construction of the Fatih complex began, becoming one of the most significant religious and cultural centres in Istanbul. The inscription written by Abdülmecid Efendi, the last caliph of the Islamic world, is placed next to the mihrab of this mosque, which is of great significance for the Muslim world. The inscription, dated 1923–1924, is framed with a gilded Ottoman coat of arms (Figure 19). In this inscription, the caliph wrote the verse from *Surah As-Saff*: 'A help from Allah and a near victory (the conquest of Mecca). (O Muhammad!) Give glad tidings to the believers!' (61:13). The content of the inscription suggests that it was prepared specifically for the Fâtih Mosque.

6. Female Calligraphers of the Dynasty

In addition to the Ottoman sultans and princes, archival documents also record that women in the palace, including *valide sultan*s and daughters, occasionally wrote calligraphic inscriptions, although in very small numbers. One of these women is an uniden-

tified valide sultan. In the *Ceyb-i Hümâyûn* and *Harc-ı Hâssa* ledger dated 29 *Rebîülevvel* 1205 AH (6 December 1790), is a note stating: 'The inscription belonging to the late Valide Sultan, located in the Dâvud Paşa Palace, has been ordered to be renewed by the Sultan, and expenses incurred for its writing and gilding are recorded.'[79] It is likely that during the restoration of the Dâvud Paşa Palace, which had become quite dilapidated by the eighteenth century, the calligraphic inscription written by the Valide Sultan was taken down from the wall as the interior items were being removed, its value was recognised, and it was subsequently entered in the record and gilded.[80] The ledger also mentions that 'the expenses were approved by His Majesty.' This work is understood to belong to Sultan Selim III. Since Selim III's mother, Mihrişah Sultan (d. 1805), was still alive at the time, the Valide Sultan in question must have been the mother of another sultan. The sultan preceding Selim III was Sultan Abdülhamid I, whose mother, Râbia Şermi Sultan (d. 1732), passed away before her son ascended the throne, so she did not hold the title of Valide Sultan.[81] However, it is also possible that this title was used later in respect for her son after he became sultan.

Another female member of the court likely associated with calligraphy, according to archival documents, is Hibetullah Sultan (d. 1841), the daughter of Sultan Abdülhamid I and the sister of Sultan Mahmud II. After her death on 18 September, the *Ceyb-i Hümâyûn and Harc-ı Hâssa* ledger dated 29 *Şâban* 1257 AH (16 October 1841) records: 'The calligraphy of the late Hibetullah Sultan, the most esteemed one, has been received from the noble court of His Imperial Majesty and recorded in the *Hazine-i Enderun-ı Hümâyun*, and it has been noted in the royal ledger. Six pieces of calligraphy in *thuluth* and *naskh*, decorated with gold, are mentioned.'[82]

Thus, it is understood that there were gilded calligraphic pieces among the valuable items passed on from Hibetullah Sultan and sent to the palace. While these pieces are referred to as 'the calligraphy of Hibetullah Sultan,' it is also noted that they do not have signatures. The calligraphy could have been executed by Hibetullah Sultan herself, or she may have simply been the owner of the pieces. According to the same ledger, it is also indicated that Hibetullah Sultan possessed a copy of the Qur'an sent by the sultan. It is thought that the sultan in question could have been either her brother, Mahmud II, or her nephew, Abdülmecid, who was on the throne at the time.

Hibetullah Sultan was married at a young age to Alâeddin Paşa, the Governor of Erzurum, and became a widow while she was still young.[83] She resided in the Kadırga

79 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d 2436-0021. *Ceyb-i hümâyun* refers to the funds allocated for the personal use of the sultan and the expenditures made from these funds; Sahillioğlu, 1993, 465–7. *Harc-ı hâssa*, on the other hand, corresponds to expenditures made on behalf of the sultan or members of the dynasty; see Bilgin 2020, 534–5.

80 For the state of the Dâvud Paşa Palace at this time, see Eyice 1994, 45–8.

81 Sakaoğlu 2015.

82 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 2488.

83 There are two documents in which Alâeddin Paşa expressed his astonishment at this marriage decision; see State Ottoman Archives HAT. 119-4840 and HAT. 127-5248.

Palace.[84] This palace is also depicted in a print in the book *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore*, published in 1819 by Antoine-Ignace Melling (d. 1831).[85] Archival documents show that despite having income from properties, land, and farms allocated to her, Hibetullah Sultan led a lavish life and was known for her generosity. It is understood that her expenses for tailoring, fabrics, jewellery, haberdashery, gifts, construction and repairs, furniture, decoration, and kitchen costs were quite high.[86]

A well-known female calligrapher of this period is Esmâ İbret (d. 1780), who was born nine years before Hibetullah Sultan.[87] The daughter of Serhâsekiyân-ı Hâssa Ahmed Ağa, she was likely married to her calligraphy instructor Mahmud Celâleddin around 1795 or shortly thereafter, at the request of Sultan Selim III.[88] Recognised at court as a female calligrapher, Esmâ İbret may have been introduced to the young female members of the palace who showed an interest in the art of calligraphy. Among those who may have been acquainted with her is Hibetullah Sultan. Mahmud Celâleddin, Esmâ İbret's husband, was also a calligrapher closely associated with the palace.[89] Notably, he inscribed the *celî thuluth* calligraphy adorning the tomb of Mihrişah Vâlide Sultan, mother of Sultan Selim III, in 1207 AH (1793). It is plausible that this master calligrapher was among the instructors who taught calligraphy to Hibetullah Sultan. Around the same time, her brother, Prince Mahmud, who would later ascend to the throne as Sultan Mahmud II, was also receiving instruction in calligraphy.

In addition to members of the Ottoman dynasty, palace calligraphy masters also trained other students, including a woman named Cilvenaz. While her precise identity remains uncertain and only one work by her has been documented, her name suggests that she may have been a concubine in the palace.[90] In the colophon of her 1841–1842 *hilye*, she inscribed the words: 'O Muhammad, intercede for the Ummah, Cilvenaz, year 1257.' Archival records dated 1 *Rebîülâhir* 1267 AH (3 February 1851) and 5 *Şâban* 1274 AH (21 March 1858) indicate that Cilvenaz served as a *kalfâ* (attendant) to Hoşyar Kadın (d. 1859), Sultan Mahmud II's second wife.[91] Hoşyar Kadın, along with another of her attendants, Şemsiye, was known to have a deep appreciation for books.[92]

84 Artan 1993, 201–11.

85 Topkapı Palace Library, inv. no. A. 3704. See Çağman et al. 2004, 270.

86 For examples of documents referring to Hibetullah Sultan's wealth and financial difficulties despite her assets, see: State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.d. 829 and HAT. 1653-21. Among the generous gifts given by Hibetullah Sultan were jewel-encrusted boxes presented to the Spanish and Dutch ambassadors; State Ottoman Archives HAT. 410-21310.

87 Derman 1995, 418–9.

88 A *hilye* written by Esmâ İbret in 1209 AH (1795) was presented to Sultan Selim III and his mother, Mihrişah Vâlide Sultan. Following this, the sultan and his mother arranged the marriage of the female calligrapher with her teacher; Derman 1995, 418.

89 Derman 2003, 359.

90 İnal 1955, 771.

91 State Ottoman Archives TS.MA.e. 499-22 and TS.MA.e. 683-19.

92 Hoşyar Kadın's book is catalogued as TSK EH.1070, and Şemsiye's book as EHA IX/3; see Derman et al. 2021, 270–1.

The Ottoman palace thus fostered an environment in which sultans, *valide sultans*, and women with a passion for calligraphy had the opportunity to work with master calligraphers, study rare manuscripts preserved within the palace, and inhabit spaces adorned with exquisite calligraphic inscriptions. This vibrant artistic milieu, however, began to wane during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, when the royal family transitioned from residing in Topkapı Palace to newly constructed waterfront palaces along the Bosphorus. Unlike their predecessors, who were immersed in the artistic traditions of the palace, later members of the dynasty – particularly after the reigns of Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz – grew up without the same exposure to the arts of the book. The shifting political and social dynamics of the era further distanced younger members of the dynasty from the calligraphic tradition. This decline, as reflected in contemporary newspapers and periodicals, began to take root among the broader Ottoman public by the mid-nineteenth century and had largely reached the royal family by the century's end, severing their once-close engagement with the calligraphic arts and their practitioners.[93]

These registers, long overlooked in the study of Ottoman calligraphy, offer more than a simple catalogue of artistic production. They illuminate a cultural and educational system in which calligraphy was deeply embedded in the formation of princely identity and the performance of imperial authority. By foregrounding the names, works, and tutelage of sultans themselves, the inventories reveal a nuanced picture of calligraphy not just as a devotional or aesthetic pursuit, but as an embodied practice of rule. The close reading of these documents also invites a reassessment of the institutional dynamics that supported artistic transmission at the highest levels of Ottoman society – from master-pupil relationships to the commemorative use of calligraphy in architecture, albums, and painting. Tracing these lines of instruction and inscription not only expands our understanding of royal calligraphic production, but also reframes the archive as a site of both artistic agency and historical memory.

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93 For discussions on this topic published in the press during the first half of the nineteenth century, see Aldemir 2021.

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From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey: Formation and Display of the Earliest Islamic Art Collection in the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*), Istanbul

Abstract

In the 1880s, Islamic art objects were not yet regarded as collectable heritage in the Ottoman state. Although Salomon Reinach (1858–1932) had suggested turning the fifteenth-century Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) into a museum of 'Muslim art' in 1883, this was realised only in 1908, when the building was devoted exclusively to the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*). The collection itself had begun to take shape gradually from the 1880s under the direction of Osman Hamdi (1842–1910) and Halil Edhem (1861–1938). In 1939, during the early Republican period, the collection in Çinili Köşk was dispersed, closing this chapter. This paper examines how the formation and display of the earliest Islamic art gallery in the Imperial Museum were shaped through the interplay between the visions and scholarly networks of individual actors and by the broader political and cultural transformations of the late Ottoman and early Republican state. These individuals, shaped by the intellectual currents of their time, simultaneously influenced state cultural policies, redefining the Islamic art collection under the framework of 'national heritage,' 'decorative art,' and/or 'masterpieces' and positioning the museum within internationally recognizable scholarly and curatorial practices. By situating the Imperial Museum's Islamic art gallery within both local reformist agendas and transnational exchanges, this study argues that it functioned as a site where the collection was reframed in service of nationalism and international recognition.

Keywords: Islamic art collection, Ottoman museum, Turkish museums, museum studies

1. Introduction

> [The Turkish government] has every right to consider Greek and Roman antiquities found in its lands as we in France would consider construction rubble. These are assets it can take advantage from, and which it can convert into cash. If the state were to auction every two or three years the antiquities entering its domains, one would see in Constantinople a series of brilliant sales, where all museums of Europe would be represented and the proceeds of which could be used to repair ruined mosques and, if need be, to buy back from Europe the precious weapons, the Kütahya and Bursa tiles, and other reminders of ancient Turkish art which have long left the country. Chinily Kiosk Museum [Çinili Köşk], that work of Mehmed II, the present use of which would scandalize the Conqueror, would become a museum of Ottoman art unique in the world. One would not even need to buy much abroad: it would suffice to centralize the treasures dispersed in storerooms, old palaces, and

> mosques. Turkey would cease to be ungrateful toward its artists, and the dome of Yeni Djami would no longer threaten to fall upon the heads of the believers who have paid for the establishment of a museum of antiquities…. We wish to believe that at the end the Porte will abrogate a law that deceives it while harming art and civilization. We hope to see that Mehmed II's kiosk shall eventually be turned into a sanctuary for the treasures of Muslim art.[1]

This is a paragraph from the article entitled '*Le vandalism modern en Orient*,' written by French archaeologist Salomon Reinach in 1883 on the eve of the forthcoming changes to the 1884 Ottoman Antiquities Law. Reinach was strongly opposed to the planned alterations of the antiquities law. He believed that each civilization should focus on its 'own' heritage because the sole inheritors of 'classical and other antiquities found on the Ottoman soil were Western museums and collections.' Reinach went even further, stating that the '"Turkish race" had its own 'national art,' which had nothing to do with the Greco-Roman past.'[2]

During the 1880s, Islamic objects had not yet been considered as collectable heritage within the Ottoman state.[3] Despite his Eurocentric arrogance, Reinach was the first scholar to propose converting Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) into a museum of '*l'art musulman*' (Muslim art) by considering the 'national' character of the building and the prospective collection of Islamic art.[4] In doing so, he effectively equated 'Muslim art' with a form of national art for the Ottoman state. Twenty-five years later, Reinach's expectation was realized and Çinili Köşk was designated solely to the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*). However, an Islamic art collection and its gallery within the Imperial Museum did not happen suddenly, it was an ongoing process that started in the 1880s and continued gradually to 1908. A gallery solely devoted to Islamic art was created within the Imperial Museum in 1889. In 1939, during the early Republican period, the collection in Çinili Köşk was dispersed, closing this chapter.

This paper examines the formation and display of the earliest Islamic art gallery in the Imperial Museum, tracing its evolution from the late nineteenth century to the early

1 Reinach 1883, 165–6. English translation of the quotation is taken from Eldem 2016, 129.
2 Çelik 2016, 44; Eldem 2016, 129.
3 In the broader European context, the terminology for describing the visual and material culture of Muslim societies was far from standardized in the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest known usages of the term 'art of Islam' appears as a chapter heading – *Die Kunst des Islam* – in Franz Kugler's *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1842), possibly the first global art history book to incorporate Islamic art into a universal narrative. In this and similar works, 'Islamic art' coexisted with other terms such as 'Mohammedan art' or ethnogeographic designations, and the religious dimension of the category was not yet dominant. As Shaw notes, it was not until the *Exposition d'Art Musulman* in Paris in 1893 that such arts began to be framed primarily in religious rather than regional terms. Shaw 2003, 174. For a discussion of the historical development and changing usage of the term 'Islamic art,' see Uzun 2023, 31–66.
4 Reinach 1883, 166.

Republican period of the 1930s through a range of sources such as archival documents, museum catalogues, visual materials, and travel guides. It argues that this process was shaped through the interplay between the visions and scholarly networks of individual actors – most notably Osman Hamdi and Halil Edhem – and the broader political and cultural transformations of the Ottoman state. These individuals, influenced by contemporary intellectual currents, both responded to and redirected state cultural policies: safeguarding Islamic objects from Western appropriation, reframing them as national heritage, decorative art, or masterpieces, and positioning the museum within internationally recognizable scholarly and curatorial practices. The study further situates the Imperial Museum's Islamic art gallery within local reformist agendas and educational frameworks, particularly the incorporation of Islamic art into the curriculum of the affiliated fine arts school, as well as within transnational exchanges and institutional models such as the Victoria and Albert Museum. By doing so, it highlights the gallery's role as a site where Islamic art was reframed in service of nationalism and international recognition.

2. A Tool of Modernization: Brief History of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*)

Ottoman museology, as a concept in Western sense, started with a reflexive character in the 1840s. Motivation to create a museum was both political and practical for the Ottomans. Establishing a museum was part of a wider set of modernization and Westernization reforms promoted during the Tanzimat period (1839–1876) by the Ottoman statesmen of the era under the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861).[5] At first, the idea of forming a museum was driven by the desire to prevent the exportation of antiquities found in Ottoman lands by foreign excavators and European collectors. Ottoman museology is generally traced to the conversion of an armoury warehouse, located in the Church of Hagia Irene in the first courtyard of the Topkapı Palace, into a museum in 1846.[6] However, the term 'museum' was not applied to the institution until 1864.[7] In addition to the collection of ancient arms (*mecma-i esliha-i atika*), there was also a collection of antiquities (*mecma-i asar-ı atika*) in the Church of Hagia Irene. The antiquities collection was formed of mostly Greek, Roman, and Byzantine remains such as sarchopagi, sculptures, and reliefs. In 1871, a rudimentary catalogue was prepared, however there is no sign that there were artefacts that could be entitled as 'Islamic' today.[8]

Need for a bigger space appeared due to the increasing number of ancient artefacts in the following years. The collection of antiquities transferred to their new location,

5 Eldem 2018, 267; Shaw, 48–9.

6 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. İrade Hariciye (İ. HR.) 32–1478. 2 Muharrem 1262 [31 December 1845]. Eldem 2018, 262.

7 The Imperial Armor and Antiquities collection took the official name of 'museum' in 1864. The Church of Hagia Irene was one of the few churches in Istanbul which was never converted to a mosque. Ar 2013, 73. See also Eldem 2018, 259, which says collection is renamed 'Imperial Museum' in 1869.

8 Goold 1871; Eldem 2016, 124.

Figure 1. Photo of Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) taken by Sébah & Joaillier, c. 1880. Source: Getty Research Institute Special Collections, 96.R.14 (C27.19). URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10020/96r14_ref8267_sb7 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

Çinili Köşk, which is a tile-covered kiosk in Persianate style, built during the reign of Mehmed II (r.1444–46, 1451–81) in the fifteenth century. It is located in the outer garden of the Topkapı Palace and is one of the oldest structures within the palace complex. Çinili Köşk was heavily restored to serve as a museum, with its interior walls whitewashed and a double staircase added to the façade (Figure 1).[9] During the opening ceremony in August 1880, the minister of education Münif Pasha (1828–1910) emphasized the historical and architectural importance of the building and why it was chosen as the new location:

> The building where we gathered today is in itself an ancient monument. It dates back to the glorious reign of Sultan Mohammed Khan II, the Conquer, and constitutes a beautiful example of the-architecture of the time. For this reason, its selection as a museum is a most auspicious event.[10]

9 'Inauguration du Musée impérial' 1880. Eldem 2016, 125.
10 *ibid*. English translation of the article was taken from Eldem 2016, 125.

Soon after the transfer, the German historian, archaeologist, and philologist Philipp Anton Dethier (1803–1881), the second director of the Imperial Museum, passed away. He was succeeded in 1881 by Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), the first Muslim and Ottoman director of the Imperial Museum, held the position until his death in 1910. Osman Hamdi, a multifaceted and intellectual individual, is considered the founder of the Turkish museology, along with his brother Halil Edhem [Eldem] (1861–1938). Both were the sons of Ibrahim Edhem Pasha (1818–1893), an influential an Ottoman bureaucrat educated in Paris. Like his father, Osman Hamdi also studied in Paris. Initially, sent to study law, Osman Hamdi pursued painting at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and took lessons in the ateliers of the Orientalist. He was not only a prominent museum scholar, but also a leading figure on cultural heritage management in the Ottoman Empire. He took part in the formation and implementation of the first antiquities law in 1874 (*Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi).*

Upon his appointment in 1881, Osman Hamdi's primary objective was to introduce a more systematic and scholarly order to the Imperial Museum. One of his first initiatives was to invite the aforementioned Salomon Reinach to classify and catalogue the collection, thereby aligning the institution with contemporary European museum practices. The catalogue of the Imperial Museum, dated 1882 classifies its antiquities collection based on civilization, geography, medium or typology under seven sections.[11] As the catalogue shows, there was still no object that can be categorised as Islamic art at that time within the museum.

It was also during Osman Hamdi's directorship that the fine arts school, the *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* – whose establishment had been discussed for several years prior – was finally founded in 1883 under the museum's management as an initiative of the Ministry of Commerce (*Ticaret Nezareti*) with the aim of improving national art, culture, and heritage.[12] Three years later, in 1886, both the school and the museum were transferred to the Ministry of Education. The aim and administrative history of the fine arts school recalls the first School of Design in London, which became a part of the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A).[13] In 1837, the School of Design was founded '[…] to stimulate trade by making articles of commerce more artistic […]' and was initially managed by the Board of Trade.[14] In 1856, its administration was transferred to the Council of the Education Department.[15] By contrast, the education system and curriculum of the *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* was based on the model of the *Paris École des Beaux-Arts*. This is not surprising, since Osman Hamdi was responsible for organizing the education model of the school. As Edhem Eldem has demonstrated, this broader mission to cultivate national art and heritage also shaped the collecting policies of the

11 Reinach 1882, 7.
12 Cezar 1995, 182; Özlü 2018, 289; Şahin 2019, 91; Ürekli 1997, 103–6. *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* evolved into the University of Fine Arts during the republican period.
13 Smith 1914, 106. See also Eldem 2016, 131.
14 *Victoria and Albert Museum. General Guide to the Collections*, 106.
15 *ibid*.

Figure 2. View of the new museum building taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1892. Source: Getty Research Institute Special Collections, 96.R.14 (C27.02a). URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10020/96r14_ref8213_mbw (last accessed 25 January 2025)

museum, particularly in relation to objects that would later fall under the category of Islamic art – a point to which I will return in the subsequent discussion.[16]

In accord with the ever-increasing numbers of collection in the late nineteenth century – thanks to archaeological digs – the need for a bigger museum space emerged. The new museum building was designed in the Neoclassical style by the Levantine architect Alexandre Vallaury (1850–1921), who studied at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. The museum collections, particularly the Sarcophagus of the Mourning Women, inspired the architect.[17] The new museum building was opened in 1891 (Figure 2). Shortly after the construction of the new building once again the space became inadequate. Therefore, additional buildings were constructed to the right and left sides of the first build-

16 Eldem 2016, 129–33.
17 Çelik 2016, 14.

ing in the following years. The second extension to the north was built in 1905 and the construction of the third extension to the south completed in 1908.[18] Today, this museum complex is known as the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (*İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri*). Although the museum complex continued to expand, a dedicated gallery for Islamic art was only established with the first extension in 1905, made possible by the availability of new space and prompted by the growth of the collection as the state increasingly sought to safeguard Islamic objects.

3. The First Display: A Gallery within the Museum (1895–1908)

The collection of objects from the Islamic world began relatively late in the Ottoman Empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century, objects from the Islamic world had started to be highly appreciated among European collectors and museums. This growing interest turned the Ottoman Empire, with its still-huge Muslim-majority geography, into a 'market state' for the art market in Europe. To counter the increasing threat of theft, the Ottoman government began to the collect Islamic objects, referred to as *sanayi-i nefise İslâmiye âsârı*, mainly from religious endowments such as mosques, madrasas, and mausoleums which were particularly vulnerable to theft. However, in the absence of a comprehensive law, items such as tiles, carpets, tomb covers, candlesticks, lamps, or Quran stands were stolen quite easily and frequently from ancient buildings. Although, the first Ottoman Antiquities Law (*Âsâr-ı Âtika Nizamnamesi*) was created in 1874 and revised in 1884, it mainly protected Helleno-Byzantine antiquities.[19] Islamic and Ottoman heritage was not clearly protected under the law until the final revised version introduced in 1906.[20] Like Helleno-Byzantine antiquities, Islamic antiquities were safeguarded only after they began to be smuggled out of the Ottoman Empire.[21] Therefore, one of the main motivations behind the Ottoman state's collecting of these objects can be summarized as Wendy Shaw aptly states:

> It was not so much the inherent value of the objects that led to their collection but a distaste for the idea that Europeans would benefit from their theft by making them acquire aesthetic and exotic value in their museums. […] The danger of their

18 Çelik 2016, 14–5.

19 For the transliteration of the Ottoman Antiquities Law of 1869, 1874, and 1884, which were published in official gazette *Takvimi Vekâyı* (Cerîde-i Resmiyye-i Devleti Âliye-i) see Koşay, Orgun, Bayram, Tan 2013, 750–833. The first article of the Ottoman Antiquties Law of 1874 states that '*Ezmine-i kadimeden kalan her nevi eşyayı masnua âsar-i atika'dandır*.' ('Every item made with art from ancient times is an ancient work.') Koşay, Orgun, Bayram, Tan 2013, 760.

20 The 1906 antiquities law was recognized by the Republic of Turkey after its establishment in 1923 and remained in effect with only minor modifications until 1973. For the transliteration of the Ottoman Antiquities Law of 1906, see Dilbaz 2018, 128–42.

21 Shaw 2003, 183.

> loss lays not in their absence but in the degree of profit possible once they entered European collections.[22]

Collecting and displaying objects from the Islamic world was not the primary aim for the Imperial Museum, and they started to be collected in the late nineteenth century without a clear strategy.[23] Although the first objects that could later be categorised as Islamic art entered the museum's inventory and the first Islamic art gallery was opened during the directorship of Osman Hamdi (1881–1910), he lacked scientific interest in Islamic art.[24] As Edhem Eldem discusses, Osman Hamdi's probable neglect likely resulted from the perception that such objects, being relatively recent in origin and lacked the historical significance of much older antiquities.[25] Osman Hamdi's use of objects that would be classified as Islamic art as decorative props in his paintings underscores their secondary status as curiosities or decorative elements rather than valuable cultural heritage.[26]

In parallel to the founding of the *Sanâyi-i Nefise Mektebi*, this orientation is further reflected in the 1884 and 1885 inventories. Thirty-seven pieces of nineteenth-century Beykoz ware were entered to the museum in 1884.[27] A year later around fifty objects – majority of which can be classified as 'Islamic art' – were entered under the heading 'Catalogue of the objects destined to form a museum of national industry' ('*catalogue des objets destines à former un musée d'industrie nationale*').[28] Compiled between 1 February and 2 March 1885, the list drew on items from mosques such as Hagia Sophia, Selim I, Şehzade, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Laleli, Zeyneb Sultan; the imperial lodge of Yeni Cami; the tombs of Bayezid II, Selim II, Ahmed I, and Ibrahim Pasha; and the library of Hagia Sophia.[29] The entries, recorded without detailed descriptions, included 15 glass and porcelain lamps, two Chinese porcelains, seven carpets, three armchairs, one console, three porcelain vases, two Quran cases, six Quran stands, two incense-burner plates and two incense-burners, one celestial globe, three lanterns, one ewer and basin, three book bindings, and one wooden ceiling.[30] While many of these objects fall under the category of Islamic art, others – such as the Chinese porcelains and armchairs – do not fit any particular category in the museum.

The idea of linking museums with the promotion of crafts and industry was part of a broader nineteenth-century trend, visible in the World Expositions and institutionalized with the establishment of the South Kensington Museum in London. As Edhem Eldem has further argued, this embryonic collection may have formed part of Osman Hamdi's broader plan for the development of national crafts and industries. In 1888,

22 Shaw 2003, 209.
23 Eldem 2016, 123.
24 Çelik, 81.
25 Eldem 2016, 123.
26 *ibid*., 127.
27 Eldem 2016, 130.
28 *ibid*., 131.
29 *ibid*., 129–30.
30 *ibid*., 130.

Hamdi even submitted a project to the planned Commission for the Encouragement of Industry (*Heyet-i Teşyikiye-i Sınaiye*), stressing the dangers faced by local crafts.[31] Seen in this light, the inclusion of Beykoz glassware and other contemporary objects in the 1885 inventory strongly supports the interpretation that Osman Hamdi intended to valorise local production within a framework of 'national industry.' Although this project of a museum of national industry was never realized, it is likely that at least part of this corpus eventually found its way into the first Islamic art gallery.

The Imperial Museum's administrative scheme and the organizational practices were revised with a regulation issued by the Council of State dated May 1889 and the department of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) became one of the six sections of the museum.[32] The 1889 regulation is curious because the department of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' was founded before the Antiquities Law of 1906. The new arrangement was as follows:

> The Imperial Museum is divided into six parts. The first is for Greek, Roman, and Byzantine antiquities. The second is for Assyrian, Caledonian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Hittite, and Himariote antiquities, as well as for works by Asian and African tribes. The third is for works of Islamic fine arts. The fourth is for ancient coins. The fifth is for examples of natural history. The sixth is for the collection, in a library, of books concerning the history and science of antiquities.[33]

An archival document dated 1894 states that there are enough objects and textiles to form a separate gallery of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) within the Imperial Museum.[34] The archival document continues with the necessary budget, 20,700 *kuruş* (piastres), to establish the new gallery space.[35] The first gallery, solely devoted to Islamic art, located at the second floor within the Imperial Museum, was opened in 1895. This new gallery was opened almost a decade before the Islamic art galleries in Europe such as the ones in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum and the Louvre were created in 1904 and 1905 respectively. Although the gallery was opened at the end of the nineteenth century, to publish a catalogue of the Islamic art collection took more than four decades, and it was only possible in 1938. Therefore, to analyse the content and the display of the Islamic art collection between 1895 and 1908, an article written by the assistant director of the museum and the travel guides to Constantinople (Istanbul) of the time were used. In addition to the written source, available visual sources were examined. No other visual documents of the gallery are known, apart from a few photographs showing it from opposite perspectives (Figures 3–5).

31 For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Eldem 2016, 129–33.

32 Cezar 1995, 548. See also Eldem 2016, 133.

33 Cezar 1995, 547–48. English translation of the document by Shaw 2003, 172.

34 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. İrade Maarif (İ.MF.), 2–46. H-25-03-1312 [26 September 1894].

35 In 1895, the admission fee of the Imperial Museum was 5 piastres per person, which gives an idea of the requested amount to create a gallery space. Coufopoulos 1895, 88.

*Figure 3. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1903. Source: Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection. Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection, Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, inv. no. 90518/10. URL: https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90518---0010.jpg. (last accessed 25 January 2025)*

The assistant director of the museum, Halil Edhem [Eldem], briefly mentions this new Islamic art gallery in his article on the Imperial Museum in 1895. It reads:

> [A]t one time during the Middle Ages when in Europe and in Asia no trace of civilization remained and knowledge and science had become nearly completely extinct, Islam and the Arabs appeared as a vehicle for the formation of a new civilization. The advancement of knowledge and science and literature and art spread across the world and the Ottomans were the inheritors of this with their acquisition of the caliphate.
>
> Since today old Arab works and old Ottoman works are among quite desirable and rare antiquities, these are also now being collected in the Imperial Museum and are being arranged for display in a special hall. In this section, the most striking item is in the corner: an ornate tile mihrab [prayer niche] from Karaman that is from the time of the Seljuk ruler Ala'al-din I. Stones with Kufic writing from the time of the Ahmed al-Malik of the Umayyad Caliphate; writing samples of famous cal-

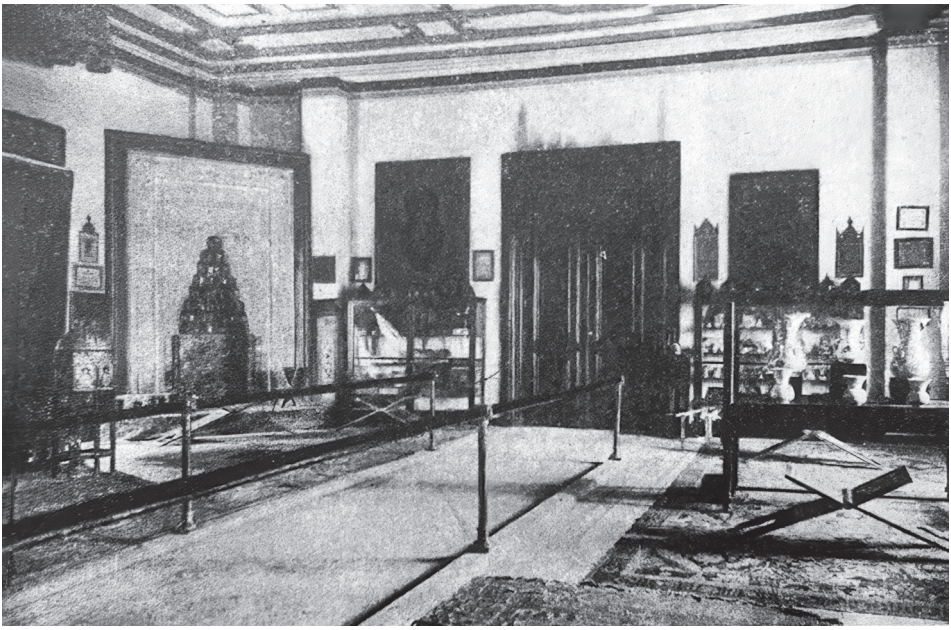
*Figure 4. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1903. Source: Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection, Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, inv. no. 90518/9. URL: https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90518--0009.jpg (last accessed 25 January 2025)*

> ligraphers; book bindings, which are testimony to the fine handicraft of Ottoman artisans; Edirne-work cabinets; mother-of-pearl inlay book-stands; ringstones with Kufic writings; and quite breathtaking Persian carpets decorate this hall.[36]

Halil Edhem states the significance of the Islamic world in the Middle Ages for the development of European civilization. He presents the Islamic world as a bridge between the 'uncivilized' and the 'civilized' world, framing the Middle Ages as a period in which civilization in both Europe and Asia had largely vanished and Islam, led by the Arabs, acted as the vehicle for its revival. This perspective echoes broader nineteenth-century notions of history, such as those of Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897), curator at the British Museum, who described the Islamic world as a bridge between Antiquity and Renaissance Europe, thereby situating Islam within a linear civilizational narrative.[37] According to Halil Edhem, the Ottomans were the heir

36 Edhem 1895, 104. English translation from Shaw 2003, 176.
37 Ward, 272.

*Figure 5. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, c. 1903. Source: Ogan, Aziz. 2013. 'Halil Edhem.' In İğdemir, Uluğ (ed.).* Halil Edhem Hatıra Kitabı Cilt I-II/In Memoriam Halil Edhem Vols. I-II. *3rd edition. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013, 383–406 + 6 figures: Figure 2 [unpaginated].*



of the civilized world thanks to their caliphal status. Halil Edhem's usage of terminology is parallel to the scholarship of the time, with a shift of emphasis on Ottoman art. Halil Edhem uses the term 'Arab works' as an equivalent of 'Islamic,' and further conflates the 'Islamic' with the 'Ottoman,' thereby framing Islamic art within a national narrative. In addition, Halil Edhem alludes to the theft of items around the Ottoman Empire by emphasizing the changing status of Islamic art, which became highly appreciated collectable in Europe.

According to Halil Edhem's description, objects and architectural elements made of various materials such as woodwork and stonework, manuscripts, calligraphy, tiles, and textiles were displayed in the new gallery. Although Halil Edhem was a specialist on Islamic art and architecture, he falsely attributed the tiled mihrab from Karaman to the time of the Seljuk ruler Ala'al-din I (1190–1237, r. 1220–37). The tiled mihrab, dated to the early fifteenth century, was brought from the İbrahim Bey Mosque (*imaret*) in Karaman close to Konya.[38] The mihrab was placed in the corner of the gallery, as can be

38 The *imaret* was built by II. Ibrahim Bey (1423–1464) who was the ruler in the *beylik* (principality) of Karamanids. Durukan, Aynur. 2000. 'İbrâhim Bey İmareti ve Kümbeti.' In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Vol. 21. Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 287–90.

seen in Figures 3 and 5. Halil Edhem categorises and describes displayed items according to features such as dynasty, race, medium, typology, and place of production. This approach provides an idea about the possible label descriptions within the gallery.

While Halil Edhem's account reflects an internal, official perspective on the gallery's contents, contemporary travel guides offer an outsider's description that reveals how the space and its displays were perceived by visitors. Travel guides to Constantinople give an idea about the gallery and its marginalized position. Compared to the antiquities of the Imperial Museum, the Islamic art collection gallery occupied limited space. This approach is understandable, since the Islamic art collection had started to be collected recently and the gallery was still quite new in comparison to the antiquities collection. Moreover, in terms of the hierarchy of the collections, antiquities were more prestigious and ranked above within the art history and archaeology compared to Islamic art collections.

A Guide to Constantinople, written by a dragoman Demetrius Coufopoulos and published in 1895 describes the content of the new gallery concisely. It reads:

> In the room on the right-hand side is a small collection of old Oriental carpets, one of which is said to have belonged to Muhammad the Conqueror; and some furniture, comprising two chairs, one of which belonged to Sultan Muhammad, and the other to Sultan Ahmed. In a corner of the room is a *mihrab* or Mussulman altar, from a mosque at Kuttahiyeh [Kütahya], a place famous for the blue tiles made there.[39]

Coufopoulos describes the objects which had belonged to the Ottoman sultans by underlining their owners rather than their aesthetic or technical features. In addition, he provides incorrect information about the provenance of the above-mentioned tiled mihrab, which came from Karaman, not Kütahya.

Another guide published by a major English publication house for travel guides, John Murray, provides information about the display. *Handbook for travelers in Constantinople, Brusa, and the Troad* first published in 1900 and republished with an index and a directory in 1907, reads:

> […] *staircase* leading up to the first storey […] In the third room are interesting specimens of *Oriental* and *Osmanli* [Ottoman] *art*, old *Persian* and *Turkish carpets*, of good design but rather worn, one of which is said to have belonged to Ahmet I. (1603–17); a *Kurân box* inlaid with mother-of-pearl, belonging to Ahmed III. (1703–30); *furniture* belonging to Selim I (1512-20), and Ahmet III.; in a corner a beautiful *Mihrab* from the mosque of Sultan Ala ed-Dîn in Konia; fine inlaid *woodwork*, &c. In glass presses and cases are fine old mosque lamps, embroidered girdles, gold plats, a model of Yeni Jami' [*Yeni Cami* (Mosque)], & c.[40]

Here the author uses the umbrella term 'Oriental.' Like in Coufopoulos' guide, the sultan's objects were described by their owners and not with a focus of their aesthetic

39 Coufopoulos 1895, 112–3.
40 Wilson 1907, 72.

or technical features. Also, here the name of the mosque of the tiled mihrab was falsely written as Ala ed-Dîn, maybe because this was written on the label of the object, if there was one. Almost all Islamic art collections in museums contained mosque lamps made of glass, metal, or porcelain: Unsurprisingly, they are also here. However, the model of Yeni Cami which was built in 1665 by the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV, Turhan Hatice Sultan, in Eminönü, Istanbul, is something unexpected to see in an Islamic art collection.

A Guide to the Eastern Mediterranean (1904) including Constantinople provides more detailed information about the exhibited items compare to other written sources. It reads:

> In the room to the left are several ancient Persian carpets found in different mosques in Constantinople; on the wall at the left-hand side of the inner door is a silk prayer-rug said to have belonged to Sultan Ahmed I. In the extreme left-hand corner is a Mihrab of Seljeukian *faince* of the best period, about 1400 A.D., which is from an ancient mosque at Karaman, near Koniah. The adjoining glass case has examples of Arab and Turkish Khoran binding, and of ancient *firmans*. The case at the right hand of the entrance door contains specimens of glass made at Beicos [Beykoz] in imitation of the 'yeux de rossignil' Venetian glass. The first cases on the north and south walls contain samples of pottery from Chanak Kalesi [Çanakkale] on the Dardanelles. In the second case on the right-hand side of the passage are specimens of Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Cufic calligraphy. In the third case are two large vases, very valuable, manufactured at Constantinople or Kutayah during the reign of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. The other vases in that case are Persian. There are also in the room Khoran boxes and Khoran stands, the two carved sides of the ascent to a Minbar from Koniah, writing materials, time-measuring instruments, weights, etc.[41]

This guide provides more detail about the displayed objects. From a photograph dated around 1903, the wall-display case appears to correspond to the 'adjoining glass case' described in the *Guide*, though the specific objects mentioned cannot be clearly identified (see Figure. 5). Based on this description, the gallery appears like a decorative art museum with its contemporary design objects such as samples of Beykoz glass and Çanakkale pottery, which were the productions of the nineteenth century and may well have included some of the Beykoz pieces recorded in the museum's inventory in 1884.

Baedeker, one of the main publication companies specialized in the tourist guide genre, published *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* (Constantinople and Western Asia Minor: A Traveler's Guide) in 1905. A very brief section entitled 'VI.-VII: *SAAL: Erzeugnisse des TÜRKISCHEN KUNSTGEWERBES*'[42] (Room 6-7: Products of Turkish handicrafts) is devoted to the gallery.[43] This guide offers concise information about the display content in the gallery, consistent with other guides.

41 *Guide to the Eastern Mediterranean* 1904, 179.
42 Capital letters were left purposely, the same as the source.
43 *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* 1905, 113.

Different from the other guidebooks, though, it shows the exact location of the gallery with a small ground plan, numbered as rooms 6 and 7.[44] Taken together, these travel guides do more than merely list the contents of the gallery; they provide rare outsider perspectives on how the displays were framed and perceived at the time by foreign visitors. Introducing these sources brings a new perspective to the study of the early Islamic art gallery, complementing internal, official narratives with contemporary external viewpoints largely absent from previous scholarship on the Imperial Museum.

The photographs of the gallery taken from opposite directions confirms the description of the travel guides. Objects made from various material or with various techniques from different time periods were scattered around the room detached from their original contexts. As the photographs of the gallery demonstrate, only the large-scale carpets, calligraphic panels, *kavukluk*s (turban stands), and metal lanterns hanging from the ceiling were exhibited as used in their authentic functions. The carpets, for example – transferred from mosques or tombs – were detached from people who would freely walk, pray, sit, or even lay on them in their original context.[45] Although there are modern approaches to the display techniques, such as hanging the small-scale carpets or textiles on the walls as if they were paintings, or separating the visitor route from the displayed items with a rope, the overall display seems rather chaotic. The use of ropes not only defined a path through the gallery but also prevented visitors from examining the small-scale objects in the cases up close, limiting the kind of intimate viewing such objects might once have invited. The tiled mihrab from Karaman, impressive with its size and its colourful tiled decoration, is mentioned in all the written sources, and it visible in the corner of the room in each photograph. From the visual sources, at least four Quran stands can be seen placed on each side of the room, behind the ropes, on the carpets. The Quran cabinet decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay, which is also referred to in almost every written source, is located on the carpet on the right side of the room in Figure 3 and the left side of the room in Figure 4. Smaller objects were displayed in display cases with wooden frames, rather typical for museum displays of that period. Unfortunately, it is not possible to understand exactly from the photos what type of objects were displayed in the wall display cases. On the other hand, it is possible to detect some of the objects such as Mamluk and Iznik mosque-lamps, which were located in one of the free-standing display cases on the right side. In Figure 4, what appears to be a painting – possibly even a portrait of a sultan – was hung on the wall next to what looks like a stone with a calligraphic inscription, underscoring both the eclectic variety of objects and the potential presence of dynastic imagery in the gallery. Taken together, the written and visual sources indicate that there was no consistent system of categorisation within the gallery; at best, some objects appear to have been loosely grouped by material, technique, or type. More significantly, the display practices themselves reveal how objects once embedded in religious or dynastic settings

44 For the ground plan see *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* 1905, 111.

45 *ibid.*

were redefined within the museum space as 'historic' or 'artistic' items.[46] In this period, for the first time the Ottoman Empire began to articulate its national identity through the material culture of its Islamic heritage, just as Reinach recommended in 1881.

4. The Second Display: Transfer to the *Çinili Köşk* (the Tiled Kiosk) (1908–1939)

When construction of a third wing of the museum was completed in November 1908, the overall museum display was reorganized. As part of the reinstallation process, the Islamic art gallery was transferred to Çinili Köşk in the same year. The above-mentioned vision of Reinach was realized after twenty-five years, and *Çinili Köşk* was solely devoted to the Islamic art collection. Halil Edhem was content with this transfer, too. He emphasizes the development and richness of the Islamic collection and draws attention to the relation between the collection and its new repository by stating the 'Turkish and Islamic art' collection 'found its exact location.'[47]

French archaeologist Gustave Mendel (1873–1938) worked many years on the collection of the Imperial Museum to prepare a comprehensive new catalogue consisting of three volumes entitled *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines* and completed in 1921. No catalogue of the Islamic collection appears to have been requested from the museum management. In 1909, Mendel published a series of articles where he promoted the new reinstallation of the Imperial Museum.[48] He reserved one of his articles for the Islamic art collection which had gone on display in Çinili Köşk at that time. Mendel starts the article with a criticism of the previous Islamic art gallery display and continues with a praise for the new installation and the efforts of Halil Edhem, who was responsible for enriching the museum collection. It reads:

> Two years ago, once these marbles had been moved into the museum's new wing, Çinili Köşk, discreetly restored, became a museum of Muslim antiquities. Until then the objects of Muslim art were piled up on the first floor of the Sarcophagi Museum, in a room which – one can say it today – had a bit of the chaotic look of an antique shop. Once they were seen in the kiosk, each of them properly placed and grouped by families, it was as if hidden treasures were suddenly revealed, for so beautiful was the setting, and so soft the light that embraced them. Halil Bey had devoted himself to this long and delicate task; and together with his excellent taste, he had brought to it his deep knowledge of Oriental history and Islamic arts.[49]

Here I would like to draw attention to the role of Halil Edhem and his contribution to the development of the Islamic art collections. As mentioned before, Halil Edhem was the younger brother of Osman Hamdi. Halil Edhem was educated in Istanbul, Berlin, Zurich, Vienna, and Bern. He studied geology and chemistry at the Polytechnic

46 Shaw 2003, 176
47 Edhem 2019, 148. The article of Halil Edhem was first published in 1932.
48 Mendel 1909, 337–52.
49 *ibid*., 340; English translation of the quotation from Eldem 2016, 134.

Vienna. Later he went to Switzerland and earned a PhD in philosophy at the University of Bern and returned to Istanbul in 1885.[50] He also took archaeology classes during his education.

He became an assistant director at the Imperial Museum in 1892. After his elder brother Osman Hamdi's death in 1910, he was appointed as a museum director and stayed in that position until 1931. It wouldn't be wrong to say he dedicated his lifetime to the Imperial Museum and museums both in the Ottoman state and in the newly established Republic of Turkey. He also played an important role in the establishment and curation of the Museum of Pious Islamic Foundations (*Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi*) in 1914, which later became the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (*Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*) in Istanbul.

Halil Edhem was almost twenty years younger than Osman Hamdi and naturally belonged to a different generation, one which was filled with sharper sensibilities about Turco-Islamic nationalism and heritage ideologies of the period.[51] The changing syllabus of the above-mentioned School of Fine Arts can also give an idea about the different management styles between Osman Hamdi and Halil Edhem. Only in 1911, one year after Halil Edhem became director, a course on Islamic art and Ottoman architecture was added to the curriculum for the first time after a major revision of the school curriculum.[52] Halil Edhem would have been influential in this change since he was interested in promoting and preserving the Islamic heritage of the Ottoman Empire with a nationalistic perspective and even published some articles on the subject.[53] In parallel, in 1910 the Ministry of Public Education established a commission under the director of the Imperial Museum to determine the preservation methods of 'Islamic and Ottoman arts.'[54] The revision of the curriculum is meaningful considering the changing political environment and rising nationalism trends after the Second Constitution period that began with the Young Turk Revolution in 1908.[55] In this context, the Young Turk emphasis on Ottoman-Turkish identity promoted a redefinition of Islamic material culture: religiously functional objects were no longer valued solely for their liturgical role, but were increasingly reframed as works of aesthetic and historical significance that could serve as markers of national heritage.[56] These developments are also mirrored in the 1911 curriculum of the School of Fine Arts, where the structure and content of the art history course reveal how heritage and educational policies intersected.

50 Eyice 1995, 18.
51 Eldem 2016, 134.
52 Gençel 2021, 142.
53 Edhem 1911, 226–30. This article mainly focuses on the neglected architecture of the Ottomans and Seljuks. Edhem also discusses the condition of the Islamic art objects such as mosque lamps and Quran cases from the Mamluks contained in these Ottoman and Seljuks monuments.
54 Shaw 2003, 210.
55 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Programları 1911;* Keskin 2017, 426–45.
56 For a further discussion on this subject, see Shaw 2003.

Before turning to the article of Gustave Mendel, I would like to share the detailed syllabus of the history of art course (*tarih-i sanat-ı nefise* in Ottoman Turkish) dated 1911. It follows a similar structure of an art history survey book at the time, with a few exceptions. The timeline of the course starts with the ancient civilizations of the 'East' ('*Şark*') such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, and Phoenicia, and then it continues with the ancient Greek and Roman periods. Following this is a part entitled 'Middle Ages' (*Kurun-u Vasatı*) and including the Byzantine period. Interestingly, under the Byzantine period, different from a Western art history survey, there is a subtitle which reads 'mosques converted from churches' ('*camie tahvil olunmuş eski kiliseler*').[57] Probably, Hagia Sophia was included under this subtitle, along with some other churches such as Chora (*Kariye Camii*) which were converted to a mosques after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. A section of the syllabus contains Arab, Iranian, and Turkish art and architecture; it comes after the Byzantine period, as expected. This section of the curriculum reads:

> Principles of Arab Art – Architecture: [its] prominent qualities and monuments- [its] influences [on other civilizations]- [its] decorative art- Iranian Art- [its] prominent monuments- Turkish Art: [its] general qualities and prominent works and monuments of Seljuks- Purity and nature of the Ottoman Architecture and the character of [the] decorative features of Ottoman buildings/monuments (mosques, tombs, and palaces [in] İzmir, Bursa, Edirne, and Constantinople)[…].[58]

This section differs from the others in categorisation because it is not defined with a subtitle like the other sections such as 'East,' 'Greece,' 'Rome,' or 'Middle Ages.' Moreover, the adjective 'purity' used to describe the character of the Ottoman architecture is significant. Neither Arab, nor the Persian sections of the syllabus included this adjective. Since the 1870s, the Ottoman government had tried to create an independent and individual place for the art and architecture of the Ottoman Empire. The book on Ottoman Architecture (*Usûl-i Mi'mârî-i Osmanî*) prepared for the Vienna Exhibition in 1873, was the first attempt to elevate the status of Ottoman architecture.[59]

Mendel's article provides information both about the architecture of Çinili Köşk and the types of the displayed items, such as architectural pieces, woodworks, metalworks, ceramics, and textiles. Mendel focuses on the decorative and technical details of the objects, rather than their historical contexts. According to Mendel, the display is based on typology and material rather than race, dynasty, or geography, which is a typical beaux arts school approach. The majority of the objects on display were rather typical for an Islamic art collection, such as mosque lamps, stucco pieces, armouries, ceramic sherds, ceramic vases, carpets, astronomical devices, incense burners, coins, calligraphy, book bindings, and Quran stands. On the other hand, there were objects

57 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Progamları* 1327/1911, 33. For the full curriculum of the School of Fine Arts (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) in 1911 see Gençel 2021.

58 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Progamları* 1327/1911, 33. English translation of the curriculum is by the author.

59 Ersoy 2007, 120.

which are surprising to see in the collection, such as musical instruments, *kavukluk*s and a large gilded console all in Rococo style.[60] One cannot help remember the above-mentioned first inventory of the Islamic collection formed in 1895, where a console was registered. Maybe the one on the display and the registered one were the same item.

Some of the works that Mendel introduces in the article were well-known examples within the international academic circles. For example, carved wooden door panels[61] were already published by French Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), the father of the Louvre's Islamic art collection, in his prominent book *Manuel d'art Musulman* (1907). Today, the wooden door panels are on display in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul. Another internationally recognized object was a carpet, which had recently been published by 'Dr. Martin.'[62] Mendel must be referring to the Frederik R. Martin (1868–1933) – diplomat, collector, dealer, and scholar of Islamic art – who published a two volumes book entitled *A History of Oriental Carpets Before 1800* few years previously.[63] Mendel also points out a resemblance between a wooden minbar in the Çinili Köşk and the one in the V&A Museum.[64] The wooden minbar must have entered the Imperial Museum's collection before 1908, because it was not on display at the previous gallery in the main museum building. Mendel's article indicates that the management of the Imperial Museum was aware of the content of the foreign museum collections, which is not so surprising, since museum catalogues were requested or sent from foreign museums such as the British Museum and the so-called 'Egypt Museum.'[65] In addition, the V&A was a world-renowned museum, with its innovative concept and rich collection. Mendel was trying to position the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum next to these well-established museums through emphasizing the similarities. Mendel finishes his article by emphasizing the educational role of the museum.[66] According to Mendel, this collection should help 'Turkish craftsmen' (*l'artisan turc*) to restore their 'ancient traditions,' which had been under Western influence for so long. The museum section would show 'the charm of the old national art' to the *l'artisan turc* and would be the most effective contribution to the wealth and economic development of the Ottoman state. Although with different intentions, both Reinach and Halil Edhem advocated Islamic art collections as the national cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Mendel, too, underlines the role of the Islamic art collections as the 'national' art of the Ottoman state. Moreover, Mendel's comments on the educational role of this collection recalls the mission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, which

60 Mendel 1909, 344.
61 '*Un des gloires du musée, c'est sa collection de portes sculptées*.' Mendel 1909, 343.
62 *ibid*., 349.
63 Martin 1906–1908.
64 Mendel 1909, 342.
65 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. Sadaret Mısır (A.MTZ. 05) 17–134; Hariciye Nezareti Londra Sefareti (HR.SRF.3) 537–84; Hariciye Nezareti Londra Sefareti (HR.SRF.3) 646–14; Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (MF.MKT.) 1128–42.
66 Italics have been added for emphasis. Mendel 1909, 345.

was established in 1852 with an aim to educate and improve designers, manufacturers, and the public in art and design.[67]

In the 1910 edition of *A Guide to Constantinople*, Coufopoulos dedicates almost two pages to the new display. The increasing page number indicates the growth of the collection and the given importance given to it. It reads:

> Chinili Kiosk […] is used now as a Museum, and it is well worth a visit. Holders of tickets to the museum proper are entitled to a free visit to this building as well. The objects in it are of pure Muhammadan and Turkish art, and they mostly consist of objects of the decorative art.
> Among others, on the wall, a large Ispahan rug of the 15th century. The Mihrab or niche of blue tiles taken form a ruined mosque in Asia. It is one of the finest specimens of early encaustic art, and it is noted for its resemblance to the famous Mihrab of the Blue Mosque in Bursa. A collection of Persian and Turkish tiles and vases, some carved wood and a fairly good collection of Rhodian plates.
> Some of the old wooden doors taken from ruined mosques are well worth inspection, as they are artistically carved and inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. The yellow rug lying on the floor is said to have been used for many years in the Mosque of St. Sophia.[68]

In the new edition, Coufopoulos erases his previous false comment about the origin of the tiled mihrab. The information that he provides about the displayed items parallels Mendel's. This time, Coufopoulos does not mention about the objects which had belonged to the sultans. The emphasis that the museum was worth to visiting is important, since this is a revised opinion of the author after the new installation of the collection. Different from the earlier guide, this time he uses the term 'Muhammedan and Turkish art.' It is curious that he separates these two terms from each other. While 'Muhammedan' seems to function as an umbrella category encompassing, for example, Persian works, the addition of 'Turkish' reflects a shift in emphasis that resonates with the proto-nationalist discourse the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the subsequent wave of Turco-Islamic nationalism.[69] It is significant to see that Coufopoulos categorises the collection as 'decorative art.'

Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern; Handbuch für Reisende, a German travel guide dated 1914, presents detailed information about the display layout of the collection under the part entitled Çinili Köşk. It states that both old and new Islamic art works are exhibited in the kiosk.[70] The emphasis of 'old and new' objects is curious and recollects an understanding of a decorative art museum. Maybe

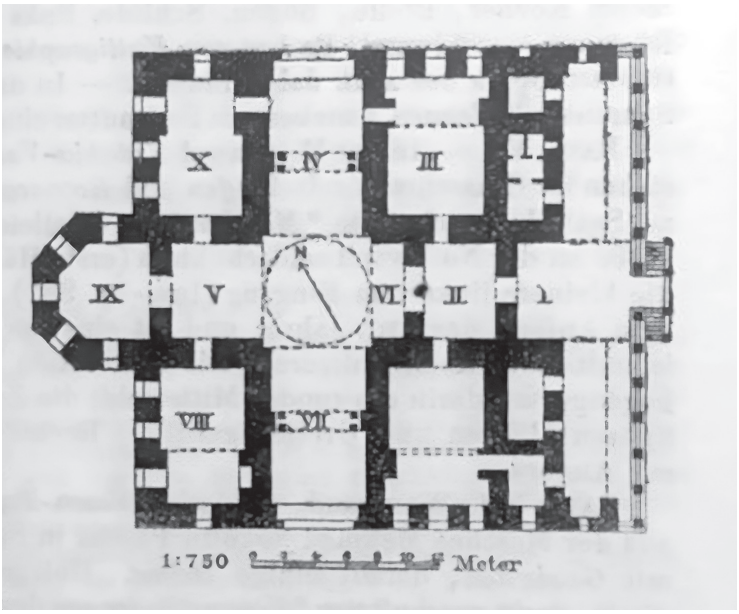
67 It was first located in Marlborough House as the Museum of Ornamental Arts in 1852 and moved to its current home on Exhibition Road in 1857. No author. 2019. 'Building the Museum'. *The V&A website*. URL: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/building-the-museum (last accessed 15 January 2025).

68 Coufopoulos 1910, 119–20.

69 For a further discussion on this subject, see Shaw 2003, 26–7.

70 *Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern* 1914, 205.

Figure 6. Ground plan of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1914. Source: Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern; Handbuch für Reisende. *1914. Leipzig: K. Bædeker.*



this guidebook perceives the collection as a decorative art museum. According to the guidebook, there are ten sections of the display including the Lobby, which is numbered I (Figure 6).

As mentioned above, Gustave Mendel wrote each object was 'properly placed a grouped by families' for the new display in the Çinili Kiosk.[71] However, by looking at the 1914 guidebook, it is difficult to see a rational and proper categorisation within the display. Like in the previous one, again it seems rather unsystematic. Categorisation can only be spoken about for some of the display cases. For example, a group of early Islamic pottery from Raqqa was displayed in a freestanding display case in room X.[72] In room V, a wall display case contains various armours.[73] However, a prayer rug, samples of calligraphy, and a Quran stand can be seen next to the armoury case in the same room. Therefore, it is not easy to detect a consistent and meaningful display techniques.

Thanks to the few photographs of the Çinili Kiosk interior, it is possible to visualize the display. Figure 7, dated 1909, shows probably the central area of the building (numbered as II, IV, V, VI, and VII in the above-mentioned ground plan). There are

71 Mendel 1909, 340.
72 *Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern* 1914, 207.
73 *ibid*., *206*

Figure 7. Islamic antiquities in the Çinili Köşk, c. 1909. Source: Shaw, Wendy M. K. 2003. Possessors and possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire. *Berkeley: University of California Press. 211.*

similarities with the pre-1908 display. The same display cases were in use, and it is even possible to see a very similar arrangement of ceramic mosque lamps as in the previous gallery. One of the sixteenth-century Iznik mosque lamps with bosses, one the signature items of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman's reign (r. 1520–1566), is also recognizable in Figure 4 at the very left side of the photograph placed in a display case. The engraving of this specific mosque lamp was also published in Mendel's article dated 1909.[74] Here again, the large-scale carpets are laid on the floor, but this time a platform was built under the carpets for their preservation. A rope encircles the platform to separate the visitor and the exhibited objects. Again, Quran stands and a Quran cabinet are placed on the rugs. The Quran cabinet, which can be identified in Figures 3, 4, and 5 – most distinctly in Figure 4 – appears to have been continuously displayed across different installations. Another similarity is the display of the metal lantern hanging from the ceiling.

The book entitled *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel: Die Sammlung türkischer und islamischer Kunst im Tschinili köschk* (1938), written by the German Islamic art and architecture expert German Ernst Kühnel (1882–1964), can be accepted as the

74 Mendel 1909, not paginated.

first catalogue of the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum.[75] In the foreword, Kühnel states that Halil Edhem suggested preparing this book more than a decade before, but it was not possible to publish it until this date without the efforts of the German Orient Institution.[76] This catalogue dedicated to the Turkish and Islamic art in Çinili Köşk was the third volume of the museum catalogue series entitled *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel,* which began publication in 1928.

The name of the catalogue gives a clue about the changing mindset about the museum. The masterpiece approach became popular for Islamic art objects after the 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' exhibition, which was organized in Munich in 1910. Ernst Kühnel was 28 years old at the time, and he was an assistant curator of this exhibition. One year after the 1910 Munich exhibition, Kühnel started to work as the assistant to Friedrich Sarre, who was the first director of the 'Department of Persian-Islamic Art' (*Abteilung der persisch-islamischen kunst*) in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (currently Bode Museum) in Berlin, established in 1904. As stated in Chapter 1, this department grew into the museum of Islamic art, which is today known as the *Museum für Islamische Kunst* in Berlin. Kühnel took over the position from Friedrich Sarre and served as the director of the museum in Berlin between 1931 and 1951. Therefore, he was still the director of the *Museum für Islamische Kunst* in Berlin when he was writing *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel* for the Imperial Museum.

Although Halil Edhem was an expert on the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum, he invited Kühnel, who was a well-known scholar with many publications on Islamic art and architecture, mainly written in German and English.[77] The field of art history in general but also the field of Islamic art and architecture was dominated by foreigners, particularly German and Austrian scholars, in those years. In Turkey, art history as a separate branch had started to be taught for the first time at the University of Istanbul by the Austrian art historian Ernst Diez (1878–1961) in 1943.[78] This could also be the reason why Ernst Kühnel was asked to write the Islamic art catalogue of the museum. On the other hand, inviting a well-known scholar and museum director for the preparation of *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel* shows the importance given to it. Probably, Halil Edhem was trying to promote and position the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum to a wider and international audience.

The Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum remained in Çinili Köşk until 1939. Based on the postcards of the Çinili Köşk interior from the 1930s, the display of the collection seems unchanged over the years (see Figures 8 and 9). These surviving images, however, were not neutral records: they circulated as postcards and their framing focused primarily on architectural elements, particularly tiles, rather than on smaller portable objects. It is possible that postcards of individual objects also existed, but if so, they have not come down to us or I have not encountered them. This visual emphasis on monu-

75 Kühnel and Ogan 1938.
76 *ibid*., unpaginated.
77 For his bibliography see Erdmann 1954, 195–208.
78 Aslanapa 1993, 9. Also, Diez worked in the 'Department of Persian-Islamic Art' in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum between 1908 and 1911. Eyice 1997, 3.

Figure 8. The interior of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1930s. Source: Salt Research Archive. URL: https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/85266 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

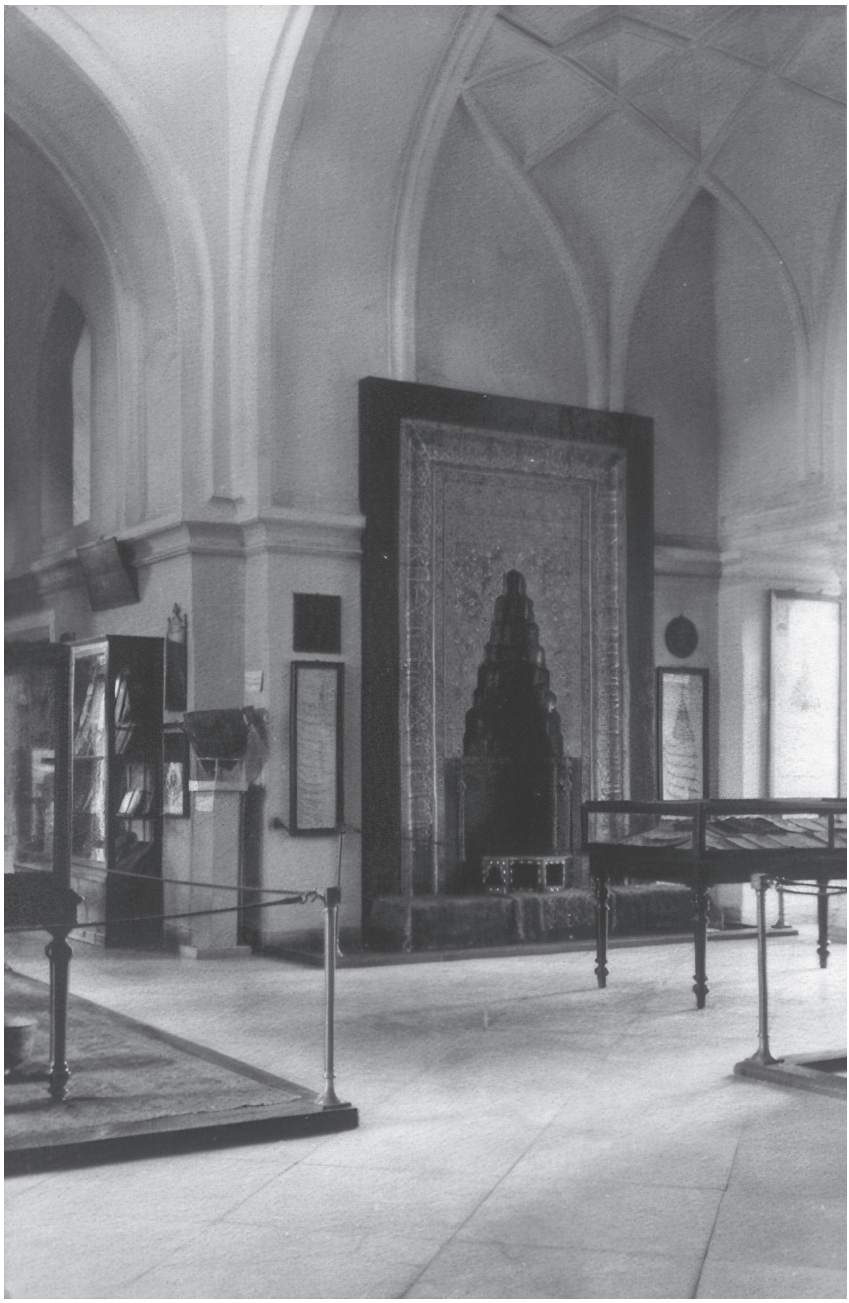


Figure 9. One of the tiled rooms of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1930s. Source: Salt Research Archive. URL: https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/79309 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

mental and decorative features indicates that the public representation of the collection did not follow the 'masterpiece approach' emphasized in the catalogue, but rather highlighted architectural splendour as a defining characteristic of 'Turkish' heritage.

Although the museum director of the time, Aziz Ogan (1888–1956), who was appointed in 1931, was against this move, the Islamic art collection of the museum was dispersed among different museums in 1939.[79] The available evidence does not clarify the reason behind the dispersal of the Islamic art collection in Çinili Köşk. Considering the objections of the museum director and the recent catalogue of the Islamic art collection, which was published with international collaboration, the closure of Çinili Köşk is a curious decision. In 1953, *Fetih Müzesi* (The Museum of Conquest) was opened in Çinili Köşk to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul). The museum was devoted to Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), byname Fatih Sultan Mehmed (Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror), who captured Constantinople in 1453. The costumes and armouries of Sultan Mehmed II, which were brought from the collection of Topkapı Palace, were displayed in Çinili Köşk.[80] The nature of the objects can be categorised under the umbrella term 'Islamic,' but the attributed meanings and the narrative of the museum had been changed significantly. As such, the story of the Islamic art collection in the Imperial Museum (renamed after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and later Istanbul Archaeological Museums) came to an end.

5. Concluding Remarks

The earliest public Islamic art collection in Ottoman Turkey was created in the late nineteenth century within the Imperial Museum. The formation and display of the earliest Islamic art collection in the Ottoman Empire from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century was a complex and multifaceted process that involved various political, cultural, and intellectual factors. The earliest public Islamic art gallery was formed in 1895 in the Imperial Museum almost a decade before the Islamic art galleries in the well-known museums of Europe such as the Kaiser Friedrich and the Louvre. This initiative was started under the directorship of Osman Hamdi and developed by the efforts of Halil Edhem in the early twentieth century. The establishment of the Islamic art gallery within the Imperial Museum had both cultural and political implications. The initial and strongest motivation behind the formation of the collection was to protect Islamic art objects from being collected and benefitted from by westerners. Collecting and displaying Islamic art in the museum also represented an effort to preserve and promote the artistic achievements of the Islamic world. On the other hand, it served as a tool for Ottoman nationalism and identity-building, as it

79 '*Müzeler 1939 da iki gurupa ayrılmış, Türkiyenin esaslı eski bir Müzesi ve milletlerarası büyük bir şöhreti olan Arkeoloji Müzesinin islâmî koleksiyonunu ihtiva eden Çinili Köşkdeki Türk, Arap, Acem eserleri diğer müzelere dağıtılmışdır*.' Ogan 1947, 11–2. Typos are left purposely as in the source.

80 *Fetih Müzesi* 1953.

showcased the cultural and historical connections between the Ottoman Empire and broader Islamic civilization.

The physical display of the Islamic art collection in the Imperial Museum shifted within the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first gallery 'had a bit of chaotic look of an antique shop,' as described by Mendel. After moving to Çinili Köşk, the gallery was reinstalled according to typology and material, with a focus on the aesthetic and technical details of the objects like in a decorative art museum display. The travel guide reviews and the articles about the collection written by Europeans after the reinstallation in 1908 praise the collection and emphasize the similarities between the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum and other significant collections such as the V&A. The changing perception of the Imperial Museum's Islamic art collection demonstrates its growing importance. The analysis of the earliest Islamic art collection in the Ottoman Empire shows that the management of the Imperial Museum tried to improve the Islamic art collection and display as a part of national heritage and wanted to put it on par with international museums.

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Imperial Collections of Topkapı Palace on Display: The Imperial Treasury, the Sacred Relics Collection, and the Ottoman Museum of Antiquities

Abstract

This study examines three imperial collections housed within sultanic pavilions at Topkapı Palace during the late Ottoman era. Originally constructed in the 15th century during the reign of Mehmed II (the Conqueror) for the sultan's personal use, these pavilions underwent significant functional and symbolic transformations over time. The Fatih Kiosk, once a private space where the sovereign collected and contemplated his collection of valuables, was repurposed as the Ottoman Imperial Treasury. The Privy Chamber, which was once the ruler's bedroom and throne room, became the Chamber of Sacred Relics, where Islamic relics were safeguarded and venerated. Meanwhile, the Tiled Pavilion, a garden kiosk situated in the palace's outer gardens, was converted into the Ottoman Museum of Antiquities in the late 19th century. These three royal pavilions were opened up for visits during the 19th century for diverse audiences holding different collections. By analysing the spaces, objects, audiences, and visiting rituals associated with these collections, this article explores Ottoman strategies of collecting and display. Reading these collections as proto-museal institutions, this research argues that the intertwined methods and discourses of exhibiting established the foundations of Ottoman and Turkish museology.

Keywords: Ottoman museums, sacred relics, antiquities, archaeology, Topkapı Palace, Fatih Sultan Mehmed

1. Introduction

Topkapı Palace, previously known as *Saray-ı Cedid-i Amire* (New Imperial Palace), was built in Istanbul by Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) after the conquest of Constantinople during the second half of the 15th century, and it remained the main seat of the Ottoman Empire for more than four centuries, until the 19th century. The palace, located at the tip of the Seraglio and surrounded by sea and land walls, was formulated reflecting the strict hierarchy and protocol of the Ottoman court. Its internal courtyards, aligned successively from more public to more secluded, opened into each other through monumental gates, and each courtyard was assigned different functions.[1]

Topkapı Palace remained at the core of the Ottoman ruling system and housed the imperial household until its abandonment by the imperial family by the mid-19th cen-

1 For a more detailed discussion of Topkapı Palace and its role in the Ottoman ruling system, see Necipoğlu 1991.

tury. Scrutinising what happened to the royal complex after its abandonment, I survey the symbolic, functional and architectural transformations that took place in Topkapı Palace during this turbulent period. Thus, in my doctoral research, I discuss the role of the imperial palace in response to the military, bureaucratic, cultural, and political transformations taking place in the late Ottoman Empire and how the palace took part in Ottoman reforms as a venue and also as an agent of modernisation.

My previous research particularly focused on the gradual museumification of the palace throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and analysed how the imperial collections, especially the Imperial Treasury, were opened for touristic visits and displayed to foreign visitors performatively.[2] In this article, I included other treasures and collections of Topkapı Palace in my discussion to have a more complete and comparative perspective on the politics of collecting and display in the late Ottoman context. Apart from the Imperial Treasury, the Sacred Relics, and the Ottoman Archaeological Museum, the collections are comparatively analysed. Portraying and studying different display techniques adopted by the Ottomans for these diverse collections, the article aims to shed light on the underlying narrative behind these different yet interlaced, 'exhibitionary orders.'[3]

This article will focus on the three most ancient pavilions of Topkapı Palace, all of which date back to the 15th century: Fatih Kiosk, the Privy Chamber, and the Tiled Pavilion (Figure 1). The functions of all three sultanic pavilions, initially built by Mehmed II (Fatih /the Conqueror), have changed over the centuries, and they ended up housing various royal collections and treasures. By the 19th century, these three pavilions – and the collections within – were being visited by diverse audiences, and different display techniques were adopted that conveyed multiple and simultaneous narratives of modernity, tradition, authority, heritage, and dynastic continuity.

I argue that these collections, as proto-museal settings, formed the foundations of the Topkapı Palace Museum today.[4] Topkapı Palace was declared a state museum by the legislation of the Grand National Assembly in 1924, months after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The conversion of the former Ottoman palace into a state museum was an official manifestation of the empire's death warrant. Today, the Topkapı Palace Museum is the most visited in Turkey, attracting over four million tourists annually. From a museological point of view, I argue that the current diverse – and sometimes contractionary – exhibition methodologies and narratives are reflections and adaptations of late-Ottoman display strategies. In this paper, I seek to understand the dynamics and politics of collecting and display in the late Ottoman context, focusing on the collections held at the Imperial Treasury, the Chamber of Sacred Relics, and the Ottoman Imperial Museum.

2 Özlü 2022, 153–92.

3 Mitchell 2004.

4 Proto-museums are accepted as early versions of museums, displaying certain collections without strict organizational, spatial, or scientific boundaries.

Figure 1. The Tiled Pavilion, Privy Chamber, and Fatih Kiosk (from left to right, clockwise) shown on an air view of Topkapı Palace (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1918, D-DAI-IST-3929)

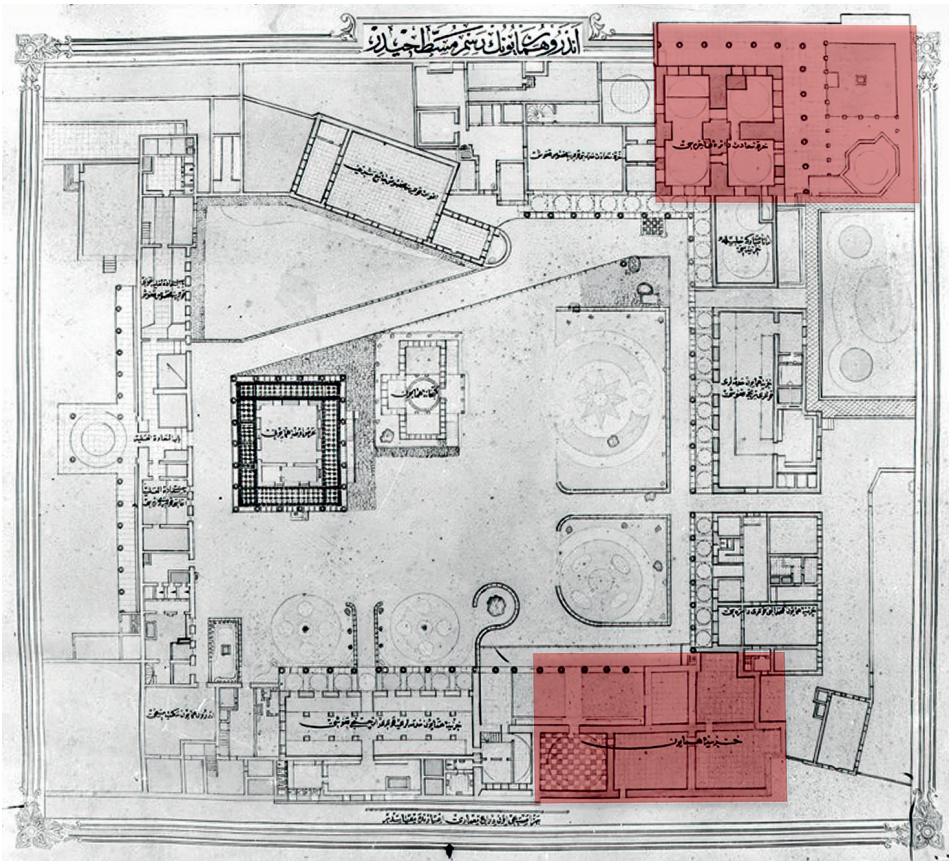
I analyse these spaces of display from a perspective of contemporary museum theory to elaborate on the underlying politics of imperial heritage. I aim to raise various questions in relation to space, collection, audience, display techniques, and narrative:

- Space: Where was the collection displayed? What were the architectural characteristics?
- Collection: What was on display? How was the collection formed?
- Audience: Who was visiting the collection? Why?
- Display: How were they displayed and presented to the audience?
- Narrative: What was the underlying discourse that the Ottomans aimed to convey: modernity, tradition, heritage, glory, richness, difference, superiority, dominance, or all?

2. Fatih Kiosk / Imperial Treasury

Fatih Kiosk (*Fatih Köşkü*) was built by Mehmed II at the Southern corner of the third court of Topkapı Palace. *Enderun Avlusu*, or the courtyard of the pages, is the most

Figure 2. Fatih Kiosk (bottom) and the Privy Chamber (top) shown on the plan of the Enderun Court (Abdurrahman Şeref, 1911)



sacred part of the palace, where the sultan lived with his male servants (Figure 2). The royal pavilion was built as a space for the ruler and composed of four connected chambers at the ground level and three units at the basement level. The chambers opened into each other, and the corner loggia was a semi-open space, overlooking the sublime view of the Sea of Marmara. According to the historical and architectural analysis conducted by Gülru Necipoğlu, Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, Sedad Hakkı Eldem, and Feridun Akozan the Fatih Kiosk was built for the sultan's private use and also to preserve his personal collections and treasures.[5]

In this sublime pavilion, the sovereign could rest, spend time, have guests, and contemplate his invaluable treasury collection, which ranged from relics to erotica,

5 Ayverdi 1973; Eldem and Akozan 1982; Necipoğlu 1991.

Figure 3. Fatih Kiosk and the Corner Loggia (Courtesy of Cengiz Kahraman)

jewellery to paintings, manuscripts to clothing.[6] The structure was initially attached to the Grand Bath (*Enderun Hamamı*) of Mehmed II and the kiosk included niches, hearths, hidden stairways to the basement, a toilet, and a balcony in its chambers, which proved its residential function, apart from being a princely treasury (Figure 3). Perhaps the building could be interpreted as the private *Wunderkammer* of Mehmed II. Meaning 'room of wonder' in German, *Wunderkammer* refers to a space in which royal treasures were housed. The early-modern practice of displaying these chambers and 'cabinet of curiosities' is accepted as the origin of museums.[7]

In the Ottoman context, Fatih's princely pavilion lost its residential function over the centuries and transformed into a treasury-depot, and started being referred to as the Inner Treasury *(Hazine-i Enderun)* and was eventually renamed the Imperial Treasury *(Hazine-i Humayun)* by the 19th century. The accounts of Ottoman court chroniclers mention that Ottoman sultans, together with the treasury pages, paid occasional visits to the Inner Treasury on special occasions. During these exclusive visits, a certain protocol and ritual for unsealing the treasury door and the display of the treasury were performed.[8]

6 Özlü 2018; Özlü 2022, 153–92; Raby 1982, 3–8; Raby 1983, 15–34.
7 Bennett 1995.
8 Hızır İlyas h.1276/1859; Hafız Hızır İlyas 2011, 143–4.

The Ottoman Imperial Treasury and its legendary riches remained a mystery for many centuries, but eventually, it was opened to foreign visitors by the mid-19th century. It was first opened for ambassadors of the great powers (France, Russia and England), later for diplomatic envoys, then for distinguished guests and esteemed European visitors. Eventually, by the last quarter of the 19th century, any Western tourists, who could afford to pay the entrance fee, could have access to the Imperial Treasury.[9]

During the reign of Abdülhamid II (r.1876–1909), access to the Imperial Treasury and the palace grounds was somewhat standardised. The tourists had to follow an established protocol and pay a certain amount to receive a *firman* (imperial decree) that granted access to the palace grounds. The palatial tour included not only the Imperial Treasury but also certain parts of the palace, its inner courts, and sultanic pavilions. My previous article from 2023 gives details about this tour and the self-orientalist spectacles that were performed for the European gaze. Therefore, in this paper, I focus solely on the exhibitionary practices that took place during the visits to the Imperial Treasury and explain the performative acts of display that mimicked the ancient palace rituals.

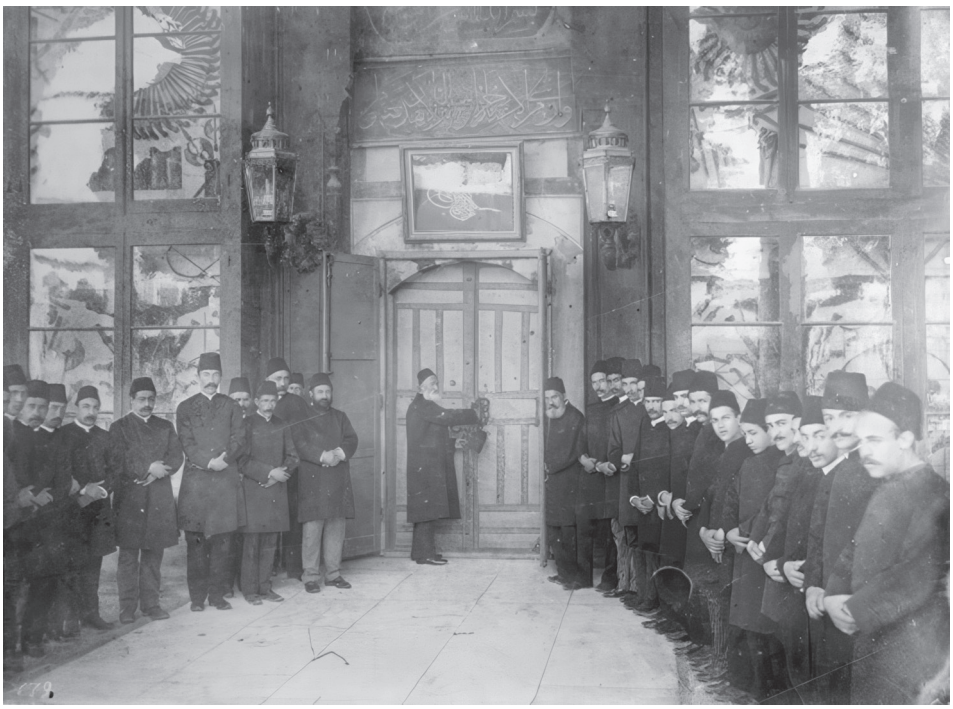
The Imperial Treasury, inner courts, and other sultanic pavilions of Topkapı Palace, including the Baghdad Kiosk and the Mecidiye Kiosk, were part of the touristic itinerary. The Imperial Treasury, however, was the final destination and the pinnacle of the tour, the most curious and desired part of the palatial visits. The display of the treasury was the last attraction, and it was shown to foreign tourists according to a specific protocol. The group was first invited towards the colonnaded entrance gallery of the imperial treasury and kept there waiting for the Chief Treasurer. Once he arrived with his entourage of treasury pages and palace servants, the Chief Treasurer unlocked the seal of the treasury gate with a certain rite as depicted by J.C. Robinson in his article at *The Times* (Figure 4):

> A high official, the keeper of the Imperial Treasury, and a staff of no less than 30 sub-officers and attendants, were assembled at the unlocking of the door. This is in itself was a picturesque, formal ceremony, apparently of prescriptive usage. The officers and attendants ranged themselves in two lines facing each other and leading up the to the doorway, and a green velvet bag containing the massive keys was passed along to the principal official, who in a solemn manner took out the keys one by one, and apparently compared and verified them in the presence of a couple of co-adjutors.[10]

According to Pierre Loti, once the doors were opened, the Chief Treasurer and the treasury pages took their positions inside the treasury chamber. After entering the first chamber of the Imperial Treasury, visitors were able to have a glance at the collection under the surveillance of the palace officials, walking from one hall to another, without adequate time or light to examine the rich and crowded collection. Only three chambers were open for visits: The Domed Chamber known as *Vezne-i Hümayun*, the Royal Chamber (*Divanhane*) and the Corner Loggia. The group was herded swiftly from one chamber to another, briefly being able to observe them all.

9 Özlü 2022, 153–92.
10 Robinson 1885.

Figure 4. Seal Breaking Ceremony performed in front of the Imperial Treasury (Istanbul University, Rare Books Collection)



What was on display in the Imperial Treasury? Almost everything that had some kind of tangible or intangible value for the Ottoman dynasty.[11] The items the sultans and sultanas once used, wore, slept in, ate at, gifts, things they found interesting, valuable, or worth keeping, from jewellery to thrones, costumes to cups, coins to paintings,

11 An inventory of the Inner Treasury from the time of Bayezid II (1496) states that robes, caftans, swords, chessboards, incense burners, belts, sheets of paper, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, shark teeth, arrows, Qur'ans in Kufic script attributed to Ali, pillows, floor spreads, prayer carpets, bed sheets, books, table spreads, shoes, and valuable carpets were stored in the chambers upstairs (*bala-yı hizane-i amire)*. Objects stored downstairs (*zir-i hizane-i amire)* included ceramic wares from İznik and China, Qur'ans kept in mother-of-pearl chests, objects of silver and gold, bed sheets, belts, cushions, books and illustrations, pitchers, metal cups, chandeliers, turbans, velvet, silk, brocade, and wool textiles, sheets of paper, archival documents and historic calendars, astrolabes and astronomical instruments, musical instruments, bows and arrows, chessboards, backgammon sets, incense, lapis lazuli, rosary beads, carpets, and chests full of miscellaneous objects. Another inventory register from 1505 also mentioned chests full of manuscripts, maps, architectural plans, and revenues from imperial gardens in addition to the aforementioned items. Öz, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi arşivi kılavuzu*, faksimile 21, TSA. D.4; Necipoğlu 1991, 137; Necipoğlu 2013, 315–50.

clocks to China porcelains, fabrics to parchments, arms and armour, gifts, boxes, glassware, silverware, and more. Anything of value for the Ottoman sultans was accumulated in the treasury chambers and shown to visitors in custom-made display cabinets. According to the Treasury Register of 1878, around 4,800 objects were deposited in the Imperial Treasury and displayed inside and outside of the windowed cabinets.[12]

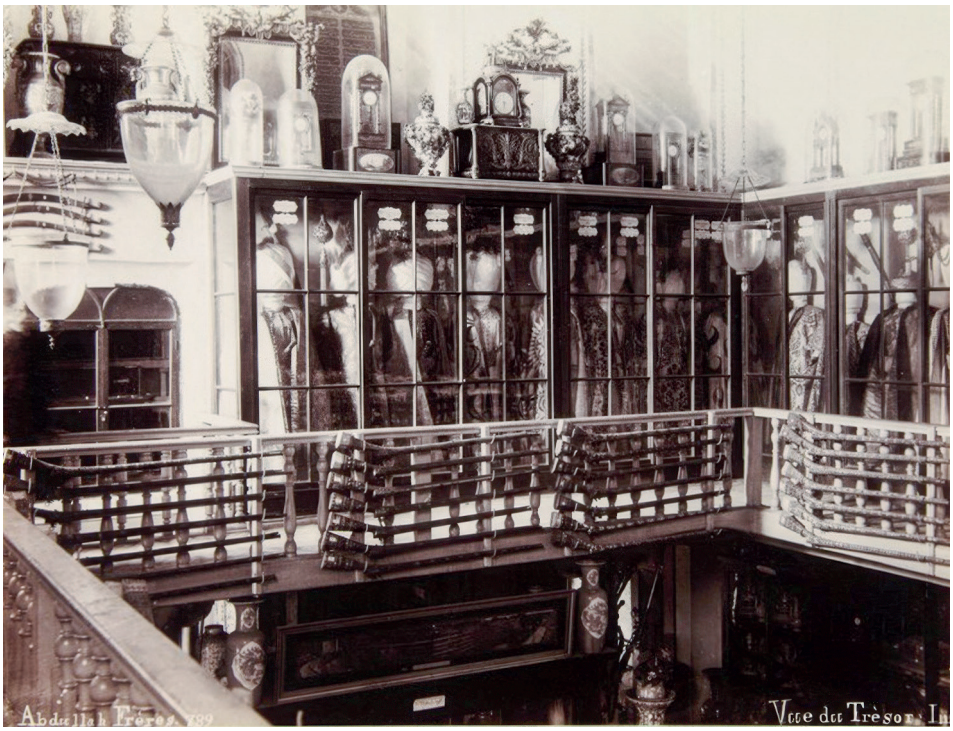
The principal piece of the collection was the so-called Persian Throne, placed at the centre of the first chamber in an octagonal cabinet. The piece was labelled as the throne belonging to Safavid Shah Ismail that was brought to Istanbul by Sultan Selim I as a war trophy, which manifested the military superiority of Ottomans over Safavids, if not the artistic.[13] Hundreds of precious objects, paintings, thrones, porcelains, clocks and more were also displayed on the gallery floor of the first chamber. The main attraction of the second chamber, where several jars of ancient coins, numerous clocks, arms and armour belonging to warrior sultans were on display, was the ceremonial robes of Ottoman sultans displayed in chronological order, from Mehmed II to Mahmud II (Figure 5). It was recorded that Mahmud II's modern military attire, representing his enforced clothing reform, was also on display.[14]

The overall impact of the treasury was some sort of disappointment mixed with wonder and admiration. For instance, an article in *Constantinople Illustrated* depicts the treasury as 'a barbaric display of [...] things of greatest value, intrinsic and historical, mixed in an ignorant and dirty fashion with a heap of modern riff-raff.'[15] The visit to the treasury frequently triggered the preconceptions of the visitors for reproducing the Orientalist narratives. Susan E. Wallace, for instance, compared the contents of the treasury with Sinbad's valley or Aladdin's cave: 'Diamonds… diamonds everywhere, thick as in Sindbad's valley and Aladdin's enchanted cave. There is such profusion of precious things that after a while one begins to feel they are imitations.'[16] Similarly, Eugène Gallois praised the richness of the collection and depicted the Imperial Treasury as 'curious rather than beautiful' and compared its decor to a scene from *The Thousand and One Nights*.[17] Robertson defined the three chambers of the treasury as an 'enchanted open sesame cave from which there might per chance be no exit.'[18] These hackneyed Orientalist narratives reflected both the identity and the expectations of the Western travellers. The Ottoman Imperial Treasury was exclusively open to foreign visitors and Ottoman subjects were denied entry up until the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908.

The display techniques implemented at the Imperial Treasury utterly contrasted with those of modern museums of the period. The Ottomans had been experimenting with collecting and displaying antiquities since the 1840s and established a state-of-the-art

12 Bayraktar and Delibaş 2010.
13 These labels were, in fact, misleading since this throne, spoliated from the Mughal court by Nadir Shah, was actually gifted to the Ottomans during the 18th century.
14 Grosvenor 1900, 729–30.
15 No author 1886b, Part I, 1886.
16 Wallace 1898, 57–8.
17 Gallois 1903, 55.
18 Robinson 1885.

Figure 5. Ceremonial robes of Ottoman sultans, displayed chronologically in the second chamber of the Imperial Treasury (Istanbul University, Rare Books Collection)

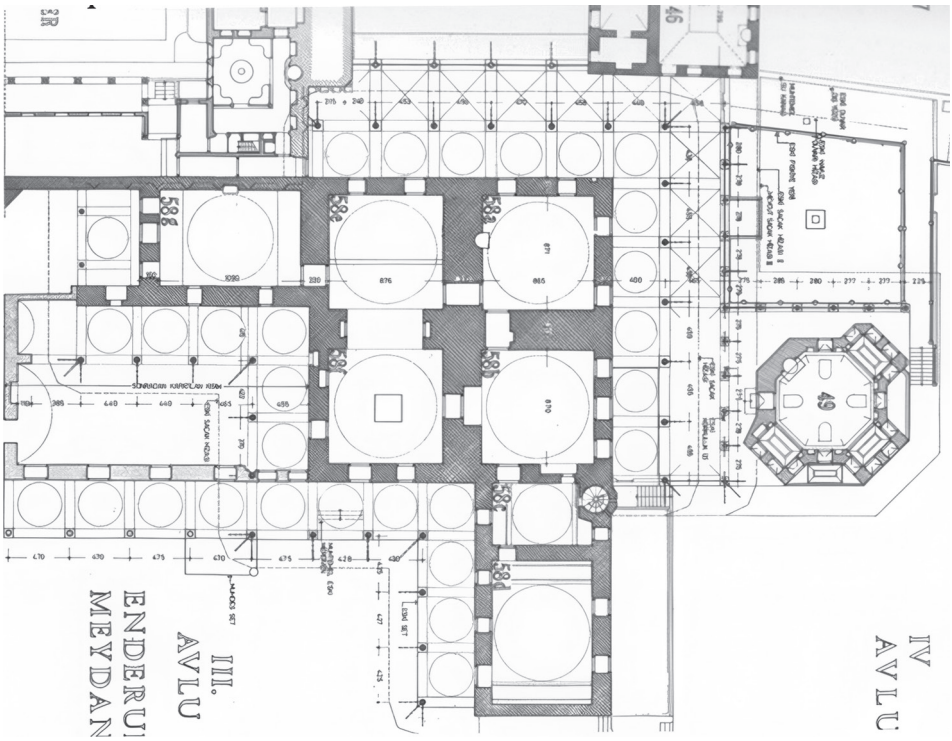


archaeology museum by the end of the 19th century. Therefore, taxonomy and display techniques of modern museology were not foreign to the Ottomans. However, in the Imperial Treasury, these were purposefully neglected. (Dis)organization of the collection, poor lighting conditions, lack of or illegibility of the labels, the dust and dirt covering the display windows, and discomfort while trying to observe the collection under the surveillance of palace officials within a limited time frame were among the most common complaints. I argue that the whole display setting performed in the imperial treasury was purposefully designed to mimic the old palace rituals, and a sense of authenticity and oriental splendour was consciously re-formulated. I tend to define this approach as the 'performing the oriental self' for the foreign gaze.

3. The Privy Chamber / Sacred Relics Collection

The Privy Chamber (*Hass Oda*) was also built by Mehmed II at the Northern corner of the Enderun court, right across from the Fatih Kiosk (Figure 2). The royal structure is strategically positioned between the Enderun court and the Harem quarters, overlooking the hanging gardens of the palace. The Privy Chamber was built as an imperial

Figure 6. Plan of the Privy Chamber (S. Hakkı Eldem and F. Akozan)



pavilion and was originally used as the ruler's primary residence, throne room, and royal bedroom. It is composed of four domed units on the ground floor, sitting on four vaulted chambers underneath (Figure 6). The pavilion was surrounded by colonnaded porticos on both sides. Entrance from the Enderun court and the Harem was through the *Şadırvanlı Sofa* (hall with a water fountain) and *Arzhane*, the chamber of audience, was positioned adjacent to this hall. The Throne Room, or the sultan's bedroom, was located at the Northernmost corner, having vistas towards the busy ports of the Golden Horn and the hills of Pera. The Throne Room was the most significant chamber and had the highest dome among the four chambers. It had direct access to the Marble Sofa, which included a marble pleasure pool and was used for audiences during the summer (Figure 7). With its prime location and impressive architecture, the Privy Chamber manifested Mehmed II's vision of powerful yet secluded rulership.

According to Necipoğlu, Ottoman sultans used the Privy Chamber as their main living space, under the service of their male pages, namely *Hasodalılar*, until the late 16th century. After his conquest of Egypt, Selim I (r.1512–1520) brought the Islamic sacred relics from the Mamluk court in 1517, placing the Holy Mantle of the Prophet Mohammad inside a niche within his bedroom. While the majority of the relics were kept at the Imperial Treasury, the most sacred items were preserved in the sultan's pri-

Figure 7. Marble Sofa and the dome of the Throne Room (Nilay Özlü)

vate space. Therefore, the Privy Chamber became the venue for keeping some of the holy relics while perpetuating its residential function for the ruler.

Until the mid-16th century, the Imperial Harem was not part of Topkapı Palace and the female household of the dynasty remained in another palace known as *Saray-ı Atik* (Old Palace) in Beyazıt. Enderun court remained the main living space of the Ottoman rulers until the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566), when certain female members of the dynasty moved to Topkapı Palace. Eventually, the Imperial Harem was established entirely in Topkapı. Murad III (r. 1574–1595) extensively remodelled and enlarged the Harem of Topkapı Palace and built a new Privy Chamber under his name in the Harem section of the palace. Ottoman rulers gradually moved their living space towards the Harem, leaving Enderun for more ceremonial and symbolic functions. In this new formulation, the Privy Chamber in the Enderun adopted a new role for keeping the sacred relics, and the privy pages became responsible for protecting and conserving the holy collection.

The collection of sacred relics was inaugurated during the reign of Mehmed II, who collected Islamic as well as Christian relics. His successor and son, Beyazid II, later dispersed his collection, but the idea of collecting sacred relics and keeping them in Topkapı Palace persisted. Selim I, after his conquest of Egypt, appropriated the sacred relics that were believed to belong to Prophet Mohammad and the four caliphs. These relics of ultimate religious value have passed to the Mamluk dynasty from the Abbasids and then to the Ottoman dynasty as the emblems of Caliphate. A certain number of relics were also sent from Mecca to Istanbul after the Ottoman control of the holy lands and during the renovation of holy shrines in Mecca and Medina in 1611, and the holy banner was brought to Topkapı Palace from Damascus in the late 16th century.[19]

Later on, the collection was enriched via constant acquisitions, gifts, and military campaigns. For instance, some of the relics kept at Medina were sent to Istanbul during WWI.[20] The sacred relics collection at Topkapı, whose number reached 605, were believed to legitimise the Ottomans' claim to the Caliphate. While some of the holy relics were initially kept in the Imperial Treasury, later during the time of Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) they were transferred to the Treasury of Sacred Relics (*Emanat Hazinesi Dairesi*) and preserved within. Among the collection of sacred relics, there are mainly five categories:

- Objects believed to belong to Prophet Mohammad
- Swords and objects belonging to the four caliphs, disciples, and other religiously significant persons.
- Qur'ans (139 in number, now preserved in Topkapı Palace Museum Manuscripts Library), religious texts and manuscripts
- Items brought from Ka'ba
- Various objects of value for the display of these relics

19 Necipoğlu 1991, 151.
20 Özlü 2024, 83–113.

The first group of items were believed to belong to the Prophet and included relics such as the Holy Mantle of the Prophet Mohammad (*Hırka-i Şerif*), his tooth broken during the war of Uhud (*Dendan-ı Saadet*), holy hair from his beard (*Lihye-i Saadet* or *Sakal-ı Şerif*), the footprints of the Prophet (*Naks-ı Kadem-i Şerif*), Holly Banner of the Prophet Mohammad (*Sancak-ı Şerif*), his bow (*Kavs-ı Saadet*) and stick (*Asa-i Nebevi*), letter attributed to the Prophet Mohammad (*Name-i Saadet*), the seal of the Prophet (*Mühr-ü Saadet*), and his swords.[21]

The sacred relics collection was enriched through acquisitions and gifts. The inventory and content of the treasury were recorded in treasury registers. It is also interesting that there was a constant circulation of relics in the Ottoman realm, and some relics were sent to certain provinces for religious and political propaganda.[22] For instance, it is known that the sacred beard of Mohammad or the holy cover of Ka'ba (*Kisve-i Şerif*) were sent to various religious shrines for display.[23] Therefore, the Privy Chamber gradually transformed into a semi-sacred place where the Islamic relics were collected, preserved, visited, and venerated.

As the Privy Chamber started being used less as an imperial residence and more as a shrine for Islamic relics, it started being referred to as the Chamber of the Sacred Relics. It became a tradition for Ottoman rulers to visit the holy relics every year during the holy month of Ramadan. Apart from Ottoman dignitaries, members of the Imperial Harem – the mother, wives, sisters, children of the sultan, and prominent members of the Harem – also attended these ceremonies. These visits were organised with strict protocol, and the preparations started days earlier.

Hassodalılar (Corps of the Privy Chamber), being the most prestigious group of servants in the imperial palace, were responsible for the preparations. As a part of this politically significant religious ceremony, the Prophet's Holy Mantle was immersed in rosewater, and dried over incense. This water was believed to possess healing powers and part of it was poured into small bottles and distributed to attendees of the ceremony and given as gifts to Ottoman grandees.[24] This religious and sensory ceremony was performed with ultimate care and registered in protocol books. Every detail is mentioned in these protocol registers, such as the names of the dignitaries attending the ceremony, their attire, the order of the visit according to the ranks of the visitors,

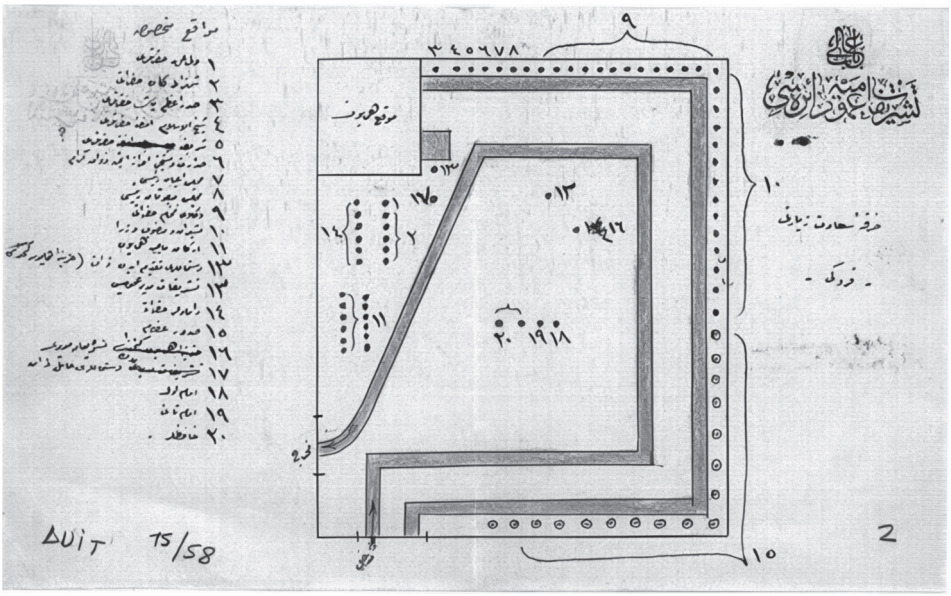
21 Aydın 2011.

22 A remarkable document from the Ottoman State Archives mentions that the palace would no longer be sending sacred beard to provinces, as only a limited number of beards remained in the chamber of sacred relics. BOA DH.HMS.28.14, 1911.

23 BOA A.MKT.MHM.24034 (1279 Ra 21 /18 September 1862). BOA BEO.3575.268076 (26 CA 1327 / 2 Haziran 1325 / 15 June 1909); BOA DH.İD.33.60 (1 Ş 1330 / 14 July 1914). There are numerous documents on the circulation of the Prophet's beard (*lihye-i şerif)* in the Ottoman Archives. Selected sample documents are: BOA DH.MKT.2555.131 (13 November 1901); BOA DH.İD.33.60 (14 June 1914). Valide Sultan of Abdülaziz, Pertevniyal also sent a *Sakal-ı Şerif* to Kaşgar Muslims and the tomb of Abdülkadir Geylani at Baghdad. See Akyıldız 2016, 333.

24 Necipoğlu 1991, 151.

Figure 8. Protocol register showing a diagram of the protocol during the annual visits to the Holy Mantle in the Privy Chamber (Ottoman State Archives BOA.İ.DUİT.15)



the position of the guest during the ceremony, to whom the holy water was given, the amount of tips distributed, and other details were minutely recorded.

Some books of ceremonies include diagrams showing the order in which the dignitaries were supposed to line up at the Privy Chamber to kiss the mantle in front of the sultan (Figure 8).[25] During the ceremony:

> the sultan would open the silver throne, the seven wrappings and the gold casket with a golden key, take the mantle out, dip its fastenings into a bowl of water and then put drops of this water into vessels, which in turn would be given away as presents. During the time of Mahmud II, the mantle started being touched with some specially prepared scarves [known as *destimal*] with religious poems [*mani*] inscribed on them, and these scarves were then distributed as gifts for his guests attending the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, during which the Qur'an was recited continuously, the sultan personally put away the Holy Mantle.[26]

Before the 19th century, while the sultan was still living in Topkapı Palace, the visits to the holy relics were conducted in seclusion, taking place within the palace grounds with the attendance of palace officials and servants. However, after the relocation of the Ottoman dynasty to newer and more modern palaces away from the Seraglio, the

25 For instance, see BOA.İ.DUİT.15; KK.D.676; KK.D.696.
26 Atasoy 1998.

visits gained an official tone and became public spectacles. The annual visit of the sultan to the Chamber of Sacred Relics was performed as a public procession, from his new palace in Dolmabahçe or Yıldız to Topkapı, the palace of his ancestors. Especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II, these grandiose processions gained a political role, manifesting the power and piety of the sultan and emphasising his role as the Caliph and protector of all Muslims around the world. The sultan was accompanied by Ottoman notables, palace officials, the sultan's family, religious elites, and high-ranking military officials. Hakan Karateke defines imperial ceremonies as performances of a symbolic nature and asserts that 'the ultimate purpose of these symbols and actions is to draw popular attention to the ruler and create an aura of sovereignty and authority around him.'[27]

The annual visits to the Chamber of Sacred Relics, which took place on the 15th day of Ramadan, were also announced in the newspapers, and strict precautions were taken to protect the route the sultan would pass through. The number of attendees to this prestigious ceremony also increased and a wide range of Ottoman notables were invited to the ceremonies by the late 19th century.

Renowned author, poet, and statesman Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, who had attended the ceremony four times, mentions in his memoirs that each and every time, the ritual intensified his religious sentiments and deepened his faith. According to Uşaklıgil, a minor change in the order of the protocol had quite profound political implications.[28] For instance, a person's order in the line or his position in reference to the sultan, was accepted as a public manifestation of their political role and virtue. These visits were explicitly of a formal nature, and the ceremony was open only to Ottoman Muslim notables. Even though Topkapı Palace was opened for foreign visitors, as explained in the previous section, during the 19th century, the doors of the Chamber of Sacred Relics and the holy relics collection remained closed to foreigners and non-Muslims until the end of the empire. For example, in 1855, the insistent demand of the Austrian dignitary to enter the Chamber of Sacred Relics while visiting other parts of Topkapı Palace was denied, and the refusal created a small-scale diplomatic scandal.[29] According to another document dated 1858, the demand of a Muslim Russian military officer from Crimea to visit the Chamber of Sacred Relics was denied due to the fact that the holy chamber was solely open to the visit of the dynasty and only on special days.[30]

After the declaration of the Second Constitution, the Chamber of Sacred Relics was opened to visits for certain Muslim notables apart from the month of Ramadan.[31] A document dated 1909 mentions that tickets were printed for those invited to the ceremonial visits to the Chamber of Sacred Relics during the fifteenth of Ramadan.[32] However, even during the Second Constitutional Era, the holy chamber was kept closed to

27 Karateke 2004.
28 Uşaklıgil 1965, 123–8.
29 BOA HR.SYS.205.8 (19 S 1272 / 31 October 1855).
30 BOA HR.MKT.270.91 (12 Ca 1275 / 31 December 1858).
31 BOA İ.HUS.176.56 (1327 / 1909).
32 BOA BEO.3642.273091 (1327 N 13 / 28 September 1909).

Figure 9. Mehmed Reşat's visit to the Holy Mantle after his accession to the throne in 1909 (Atatürk Library, Postcards Collection)

non-Muslims. For instance, a permit was given to German scholar Cornelius Gurlitt to conduct research in all parts of Topkapı Palace, except for the Chamber of Sacred Relics and the palace archives.[33] Only after the declaration of Topkapı Palace as a state museum during the Republican era did the Chamber of Sacred Relics, the Privy Chamber, and the collection open for tourist visits.

Hence, it can be concluded that even though Topkapı Palace and some of its royal collections were opened for foreign visits during the 19th century, the collection of sacred relics continued to keep its formal ceremonial role in Ottoman dynastic tradition (Figure 9). The visits to the chamber of sacred relics were part of Ottoman court decorum and were explicitly of a political and religious nature. The nature of the visits, their audience and the ceremonial practices were quite different from the display of the Imperial Treasury collection. The religious and political significance of the collection was perpetuated during the 19th century, and even more so, these annual visits of the sultan to the Holy Chamber gained a public character and became popular spectacles, legitimising his status as the ruler and Caliph of the Muslim world.

33 BOA BEO.3741.280510 (19 R 1328 / 31 March1910); BOA İ.MBH.2.13 (19 R 1328 / 31 March 1910).

Figure 10. The Tiled Pavilion in Topkapı Palace (Nilay Özlü)

4. The Tiled Pavilion / Museum of Antiquities

Similar to the Fatih Kiosk and the Privy Chamber, the Tiled Pavilion or *Çinili Kiosk* is among the royal pavilions built by Mehmed II during the 15th century. However, unlike the other two that were located in the Enderun court, the Tiled Pavilion was built in the outer gardens of Topkapı Palace. The sultanic kiosk is believed to be one of the three garden pavilions commissioned by Mehmed II. These three garden kiosks were believed to reflect different architectural styles: one in Greek (Byzantine) style, the other in Ottoman, and the third in Persian style.[34] Only the Tiled Pavilion, which reflected the Persian or Karamanid style, remains to this day (Figure 10).

The garden pavilion was built as a pleasure kiosk where the ruler could entertain himself in nature, away from the strict protocol of the inner palace, enjoying poetry recitals, hunting, or watching competitions and games. The two-story-high pavilion was built in brick and masonry and adorned with beautiful blue tiles inside and outside. The pavilion's architectural decoration and its cruciform plan with four iwans and a central dome reflected its Persianate character. There was once an artificial lake in front of the building reflecting its monumental Northern façade. Its southern façade facing the palace was defined with a colonnaded portico. The original timber columns were

34 Necipoğlu 1991.

replaced with marble ones after the fire of 1737 and its roof was also renovated during that time.[35] The blue tiles defining the entrance portal and the Quranic script inscribed on tiles on the façade are among the most striking features of this beautiful kiosk.

Following the example of the Tiled Pavilion, the garden kiosk as an architectural typology, became common in Topkapı Palace and the succeeding sultans erected several other pleasure kiosks in the outer gardens and the fourth courtyard of Topkapı Palace. While the Tiled Pavilion was built as a royal kiosk, it lost its prestigious role over time and was used for multiple functions, including a prison or a residence for high-ranking palace officials. Especially after the move of the Ottoman dynasty to new palaces by the 18th century, the outer gardens and garden pavilions of Topkapı Palace were left in desolation and became idle. Following the military reforms initiated by Mahmud II, the outer gardens of Topkapı Palace were occupied by numerous military organisations, including barracks, a military hospital, drilling fields, ammunition depots, and armouries. The Tiled Pavilion had also become a military depot (*Harbiye Anbarı*) by the 19th century.

The life of the monument came to a sudden twist, when the Ottoman government decided to move the antiquities collection from St Irene to the Tiled Pavilion. In fact, the former Byzantine church of St Irene, located in the first court of Topkapı Palace, has also been used as an armoury since the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. However, during the Tanzimat era, in 1846 with the order of Sultan Abdülmecid (r.1839–1861), a double collection of antique weapons and antiquities (*Mecma-i Asar-ı Atika* and *Mecma-i Esliha-i Atika*) was established in the atrium of the former church and occasionally shown to tourists as a part of Topkapı Palace tours. Later, in 1869, during the reign of Abdülaziz, the antiquities collection at St. Irene was renamed the Ottoman Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*). With the enrichment of the collection, thanks to the Antiquities Law of 1869, which aimed to control and possess antique remains discovered within the empire, the need for a new space solely dedicated to antiquities arose. Hence, in 1873, the Ottoman state decided to move the antiquities from St Irene to the Tiled Pavilion, keeping the collection within the precincts of Topkapı Palace.

The renovation of the Tiled Pavilion and the move of the collection took several years and eventually the Tiled Pavilion was inaugurated as the Museum of Antiquities (*Asar-ı Atika Müzesi*) in 1880, during the reign of Abdülhamid II. During the opening ceremony, the Minister of Education, Münif Pasha, emphasised the importance of the museum as a marker of progress and civilisation. He also stated that many archaeological findings from the Ottoman lands adorned European and American museums. However, he argued, with the opening of this museum, Europeans would finally change their opinion about the Ottomans and accept them as members of the civilised world. He ended his speech by noting that the Tiled Pavilion itself should be

35 Eyice 1993, 337–41.

Figure 11. The Tiled Pavilion as the Museum of Antiquities (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, D-DAI-IST)

considered an antiquity from the era of Mehmed II, and the building was purposefully selected for this task.[36]

Even though the historic and artistic qualities of the Tiled Pavilion were praised by Münif Pasha, the 15th-century kiosk underwent significant architectural alterations during its conversion into a museum.[37] During this process, its authentic architectural features were ruined. For instance, the original marble staircase was removed, and a new double marble staircase was built in front of the ancient pavilion. Some of the original tiles were also damaged; glazed tile bricks on the façade were whitewashed; the original door was replaced; hearths were walled over; niches were filled out; original flooring was replaced with marble, and iron railings were placed at its entrance gate (Figure 11).

The aim was to convert the historic pavilion into a modern museum to house the antiquities collection. However, the museum collection remained rather disorganised under the direction of German historian, archaeologist, and painter Dr. Philipp Anton

36 Gürol Öngören 2012, 79; Kural Shaw 2003.
37 Cezar 1971, 241–2.

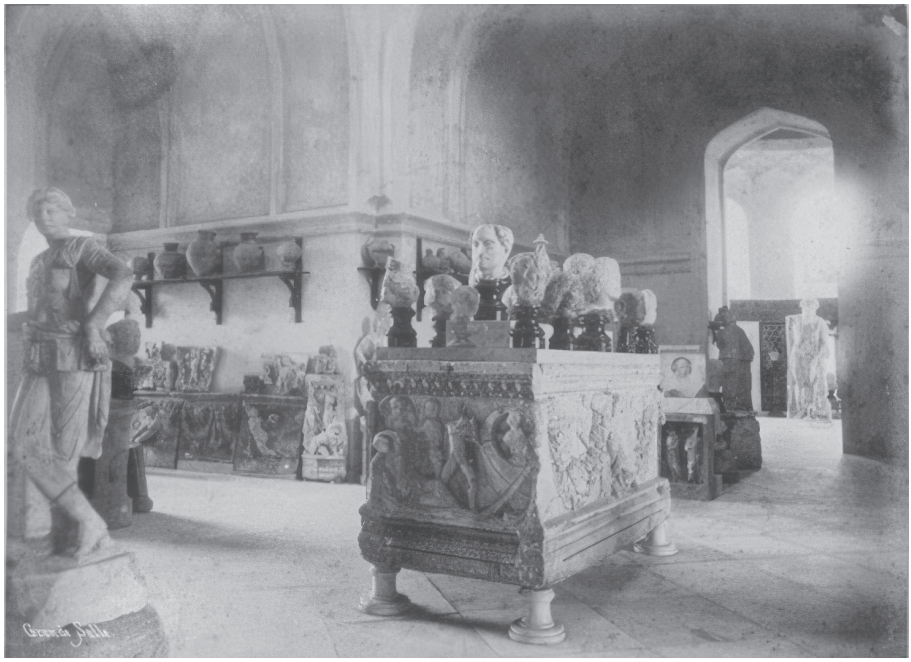
Déthier.[38] Déthier was criticised by *Century Illustrated Magazine* for having 'no idea of the way in which a museum should be managed' and making the museum inaccessible to scholars.[39] Just a year after the inauguration of the new museum, in 1881, Déthier passed away, and Osman Hamdi, a member of the museum committee and the son of the former grand vizier Edhem Pasha,[40] was appointed as the first Ottoman-Muslim director of the Imperial Museum.[41] Educated in the Paris *École des Beaux-Arts*, Osman Hamdi was an Ottoman intellectual, painter, bureaucrat, and representative of the Ottoman elite, having close relations both with the Ottoman ruling circles and the European intelligentsia.[42]

As the new director of the museum, Osman Hamdi aimed to put the archaeological collection in the Tiled Pavilion in order. As he had no formal education in archaeology, he invited French archaeologist Salomon Reinach to Istanbul to help with 'remedying the deficient arrangement, (…) but also of drawing up a summary catalogue' of the museum, which was 'despair of any antiquary' order.[43] According to Reinach, who published a catalogue of the collection in 1882,[44] the antiquities in the Tiled Pavilion were in complete disorder.[45]

Another French archaeologist, André Joubin, who was invited to Istanbul in 1893 to help reorganise the collection in the Tiled Pavilion, also criticised the arrangement of the museum and complained about its erratic condition. He compared the display of the collection to a 'shop at the Grand Bazaar.'[46] After Joubin's reorganisation, the collections in the Tiled Pavilion were spatially classified according to their geographical origins.[47] This new arrangement marked the beginning of a new era for Ottoman museology that emulated and adopted the modern techniques of display (Figure 12). The arrangement and categorisation of archaeological objects in the Tiled Pavilion under

38 Cezar 1971, 242.
39 Peter 1893, 546.
40 The former Grand Vizier Edhem Pasha was the Ottoman Ambassador to Vienna at that time and one of the most influential figures of the time.
41 Cezar 1971, 254; Ürekli 1997, 134.
42 For in-depth information regarding Osman Hamdi Bey, see Cezar 1971; Eldem 2010; Ersoy 2003 and 2011; Rona 1993.
43 Caillard 1900, 136–7.
44 Reinach 1882.
45 Eldem 2010, 444.
46 André Joubin was a French archaeologist who came to Istanbul for an archaeological post and took part in the reorganisation of the Imperial Museum under the direction of Osman Hamdi between 1893 and 1894. Reports from André Joubin to the French ambassador about his post in Constantinople could be found at the Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, 25 March 1893, no. 97–107 / 9 June 1893, no. 110 –111.
47 Eldem 2010, 154–5; Gürol Öngören 2012, 80; Şapolyo 1936, 45–6. The two front rooms of the Tiled Pavilion were dedicated to archaeological findings from Palmyra and the Himyarite Kingdom, Greco-Roman antique pieces were displayed in the central hall, one of the back rooms was dedicated to antiquities from Cyprus, and the other room held the objects from the Bronze age, while the cloisters were filled with Byzantine antiquities.

Figure 12 a–12b. Chambers of the Tiled Pavilion organised as the Museum of Antiquities (Istanbul University Rare Books Collection)



the direction of Osman Hamdi reflected an awareness of scientific taxonomy and was meant to demonstrate the modernisation and progress of the empire.

An article from *The Times* praised Osman Hamdi for the new order of the museum but also criticised the size of the Tiled Pavilion sarcastically:

> I have seen a few exceedingly fine specimens in the little museum close to the Seraglio, which is now being put into excellent order by Hamdi Bey. This, by the way, is the 'Imperial Museum' of Constantinople, though it could be put bodily inside the Elgin Room of the British Museum.[48]

In the following years, the Ottoman Imperial Museum flourished and became one of the most celebrated archaeological institutions of Europe. It is not an exaggeration to assert that, under the direction of Osman Hamdi, the foundations of modern museology and archaeology in Turkey were laid. The museum became known worldwide, especially after Osman Hamdi took part in archaeological excavations himself. His discovery of 26 Sarcophagi in Sidon in 1887 was a turning point in the history of the museum. After this ground-breaking discovery, Sultan Abdülhamid II approved the construction of a new museum building, which was erected right across the Tiled Pavilion. An article from *The Independent* in 1888 announced the construction of the new museum building:

> So greatly has the collection increased that Chinili Kiosk is no longer large enough to accommodate all the pieces. Hamdi Bey has therefore obtained a settlement of £2,000 from the Sultan toward the erection of a new building which is now in process of construction.[49]

The new and ambitious building was designed by Ottoman Levantine architect Alexandre Vallaury in neoclassical style, and was completed in three phases (Figure 13). The First wing was completed in 1891, the second in 1903, and the last in 1908. The Ottoman Imperial Museum, with its rich collection, state-of-the-art display units, universally acclaimed neoclassical architecture, beautiful and rich library, modelling, and photography studio, became a manifestation of modernity and civilisation, competing with its European counterparts. For instance, *The New Mediterranean Traveller* guidebook praised the Imperial Ottoman Museum:

> This Museum, housed in the buildings called the 'Chinili Kiosk' in the Old Seraglio grounds, is of large importance and interest. It contains many archaeological treasures, notably the Sidon sarcophagi, the finest in the world, and the tablets and other finds of recent excavations in the Euphrates Valley.[50]

However, unlike the European museums, which attracted a significant number of visitors, the audience of the Imperial Museum was quite limited. Hidden behind the high walls of Topkapı Palace, the museum was out of public sight and reach. It was, in fact,

48 No author 1886.
49 Prince 1888, 16.
50 Lorenz 1922, 147.

Figure 13. The new building of the Ottoman Imperial Museum (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, D-DAI-IST)

practically closed to Ottoman visitors.[51] Although no visitor records have been found so far, it is likely that the museum was not a point of attraction for the local population. An article published in *Şehbal* newspaper in 1913 pointed out that the Imperial Museum was solely dedicated to archaeology, thus it was open only to the use of foreign visitors, rather than the Ottomans. However, it is not fair to say that the museum welcomed all tourists. On the contrary, only a small number of foreign visitors could have access to it, especially during its early years. According to the museum catalogue published in 1893, the museum was open especially for foreign researchers and scholars interested in conducting archaeological research. Hence, unlike its European counterparts, the Ottoman museum positioned itself as a restricted scientific institution rather than an educational establishment for the wider public. In fact, similar to the aforementioned imperial collections at the Fatih Kiosk and the Privy Chamber, the antiquities collection at the Tiled Pavilion remained exclusive to certain guests. Selected visitors could have access to these royal pavilions, following a certain pre-set protocol. In this respect,

51 Çelik 2016; Eldem 2019, 259–85.

Figure 14. Islamic Arts Collection in the Tiled Pavilion (Halil Edhem, Das Osmanische Antikenmuseum in Kostantinopel)

even though, all three imperial pavilions were designed to house different collections designated for diverse visitor groups, their exclusive nature was mutual and pertained their character as princely collections, rather than museal institutions with educational purposes.[52]

With the completion of the new antiquities museum, the building formed a U-shape encircling the Tiled Pavilion and cutting its visual, physical, and symbolic connection with Topkapı Palace. All the archaeological collections within the Tiled Pavilion were transferred to the newly completed sections of the museum, and by 1907 the Tiled Pavilion was dedicated solely to the Collection of Islamic Arts (Figure 14).[53] Hence, a certain connection between the objects on display and the museum space was established. The Tiled Pavilion housed the collection of Islamic Arts until the foundation of the separate Islamic Arts Museum (*Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi*) in 1914 in the Süleymaniye complex. The Tiled Pavilion was evacuated during WWII, then reopened as the Fatih

52 Artun and Akman 2006; Preziosi and Farago 2004.

53 The Islamic Arts section of the Ottoman Imperial Museum was first established on the second floor of the new museum building and the collection was enriched by gathering numerous items from various parts of the empire, opening its doors to visitors in 1894. See Eldem 2016.

Museum in 1953, and today it houses the collection of Turkish Çini tiles and ceramics as part of the Istanbul Archaeological Museums.

5. Conclusion

As explained in the previous sections, the imperial pavilions of Topkapı Palace were organised to display various imperial collections during the second half of the 19th century. The Imperial Treasury, housing the personal treasures of the Ottoman sultans that were accumulated since the 15th century, was opened to Western visitors and shown to these privileged groups following a certain route and rite. From getting an entrance permit (*ferman*) to their access to the palatial grounds, and from a hosting ritual at Mecidiye Kiosk to their arrival at the Imperial Treasury, every detail was meticulously organised and pre-planned. This performative display was organised, reenacting the ancient palatial traditions and creating an authentic scene, which triggered the Orientalist conceptions of the European tourists visiting the Seraglio and hitherto hidden treasures of the Ottoman sultans.

A similar strict protocol was also enacted in the Privy Chamber, which housed the Holy Mantle of the Prophet Mohammad and other sacred relics. However, the audience for this religious ceremony was utterly different. Under the auspices of the sultan, only Muslim Ottoman dignitaries, and members of the imperial family could attend the annual visits to the Chamber of Sacred Relics. Apart from its religious sentiments, attending to this ritual was of utmost political significance in the Ottoman court decorum, and the order and position of each attendee was previously designated and recorded. Special invitations were printed and souvenirs were handed to those attending this consecrated state event. According to Selim Deringil, these annual imperial visits to the Chamber of Sacred Relics turned into a public spectacle during the time of Abdülhamid II and the display of the holy relics became an 'invented tradition.'[54]

Ottoman Antiquities Museum, on the other hand, was the ultimate product of the 19th century, manifesting Ottoman modernisation and its place in the civilised world. After the antiquities collection was moved from St. Irene to the Tiled Pavilion, and under the direction of the museum director Osman Hamdi, the museum was organised as a scientific institution, following European norms of taxonomy and techniques of display. However, unlike the European museums, which aimed at educating and civilising a wider population, the Ottoman Antiquities Museum was not accessible to the Ottoman public, not even to many foreign tourists. Only a selected group of archaeologists and scholars could have access to it. Therefore, rather than functioning as a public museum, it was positioned more as a scholarly institution of research and prestige.

I argue that the three collections housed in the royal pavilions of Topkapı Palace during the late 19th century established the foundations of Turkish museums. The doors of Topkapı Palace finally opened for the Ottoman public, after the fall of Abdül-

54 Deringil 1983; Deringil 1993, 3–29.

hamid II and the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908. Even then, the Privy Chamber remained inaccessible to the wider public, while the Imperial Treasury became a popular attraction. These three collections manifested diverse narratives, they were open to distinct audiences, and all three collections adopted different display strategies, communicating distinct discourses of power, tradition, heritage, and modernity. However, after the collapse of the empire and six months after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, in 1924, Topkapı Palace was declared a state museum with the order of Gazi Mustafa Kemal. After its official museumification, all the collections were put under the direction of the Museum of Antiquities (*Asar-ı Atika Müzeleri*). As a result, diverse collecting practices and different narratives of display were flattened and assembled under a single institution.

Even though the aim of the nascent Turkish Republic was to unify these diverse collections under a single discourse of modernity and secularism, multiple and entangled narratives of display are still evident today in Topkapı Palace Museum, the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, or the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts. The Topkapı Palace Museum collection conveys alternative and sometimes conflicting discourses of modernity, secularism, glory, nostalgia, patriarchy, and religion. While the Treasury Section is a celebrated representation of the past glory and superiority of the Ottoman Empire, the Sacred Relics Collection conveys a religious message and is primarily venerated by believers of Islam. The Museum of Archaeology, on the other hand, continues to position Turkey as an integral part of European and world civilisation and attract a tiny portion of society.

Today, Topkapı Palace Museum is visited as an architectural monument embracing numerous palimpsest spaces and rich decorative elements from the 15th to the 19th century. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and accomodated diverse historic collections reflecting the splendour of the Ottoman dynasty. It is also a religious site holding Islamic sacred relics and an academic source thanks to its rich manuscript library and palace archive. The museum attracts a variety of visitors, including students, tourists, scholars, architects, believers, bureaucrats and politicians, each with their own purpose and routine. Each audience has different visiting rituals and encounters different museal narratives. I argue that these multiple discourses and display rituals originated during the late Ottoman era, when different parts and collections of Topkapı Palace were opened up to diverse audiences.

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Vernacular Legacies and Modern Visions: Sadberk Koç's Collectorship

Abstract

This article examines the collecting practice of Sadberk Koç (1908–1973), whose systematic engagement with Ottoman textiles and domestic artefacts culminated in the posthumous establishment of the Sadberk Hanım Museum, Turkey's first officially recognised private museum. By foregrounding vernacular material culture – embroideries, garments, and household textiles embedded in everyday and ritual life – Koç's practice complemented the broader heritage landscape of the early Republic, which, in its pursuit of modernisation and secularisation, placed greater emphasis on monumental architecture, modern painting and sculpture, and Western-oriented music and performing arts, while forms of vernacular domestic material culture, received comparatively little institutional attention. Drawing on archival inventories, oral histories, and family recollections, the study situates her ethos within intersecting narratives of gender, modernisation, and cultural policy. It also highlights the intellectual affinities and networks of mid-twentieth-century women collectors, whose practices reframed private acquisition as cultural stewardship. The museum's subsequent development and its plans for expansion into a purpose-built complex illustrate the ongoing negotiation between domestic and institutional spheres, and between private initiative and public mission. By bridging vernacular and monumental, intimate and institutional, Koç's legacy demonstrates how individual agency recalibrated national heritage discourses, ensuring that the textures of everyday life became part of Turkey's cultural record.

Keywords: female collector, textile studies, museology, Ottoman Empire, Turkish culture

1. Introduction

Sadberk Koç holds a distinctive place within the cultural landscape of Turkey, most visibly through the institution that bears her name, housed in a historic Bosphorus mansion. As a founding partner of the Koç Group – the country's largest conglomerate – and spouse of industrialist Vehbi Koç, she was situated at the confluence of economic capital and cultural agency in the formative decades of the Turkish Republic. Yet her significance extends beyond these familial and corporate affiliations. Among a small cohort of mid-twentieth-century women collectors, Koç pursued an enduring engagement with Ottoman artefacts – particularly garments and domestic textiles – that not only embodied the material culture of the empire but also preserved the intangible practices that animated it. This pursuit ran counter to prevailing institutional tendencies, which largely privileged monumental, courtly, or European decorative arts. The cultural milieu of the early Republican era, shaped by modernisation and Westernisation policies, frequently

relegated vernacular[1] material heritage to the margins, favouring instead new forms of artistic production and state-sanctioned heritage narratives.[2] While she fully embraced the opportunities and sensibilities afforded by modernity in her personal life and education, her collecting practice constituted a deliberate countercurrent – one that *attested to the technical and aesthetic sophistication* of Ottoman craftsmanship and safeguarded embedded forms of domestic knowledge transmitted across generations.

Koç's aspiration to make her collection publicly accessible emerged at a time when the private acquisition of vernacular material culture in Turkey remained overwhelmingly confined to domestic or familial spheres, and when the very notion of a privately founded museum open to the public was effectively absent. Although institutional collecting had antecedents in the late Ottoman period,[3] most private holdings remained beyond public reach until well into the second half of the twentieth century. In this context, the inauguration of the Sadberk Hanım Museum (SHM) in 1980 constituted a pivotal moment: as Turkey's first officially recognised private museum, it not only established a model for subsequent cultural initiatives but also embodied a sustained commitment to heritage preservation at a historical juncture when such undertakings required careful negotiation of limited institutional receptivity and an evolving legislative framework for cultural property.

Building on this contextual foundation, the present study interrogates the specificities of Koç's collecting ethos and praxis. While the operational framework and curatorial trajectory of the Sadberk Hanım Museum have been the subject of prior documentation, the subtler contours of Koç's personal acquisition strategies – and the intellectual and affective dispositions underpinning them – have received comparatively limited scholarly attention. This article seeks to address that lacuna by situating her practice within the intersecting narratives of Ottoman textile production, domestic material culture, and the shifting heritage paradigms of twentieth-century Turkey.

The research draws upon a multi-source evidentiary base. Foremost among these are the museum's systematically catalogued inventories and archival holdings, which together constitute a critical repository for reconstructing the scope and character of Koç's acquisitions. Oral histories form an equally integral component: testimonies from current and former curators and conservators – some with over three decades of continuous service – provide insight shaped by direct engagement with Koç's initial ambitions and by lived experience of the museum's evolving institutional ethos.[4] These

1 In this study, the term 'vernacular' is used inclusively to denote both objects of daily domestic use and those employed in rites of passages and life-cycle rituals – such as the hammam, circumcision, and henna night – which, while not quotidian in frequency, were integral to the fabric of Ottoman culture.

2 Berkes 2013, 521–55.

3 For a comprehensive analysis of Ottoman museological frameworks and collecting practices, see Wendy 2003.

4 The author wishes to thank Dr Lale Görünür, Hülya Bilgi, and Dr Şebnem Eryavuz for their insights drawn from decades of experience in textile collecting and its traditional contexts; archivist Mevlüde Kurt for her assistance in navigating the museum's archival hold-

accounts function as a form of 'living archive,' complementing and, at times, extending the extant secondary literature. Particularly valuable are the recollections of Koç's eldest daughter, Semahat Arsel, whose interviews illuminate the familial, biographical, and affective dimensions of her mother's engagement with art and heritage.

Among published sources, Ayşe Üçok's biographical monograph remains the principal reference point, interweaving personal recollections with historical contextualisation.[5] Family memoirs and autobiographies offer complementary perspectives, particularly those recounting diasporic and urban memories of accompanying Koç to flea markets and antique shops. Such narratives add granularity to the biographical record, underscoring both the intentionality that informed her acquisitions and the integration of collecting practices into the quotidian rhythms of domestic and social life.[6]

2. Sadberk Koç: Life, Social Milieu, and the Making of a Collecting Ethos

Sadberk Koç (née Aktar) was born in 1908 in Ottoman Ankara, the second of four children of Seraktar Sadullah Bey,[7] a prominent figure within the city's entrenched merchant elite, and Nadire Hanım, of the equally notable Kütükçüzade family. Both lineages were deeply embedded in the socio-economic networks of late Ottoman provincial commerce, their influence extending beyond Ankara into the imperial capital. Her early years unfolded in a city negotiating the tensions of political disintegration and gradual infrastructural modernisation during the empire's final decade – a formative environment in which traditional urban life intersected with the first signs of republican transformation.

In May 1918, the family relocated to Istanbul to join Sadullah Bey, who had moved earlier to expand the family's commercial portfolio. His business interests encompassed the supply of goods for a shop jointly operated in Ankara with his brothers, as well as the profitable Angora wool trade – an enterprise in which the extended family maintained long-standing stakes.[8] The household took residence in a traditional wooden mansion in the Yeldeğirmeni quarter of Kadıköy, an area that, by the late nineteenth century, had developed into one of the most socially heterogeneous and architecturally progressive districts on the Asian side of the city. Its early experiments in urban planning and the proliferation of multi-storey apartment buildings reflected a modernising

ings; and Dr Ozan Torun for his guidance in directing the author to relevant sources on the historical background of the transitional period.

5 Üçok 2005.

6 Dündar 2006 and 2008; Gönül 2003; Kıraç 2006; Koç 1990 and 1991; Sümer 2022; Tüzün 2018.

7 The terms *Bey* (for men) and *Hanım* (for women) are honorifics traditionally used in Ottoman and modern Turkish society to denote respect. Often placed after a person's first or last name, these titles function similarly to 'Mr' and 'Ms' in English, though they carry additional cultural connotations.

8 Sümer 2022, 25.

Figure 1. Sadberk Koç in a studio portrait, wearing a cloche-style headpiece emblematic of early Republican urban fashion and Western-oriented modernity, c. 1920s. The SHM Archives

urban milieu inhabited by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities alike, mirroring the complex cultural stratigraphy of the late Ottoman capital.[9]

Although Nadire Hanım adhered to the conventions of an Ottoman domestic ethos, Sadullah Bey prioritised his children's integration into modern educational frameworks. Sadberk and her younger sister, Melahat, were enrolled at the Sainte-Euphémie French Middle School for Girls, while their elder brother, Emin, attended the prestigious Saint-Joseph French School in the neighbourhood. This pedagogical orientation, characteristic of the late Ottoman and early Republican urban elite's Francophone affinities, equipped the siblings with multilingual proficiency and fluency in both Ottoman Turkish and the Latin alphabet. Such linguistic and cultural capital would later underpin Sadberk's capacity to navigate with equal ease the traditionalist codes of her inherited milieu and the modernist sensibilities of the emergent Republic.

At the age of eighteen, Sadberk married her maternal cousin, Vehbi Koç, in early 1926 – an alliance that reflected both familial expectation and the consolidation of commercial and social capital within Ankara's mercantile elite. The wedding took place at a moment when the newly founded Republic, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was implementing far-reaching reforms in law, education, and public life.[10] The ceremony itself blended markers of modern sociability with elements of established custom: Western-style banquets were held, prominent figures of the nascent republic, including members of the Court of Independence, were in attendance, and the evening featured a performance by Münir Nurettin Selçuk,[11] then a leading figure in Turkish classical music and a member of the Presidential Orchestra. Such details not only signalled the family's integration into the emergent republican elite but also illustrated the hybrid cultural codes negotiated by urban upper-class households in this transitional era.

Following their marriage, the couple resided in the Ulus district of Ankara, within Vehbi Koç's parental household – a common arrangement that reinforced extended family cohesion while situating the young couple at the heart of the capital's evolving socio-political milieu. In the subsequent years, Sadberk embraced the role of household manager and mother, while actively shaping her children's education. Semahat was born in 1928, followed by Rahmi Mustafa in 1930, both in the family's orchard

9 The Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood, named after the windmills, built in the late eighteenth century to supply flour to the Ottoman army, underwent several waves of demographic and architectural transformation in the following century. Known for its early multicultural composition – initially inhabited by Greeks and Turks, later joined by Jewish communities after the 1872 fire – the area evolved from a village into one of the first modern apartment districts of Istanbul. The construction of Haydarpaşa Train Station in the early twentieth century further accelerated this urbanisation, attracting workers and Levantine families and contributing to the district's economic vitality and grid-pattern planning visible in contemporary maps. See Barkul 1994, 462–3; Demirhan-Kiriş and İnceoğlu 2023, 29; Duygun and Koçyiğit 2021, 24.

10 See Berkes 2013, 521–53.

11 Koç 1990, 36.

house in Keçiören.[12] Intent on raising multilingual children, she employed foreign nannies to cultivate early language acquisition, an approach consonant with the cosmopolitan aspirations of the republican bourgeoisie. Two more daughters, Sevgi and Suna, were born in 1938 and 1941, respectively.

By the late 1930s, the family had established a pattern of summering in Istanbul. In 1938, Vehbi Koç purchased the Frenkyan Yalısı in Büyükdere, a Bosphorus waterfront mansion furnished with ornate interiors and a substantial library of rare books.[13] In 1951, the couple relocated permanently to Istanbul, settling in the Çankaya Apartment in Şişli.[14] This move, motivated by the pursuit of superior educational opportunities for their children and the expansion of Vehbi Koç's business interests, also represented a symbolic embrace of Istanbul's urban modernity. By mid-century, Şişli had come to epitomise elite urban living – its luxury apartment culture,[15] satirised in *Lüküs Hayat*, encapsulating the aspirational lifestyle of the city's upper-middle classes.[16]

12 This orchard house has served as the residence for the Koç University Vehbi Koç Ankara Studies Research Center (VEKAM) since its establishment in 1994.

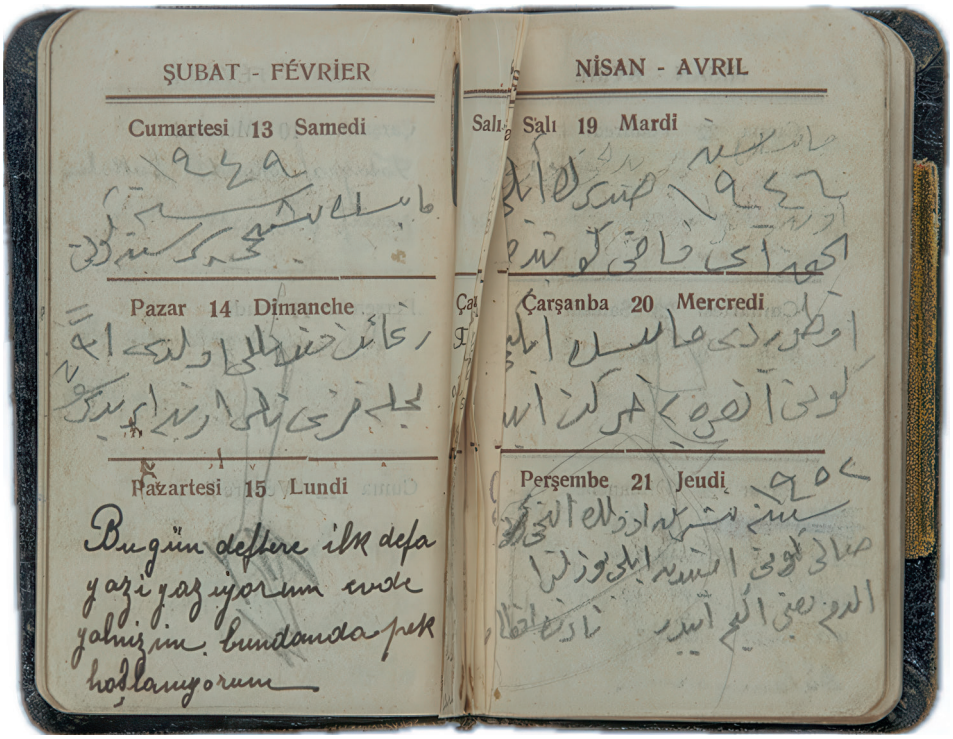
13 Sümer 2022, 110–1.

14 Akman and Tüzün, no date, online. The Çankaya Apartment appears on Jacques Pervititch's 1923 insurance map of Şişli under its original name, *Sebouhian Appartements*, suggesting Armenian ownership. Pervititch 1923, 231. By the early 1930s, it had become a prominent urban landmark, frequently used in newspaper advertisements as a reference point for directions. A newspaper notice (*Cumhuriyet*, 3 May 1934, 7) regarding an auction to be held in apartment no. 8 refers to the building as 'Çankaya Apartment (formerly Sebuhyan Apartment).' The adoption of the name 'Çankaya' – an overt reference to the presidential residence in Ankara – was likely not coincidental.

15 Located on the European side of Istanbul, north of Galata and Beşiktaş, the district of Şişli underwent a remarkable transformation from rural farmland to a prestigious residential and cultural hub over the course of the nineteenth century. Initially shaped by Tanzimat-era urban planning and migration policies, its development accelerated with the extension of transportation infrastructure – most notably the horse-drawn tram line reaching Şişli in 1881 – and the establishment of factories, hospitals, and state institutions. By the early twentieth century, Şişli had become a vibrant centre of intellectual and political life. Throughout the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, Şişli remained home to an affluent and cosmopolitan population, where upwardly mobile Muslim families lived alongside Levantine and non-Muslim communities. Although this multi-ethnic fabric persisted into the 1940s, a series of nationalist policies and political events – including the Wealth Tax (1942), the 6–7 September pogrom (1955), and the Cyprus crisis (1964) – profoundly altered its demographic composition. Şişli nevertheless retained its cultural and economic dynamism well into the late twentieth century. Duben and Behar 1998, 44, 47; Kaynar 2012, 51, 102–4, 134, 135, 279.

16 Premiered in 1933, *Lüküs Hayat* is a Turkish operetta composed by Cemal Reşit Rey with a libretto by Ekrem Reşit Rey. As one of the most iconic works of early Republican popular theatre, it satirises the newly emerging bourgeoisie's fascination with Western-style luxury and modernity. The operetta portrays living in an apartment in Şişli as a quintessential marker of upward mobility, urban sophistication, and social aspiration in interwar Istanbul. See Öztan and Korucu 2017, 387.

Figure 2. Notes taken in old and new scripts by Sadberk Koç in her 1932 agenda, recording the quiet contentment she found in spending solitary hours at home. The SHM Archives, A.504-5.



Throughout these formative decades, Sadberk Koç cultivated a sustained engagement with domestic arts, gardening, and the use of medicinal herbs – pursuits that reflected both inherited Ottoman domestic practices and the leisured self-fashioning of the republican bourgeois household. Her life was structured around the upbringing of her children, yet she remained attentive to the cultural and aesthetic life of her surroundings, finding in these years also a quiet contentment in solitary hours at home (Figure 2). She navigated, with notable adaptability, the cultural dualities of the imperial and republican worlds – a synthesis later characterised by her daughter, Suna Kıraç, as the capacity 'to wear a scarf for errands to the market and a hat for a wedding'[17] and by her elder daughter, Semahat Arsel, as 'one of the architects of the robust family structure that has endured since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.'[18] Together, these assessments capture the pragmatic versatility with which Koç integrated inherited customs and emergent modern codes into her daily life.

17 Kıraç 2006, 21. Translation by the author.
18 Arsel remarked during a private conversation dated 3 December 2023, Istanbul.

It was within this matrix of domestic stewardship as a locus of cultural agency that Koç's interest in Ottoman textiles, embroidery, and traditional garments began to acquire definition. Initially an extension of her appreciation for finely crafted household artefacts, this interest evolved into a purposeful and increasingly systematic collecting practice. Drawing on income derived from rental properties allocated to her from the Koçtaş estate – a wholesale construction materials company founded by her husband in 1955 – she assembled garments, embroideries, and decorative objects with discernment, storing them in trunks and chests on the upper floor of her home. These acquisitions were informed not only by her cultivated aesthetic sensibilities but also by a consciousness of their role as bearers of intangible knowledge embedded within domestic textile traditions.

Her extensive travels, encompassing destinations from Japan and Egypt to the United States and the United Kingdom, expanded the intellectual and aesthetic parameters of her heritage vision. Encounters with diverse museological models and approaches to the presentation of material culture reinforced her conviction that vernacular domestic artefacts – long marginalised in both public institutions and market hierarchies – deserved a place within a formal, public-facing framework. One visit proved especially formative: the Benaki Museum in Athens, founded in 1930 in a neoclassical mansion, was among the earliest private museums in Europe to integrate Greek and Ottoman material heritage under a single institutional roof. Its emphasis on domestic textiles, costumes, and everyday artefacts resonated deeply with Koç, providing a tangible precedent for the type of institution she envisaged for Turkey.

Although Koç long envisaged establishing a museum in her name to house her growing collection, several structural and personal constraints impeded its realisation during her lifetime. The legal framework in Turkey at the time did not permit the foundation of private museums, and while her personal resources might have allowed for the initial establishment of such an institution, sustaining it over the long term would have required a continuous allocation of funds and administrative attention. Moreover, Vehbi Koç expressed limited enthusiasm for the project – a reluctance that underscored the prevailing perception of private museology as institutionally unorthodox within the heritage landscape of the period.

In 1967, following a period of illness, Koç drafted a handwritten will dated 3 January, in which she articulated her wish for her collection – together with a cherished diamond bow brooch (Figure 3) – to be displayed in a pavilion within a museum in either Ankara or Istanbul, and to bear her name.[19] The language of the document conveyed both her enduring aspiration and an acknowledgement of the improbability of realisation of a museum in her name during her lifetime.

The final years of her life were marked by declining health. Diagnosed with cancer in 1971, she underwent two operations in London, where she had been receiving treatment. Despite these circumstances, she remained attentive to the fate of her collection. In a letter dated 19 September 1973 and addressed to her husband, she

19 The Sadberk Hanım Museum Archives, SHM A.502.

Figure 3. Encrusted diamond bow brooch, Sadberk Koç mentioned in her will. The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 16099 Z.610

made a last appeal: 'Establish my museum; let it be administered and financed by Koç Holding, with measures in place for its ongoing operation.'[20] This request, written only weeks before her death on 23 November 1973, effectively entrusted her family with the responsibility of fulfilling her most sustained cultural ambition. In the context of twentieth-century Turkey, where private initiatives in heritage preservation were rare, her testament represents a conscious effort to secure a place for vernacular material culture within the nation's public memory.

To appreciate the scope and intent of this ambition, it is essential to trace its origins to Koç's formative encounters with art and material culture. Nurtured by her familial milieu and domestic environment, her interest in the decorative and applied arts initially took shape through the careful acquisition of Ottoman women's garments and embroideries. Over time, this focus widened to include silverware bearing the impe-

20 Published in Dündar 2008, 228–9. Translation by the author.

rial tughra, Ottoman-era porcelains, and other artefacts emblematic of the empire's material legacy. Her collecting combined an attentive eye for craftsmanship with a persistent curiosity about provenance. Frequenting antique shops in Ankara and the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul – particularly in the Sandal Bedesteni, one of the few reliable sources for such textiles and related objects – she examined embroideries to determine their regional origins, typologies, and approximate dates.[21] Koç's relationships with shop proprietors, developed through regular visits and sustained conversation, facilitated access to objects and information that might otherwise have remained within closed commercial networks. On occasions, dealers brought items directly to her residences in Büyükdere or at the Çankaya Apartment,[22] a practice that spoke to her reputation as a discerning and significant buyer within these circles. These sustained interactions with specialised dealers not only broadened her access to rare vernacular textiles but also informed the systematic approach to acquisition and preservation that would later define her collecting ethos.

At times, these excursions into the antique markets were undertaken in the company of her children and nephews, serving as informal apprenticeships in connoisseurship and material culture. The experience left a lasting impression on her daughter, Sevgi Gönül, who decades later recalled in her column *Sevgi'nin Diviti* in the newspaper *Hürriyet* the sensory and intellectual dimensions of such visits:[23]

> For as long as I can remember, I wandered through flea markets and curiosity shops with my late mother, who was drawn to old knick-knacks. These places – one would need a thousand witnesses to even call them shops – were chaotic heaps where objects merely thought to be old and those that truly were old lay jumbled together, coated in dust and grime. To find something genuinely old among them required a keen eye and a considerable investment of time. On rare occasions, it was possible to unearth intriguing and authentic pieces at reasonable prices. In those days, the knowledgeable antique dealers one encounters in Istanbul today were scarce, and there were no scholars at the flea market. I greatly enjoyed such places; the challenge of spotting something overlooked by everyone else, however difficult, was a thrill my mother and I shared.

While evoking the atmosphere of Istanbul's mid-century flea markets, this account also sheds light on the pedagogical dimension of Koç's collecting practice. Beyond the acquisition of objects, these shared forays functioned as a means of transmitting aesthetic discernment, patience in research, and an appreciation for vernacular heritage – values that would later inform the museum's curatorial ethos.

21 Information obtained through oral communication with Dr Şebnem Eryavuz on 31 July 2025.
22 Üçok 2005, 218. Translation by the author.
23 Dated 16 December 2001, published in Gönül 2003, 84. Translation by the author.

An examination of the approximately 3,000 works transferred from Koç's private holdings to the museum reveals a deliberate breadth of scope, yet a pronounced hierarchy of categories.[24] Foremost among these are textiles – embroideries, silk weavings, and traditional garments – representing not merely an aesthetic predilection but a sustained engagement with one of the most emblematic mediums of Ottoman domestic culture. Metalwork, particularly silver tableware engraved with imperial *tuğras* and *tombak* vessels, forms the second largest category, followed by both European and Ottoman porcelains. Beykoz glassware, jewellery, and select pieces of furniture comprise smaller yet carefully curated subsets within the assemblage.

This distribution reflects more than an individual collector's inclinations; it offers a microcosmic survey of the material environments inhabited by the Ottoman elite and upper-middle classes. Textiles possess an unparalleled cultural density in the Anatolian and Ottoman context, owing in part to the enduring imprint of nomadic traditions on modes of living, furnishing, and social exchange. Cuts of garments such as the *üçetek entari* – an open-front robe with deep side slits – the *şalvar* (voluminous trousers), and various forms of *kaftan* embody patterns of mobility, posture, and gesture that predate urban modernity, accommodating both floor-seated interiors and equestrian movement (Figure 4). In this sense, these pieces reconstitute the ergonomics, tactility, and visual codes of a social world in transition.

The centrality of textiles, rooted in the mobile traditions of nomadic Turkish life, persisted into the Ottoman imperial milieu, where the relative absence of Western-style furniture until the late nineteenth century reinforced the primacy of fabric in articulating domestic space. Upholstery such as wall hangings, cushion covers, and ceremonial furnishings fashioned from sumptuous silk fabrics – particularly *çatma* (voided and embroidered silk velvet) and *kemha* (brocaded silk interwoven with silver or gold-wrapped threads) – represent the apex Ottoman textile ateliers reached, following a classical design repertoire regulated by the imperial court.[25] In Koç's collection, such courtly exemplars coexist with vernacular variants, revealing the interplay between metropolitan production and regional adaptation, and suggesting a more porous boundary between elite and everyday material cultures than is often assumed (Figure 5).

24 The breakdown is as follows: 892 pieces of textiles (666 embroideries, 98 silk weavings, 128 garments), 881 pieces of metalwork, 608 pieces of ceramics including porcelain, 191 pieces of jewellery, 160 glass objects, 145 wooden objects, 31 pieces of furniture (data retrieved from the museum's inventory database TMS).

25 These fabrics were meticulously recorded as treasury items in palace inventories, where they served not only as symbols of sultanic authority – reflected in the ceremonial garments of palace officials – but also held diplomatic importance as prestigious court gifts. Their production was subject to strict regulation. The *Ehl-i Hiref* (Guild of Artisans), under the supervision of the Imperial Household, ensured that textile manufacturers adhered to rigorous quality standards, thereby preserving aesthetic uniformity and technical excellence across the empire. See Atasoy et al. 2000, 16–25.

Figure 4: Üçetek entari, *made of silk satin embroidered with silk and metal thread. Ottoman, 19th century. The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 2593 K.11*

Figure 5. Cushion cover, Ottoman, 17th century, çatma (voided and embroidered silk velvet woven with metal-wrapped thread). The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 14069 D.194

Among the most culturally resonant works in Koç's holdings are embroidered textiles that emulate the decorative repertoire and visual richness of luxurious silk weavings, created as more affordable substitutes for those unable to obtain the costly originals (Figure 6). Their very existence reflects how aesthetic aspirations could be met through alternative, locally crafted means, a dynamic that underscores embroidery's enduring place within Ottoman and Turkish society, where it long occupied a position at the intersection of artistry, sociability, and symbolic communication. A chronological mapping of women's life-cycle rituals – the parade marking the first day of school (*amin alayı*), dowry preparation (*çeyiz sandığı*), engagement, henna night (*kına gecesi*), bath ceremonies (*hamam*), wedding celebrations, trotter day (*paça günü*), puerperium (*lohusa*), circumcision feasts (*sünnet*) – reveals the omnipresence of textiles as both functional objects and ceremonial signifiers.

Bath rituals, for instance, were elaborately staged social events – especially significant as occasions for women's social interaction – in which embroidered bath wraps (*peştemal*), towels (*peşkir*), kerchiefs (*çevre*), and decorative bundles (*bohça*) mediated between modesty and display, utility and ornament. Such items were not passive accessories but active participants in the performative construction of femininity, hospitality, and status. In this light, Koç's predilection for embroidered domestic textiles appears not only as a reflection of her personal aesthetic sensibility but as an act of cultural documentation – one that preserved the tactile and visual language through which social bonds, gender roles, and community identities were continually reinforced.

Figure 6. Quilt cover, Ottoman, 17th century, fine linen fabric embroidered with silk threads. The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 1773 I.929

Over time, what began as an intimate engagement with such objects matured into a collecting practice marked by deliberation and method. The textiles she assembled were not sequestered as static *objets d'art* but integrated into the rhythms of her domestic environment, at once part of her lived space and her curatorial imagination. Through this process, the collection transcended its material form, evolving into a mnemonic archive – an embodied record of craft knowledge, ritual practice, and the aesthetic codes of Ottoman and early Republican domestic life.

Within this tapestry of domestic textile traditions, circumcision ceremonies stand out for the density of their material symbolism and the degree to which they mobilised communal resources. The ceremonial bed and the decorated room in which the rite was performed were often adorned with richly embroidered fabrics, frequently borrowed from neighbours rather than newly commissioned. This practice, rooted in an ethic of mutual aid, bound households together through a reciprocal exchange of valued objects. Such items may carry subtle inscriptions – often the initials of the household's male head – stitched discreetly into the fabric to ensure their identification once returned. These marks, while functional, also anchored the textiles within a framework of familial identity and patriarchal lineage, linking domestic craft to the social architecture of the community.

Koç's collection preserves tangible traces of this practice. Several embroidered pieces bear the initials 'V.K.' in Latin script, clearly referencing Vehbi Koç, suggesting that they had either been lent by the Koç household for ceremonial use or were prepared in anticipation of such sharing (Figure 7).[26] In at least one instance, the Ottoman Turkish letter *vav* (و) is used instead, likely serving as an abbreviated emblem of Vehbi Koç's name (Figure 8). These marked works operate as micro-histories within the larger corpus, crystallising the layered narratives of production, circulation, and reuse that defined the social life of textiles in Ottoman and early Republican domestic settings.

Comparable communal and symbolic dimensions are evident in the use of *bindallı* gowns worn by young women in the period leading up to marriage. Traditionally fashioned from deep burgundy or midnight-blue velvet and embroidered in the so-called *dival* technique with gold thread in distinctive, densely branching motifs – features that give the garment its name –, these ceremonial gowns hold deep cultural resonance. During the henna night, a festive gathering held on the eve of the wedding, the bride and her attendants wear *bindallı* dresses, reinforcing both individual identity and collective belonging within the framework of ceremonial tradition (Figure 9). In this context, embroidery and attire function as markers of social cohesion, intergenerational continuity, and intangible cultural heritage.

The practice was not confined to a single community. Surviving examples in international collections indicate that *bindallı* gowns were also worn by Jewish women across Anatolia and the Balkans for weddings and other major life-cycle rituals. Oral accounts, passed down through generations within the Jewish community in Turkey, further suggest that, on occasion, such garments were subsequently donated to syna-

26 Items numbered SHM 2757, 2764, 2765, and 2767 exemplify this case.

Figure 7. Embroidered hand towel, Ottoman, 17th century, linen fabric, silk threads, and metal-wrapped silk thread. The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 2757 I.633

Figure 8. Embroidered hand towel, Ottoman, 17th century, linen fabric, silk threads, and metal-wrapped silk thread. The Sadberk Hanım Museum, Sadberk Koç Collection, SHM 1664 I.867

Figure 9. Sadberk Koç (on the right) with siblings and a sister-in-law dressed in bindallı *for the henna night, a pre-wedding ceremony, Yeldeğirmeni, Istanbul, 14 January 1931. The SHM Archives, SHM A.507*

gogues to be repurposed as ceremonial textiles. This shared sartorial idiom underscores the permeability of cultural boundaries within the Ottoman world and exemplifies intercommunal aesthetic affinities.

Within Koç's collection, *bindallı* gowns occupy a notable position as artefacts that encapsulate both skilled craftsmanship and the performative dimensions of ceremonial dress. Their material qualities – plush velvet surfaces, intricate compositional schemes, and codified contexts of use – situate them beyond the realm of everyday clothing, as tangible expressions of bridal identity, familial prestige, and collective festivity. Preserving these garments has ensured the survival of not only their material qualities but also the ritual practices and cross-communal traditions they embodied, many of which have been attenuated or transformed in the context of urban modernity.

The fragility of such ceremonial textiles – objects deeply embedded in the ceremonial aesthetics of Ottoman and early Republican domestic life, and reserved for occasional, highly codified use – rendered their preservation a matter of both cultural responsibility and practical foresight. Their survival into the present owes as much to the care and storage practices devised by their custodians as to the quality of their initial craftsmanship, linking the visual and performative splendour of social ritual to the quiet, sustained labour of safeguarding it.

Koç's approach to safeguarding her textiles synthesised inherited domestic customs with an emerging awareness of professional conservation principles. In the early stages of her collecting, she adopted methods akin to the traditional dowry chest system, in which garments and embroidered panels were meticulously wrapped in plain cotton cloths and stored in chests, suitcases, or wooden cabinets. To protect against insect damage, she favoured natural deterrents – dried herbs from her own garden – thus blending artisanal knowledge with the resourcefulness of domestic practice.[27]

As her holdings expanded, the seasonal inspection and airing of stored textiles, once accomplished within a few days, became an undertaking requiring weeks of sustained attention. This transformation reflected both the growing scale of her assemblage and her insistence on preventive care. Her methods underscore an important intersection between vernacular storage traditions and the incremental professionalisation of textile preservation in Turkey during the mid-twentieth century. In Koç's case, the act of storage was not a passive measure but an extension of her curatorial vision, one in which preservation was integral to the cultural afterlife of the object.

Three recurrent challenges frame the preservation of Ottoman-period textiles, and together they highlight the significance – and relative rarity – of Koç's holdings. First, textiles are inherently fragile, their organic fibres vulnerable to light, humidity, and mechanical stress. Second, within Ottoman domestic culture, valuable fabrics were rarely kept as untouched heirlooms; rather, they were frequently repurposed, altered, or cut down for new uses until no longer serviceable. Third, well into the twentieth century, collectors and institutions alike tended to prioritise court silks, monumental

27 Information derived from a conversation with Semahat Arsel, held at the Sadberk Hanım Museum on 3 December 2023.

embroideries, or European decorative arts, relegating vernacular textiles to the margins of both scholarly attention and market value.

While a few private collectors in Turkey took an interest in ethnographically oriented textiles, their holdings often remained sequestered within family circles or discreet intellectual networks, seldom made accessible to the public. Sadberk Koç's collection, by contrast – albeit posthumously institutionalised – ensured that such materials would enter the public domain, securing both their visibility and their scholarly relevance. The corpus encompasses court-associated pieces of considerable quality; however, its particular strength lies in garments and household textiles used by women from the upper and middle strata of Ottoman and early Republican society. These works preserve not only the material evidence of craftsmanship but also the social narratives encoded in their patterns, forms, and functions. In this respect, Koç's assemblage expands the parameters of Ottoman textile history, demonstrating that the cultural memory of a society resides as much in the vernacular and domestic as in the monumental and imperial.

3. Shared Tastes, Kindred Pursuits

The formation of Sadberk Koç's textile collection was anchored in her cultivated aesthetic discernment and the familial milieu that had shaped her sensibilities; yet these pursuits unfolded not in isolation, but within a loosely structured, intellectually vibrant network of women linked by ties of kinship, shared education, and ideological affinity. This more intimate dimension of her collecting practice developed in parallel with the broader trajectories already outlined, offering a closer view of the personal relationships and shared sensibilities that informed her acquisitions. This cohort – comprising writers, educators, and fellow collectors – was united by a resolve to preserve vernacular material culture at a historical juncture when such artefacts – fragments of Ottoman domestic life, including embroideries, lacework, traditional garments, and household implements – were increasingly dismissed as obsolete or devoid of cultural value. What distinguished this circle was not merely the refinement of their taste, but their ability to reframe private collecting as a form of cultural stewardship.

The emergence of this shared ethos among women collectors unfolded against the backdrop of the cultural reforms of the early Turkish Republic. In its determined pursuit of a modern, secular national identity, the Republican regime often sought symbolic distance from the Ottoman imperial legacy. Monumental architecture, Islamic calligraphy, and select courtly arts were preserved as embodiments of a curated past, yet the artefacts of everyday life – particularly women's craft traditions rooted in domestic practice – were largely excluded from institutional narratives.[28] The modernisation programme of the early Republic, closely intertwined with a project of secularisation, not only fostered new cultural forms and introduced profound transformations in ways of life, but also frequently marginalised inherited traditions, many of which were

28 Shaw 2003, 172–5.

interwoven with religious or communal life.[29] This selective approach to preservation, paradoxically, created a space for private collectors such as Sadberk Koç to intervene, sustaining those strands of material culture that official heritage frameworks had left unattended.

The legal landscape governing cultural heritage during her collecting years has its roots in Ottoman antiquities legislation – the 1906 Asar-ı Atika Regulation – nominally provided protection for historical artefacts. Its scope was strikingly broad, purporting to encompass a vast range of potential antiquities, yet textiles were not explicitly mentioned. The catalogue of protected categories, while ostensibly comprehensive, was drafted in a 'haphazard' manner that betrayed a degree of arbitrariness, as if designed to be 'all-inclusive' without a coherent or consistently applicable set of criteria.[30] This elasticity allowed for subjective interpretation and, despite its late Ottoman origins, ensured the regulation's continued enforcement without substantive revision for the first five decades of the Turkish Republic – remaining in effect until legislative changes introduced by the 1973 Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets.[31] In practice, vernacular objects such as household textiles, accessories, and other domestic artefacts – particularly those preserved in dowry chests or inherited within families – rarely entered public inventories. Many of the items Koç acquired circulated freely in Istanbul's antique markets or passed directly from private owners into her care, unimpeded by significant bureaucratic restrictions.

A 1954 letter written by Sâmiha Ayverdi (1905–1993), one of the foremost women writers in Turkish literature, to Belkıs Dengiz, a young schoolteacher stationed in Anatolia, casts further light on this shared cultural disposition. In this richly evocative text, Ayverdi laments the general disregard for traditional women's handicrafts, which she describes as 'orphaned' and 'neglected,' and urges her correspondent to collect examples of embroidery, lace, and other handcrafted items encountered during her travels.[32] Ayverdi's instructions are specific and remarkably practical: she advises Dengiz on where to look, what to purchase, and at what price. Yet behind this utilitarian tone lies a deeper moral and emotional charge – an appeal to preserve the memory of Ottoman domestic life not through abstraction, but through the tactile, fragile remnants of women's labour. Ayverdi lamented the inability of contemporary society to truly appreciate the refined aesthetic and spiritual value of artworks created by Ottoman women of the past:[33]

> In Istanbul, there are so few people who can appreciate the true value of these old works of art... I feel ashamed before the spiritual presence of those women of the past who produced such delicate, refined, and tasteful objects.

29 Berkes 2019, 521.
30 Shaw 2003, 127.
31 *ibid.*, 129–30.
32 For context on the Ayverdi–Dengiz correspondence, see Ayverdi and Dengiz 2015, 81–3.
33 *ibid.* Translated by the author.

And, 'worst of all,' she wrote:

> … taking advantage of our inability to appreciate them, foreigners have carried away our old works by the suitcase and the trunkful. Just recently, two acquaintances of mine bought such a quantity of Turkish embroideries and fabrics from antique dealers in Paris and London that they had to pay customs duties to bring them back into their own homeland.

These remarks are more than a critique – they also reflect the efforts of a few discerning individuals to reclaim what had been lost. Of note is her mention of her daughters Nezihe and Nadide (Uluant) as active collectors of laceworks, spoons, and purses – women who, even before institutional frameworks emerged to valorise such materials, had already recognised their cultural and artistic worth. A dedicated collector in her own right, Nadide Uluant (1925–2019), daughter of Sâmiha Ayverdi and a classmate of Semahat Arsel at the American College for Girls[34] and who would later donate her extensive holdings of Turkish embroidery to the Kubbealtı Foundation, fondly recalled Koç as a kindred spirit in the world of collecting. She noted, with a touch of amusement, that whenever she hesitated before acquiring a particularly fine or expensive textile, it would almost certainly end up in Koç's collection.[35] These recollections not only document the transmission of taste and collecting ethos between generations of women but also situate these acts within a broader ethical framework, one that views preservation as a civic responsibility.

Koç occupied a distinctive position within this milieu – both as a discerning collector and as a cultural interlocutor whose sensibility could quietly set the tone for others. She maintained a close friendship with the writer and journalist Nezihe Araz (1920–2009), a prominent figure in mid-twentieth-century Turkish intellectual life whose literary and cultural pursuits reflected a sustained engagement with both Ottoman and Republican heritage. Their interactions often revolved around newly discovered textiles or intriguing antiquarian finds, functioning as informal salons of aesthetic exchange in which objects became catalysts for conversation and mutual discernment. In one recollection, Koç is said to have visited Araz's residence in Bebek, where Araz brought out a piece of lace that Koç had admired days earlier but refrained from purchasing due to its cost.[36] Seeing it again, Koç reportedly measured a section with her hands and requested a small portion to keep – a gesture that encapsulates her cultivated discernment and the understated reciprocity that defined their relationship. Beyond its anecdotal charm, the episode illustrates how material culture circulated within networks of shared sensibility,

34 The American College for Girls was a leading American-founded women's college in Istanbul, established in 1871 and later merged with Robert College in 1971 to form a co-educational institution.

35 Personal conversation with Dr Şebnem Eryavuz, 31 July 2025. Dr Eryavuz has served as a collection consultant for the Kubbealtı Foundation since 2010 and previously worked as an art historian at the Sadberk Hanım Museum from 1989 to 2001. The anecdote was recounted to her directly by Nadide Uluant.

36 Üçok 2005, 219–20.

where objects were not merely commodities but touchstones of dialogue, recognition, and aesthetic kinship.

Koç's collecting appears not merely as an elite pastime or private pursuit, but as part of a gendered and intersubjective culture of care – a constellation of relationships, conversations, and silent acknowledgements that made women both the custodians and the transmitters of aesthetic memory. This orientation is evident in her desire to share her acquisitions with others, particularly with younger generations. In one recollection dated to June 1970, she is said to have shown Nezihe Araz a newly acquired traditional Albanian dress – purchased for 7000 lira from an antiquarian – lamenting that, aside from her friend, there was no one to whom she could show such beauty.[37] Saddened by her husband Vehbi Koç's initial reluctance toward the idea of founding a museum, she asked Araz for her support in broaching the subject again.[38] The museum, it seems, was born not only of vision and means, but also of the quiet encouragement and aesthetic companionship of women who shared her concerns – foreshadowing the eventual institutional form her vision would take.

Situated between official heritage frameworks and the intimate sphere of domestic culture, this circle fostered an alternative mode of cultural exchange, in which connoisseurship was shaped through personal relationships, shared discoveries, and mutual encouragement. Unlike the dominant tendencies of their time – which favoured court silks, monumental artworks, or European decorative arts – they gravitated toward anonymous objects of domestic labour produced and used by women in everyday life. Koç's methodical acquisition and eventual institutionalisation of her collection thus set her apart, positioning her not only as a private connoisseur but as an intermediary figure whose practice responded to institutional and market indifference toward vernacular Ottoman objects.

4. The Museum: Foundation, Growth, and Relocation

Sadberk Koç was 'the first person to introduce beauty, history, and art to the Koç family,' her daughter Suna Kıraç later observed – a remark that encapsulates both the cultivated aesthetic discernment and the formative cultural influence she exercised within her family and beyond.[39] Over several decades, Koç developed a connoisseurial sensibility grounded in the attentive appraisal of craftsmanship, historical resonance, and cultural meaning. This refined vision found its most enduring and public expression in the establishment of the Sadberk Hanım Museum – an institution realised posthumously through the combined initiative of her family and the Vehbi Koç Foundation. Its foundation not only honoured her personal legacy but also coincided with, and indeed precipitated, a decisive legislative change that, for the first time in the Repub-

37 *ibid.*, 237.
38 *ibid.*, 237–8.
39 Kıraç 2006, 20. Translated by the author.

lic's history, enabled private individuals to establish museums in Turkey.[40] Inaugurated in 1980 as the nation's first officially recognised private museum, it marked a formative moment in Turkish museology, setting a precedent for more than four hundred private museums that would emerge in subsequent decades.[41]

The choice of location carried both symbolic and practical significance. The Azaryan Mansion, an early twentieth-century registered property in Büyükdere, had served as the Koç family's summer residence for nearly three decades following its acquisition by Vehbi Koç in 1950. In 1977, Vehbi Koç donated the property to the Foundation, commissioning celebrated architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem to oversee its careful restoration. This process preserved the building's architectural integrity while adapting the interiors for exhibition purposes, establishing a balance between heritage conservation and the functional demands of a museum space.[42]

The decision to name the institution the *Sadberk Hanım Museum*, rather than the *Sadberk Koç Museum*, reflected an astute sensitivity to social nuance. The honorific *hanım* ('madam') conveyed a combination of courtesy and esteem, while also evoking the grace, refinement, and generosity for which she was remembered. As her daughter recalled, Koç's domestic order was meticulous, her preference for sewing her own linens emblematic of her attention to detail, and her habit of purchasing in large quantities for the purpose of gifting indicative of her generosity of spirit.[43]

The museum's foundational holdings, derived from Sadberk Koç's private collection, were soon augmented by major acquisitions, most notably the Hüseyin Kocabaş

40 In her petition to the Ministry of Culture on 14 April 1978, Suna Kıraç stated that, with the donations made in 1974 and 1977, the foundation provided the necessary resources for the establishment and maintenance of the location where the museum would be opened. She requested that the appropriate arrangements be made in accordance with the antiquities law published in the Official Gazette dated 6 May 1973 and numbered 14527. (The SHM Archives, report 2/470). During the ongoing bureaucratic process, the private museum regulation came into force in the Official Gazette dated 8 October 1980 and numbered 17126. (The SHM Archives, report 21/460).

41 The establishment of private museums in Turkey gained momentum in the early 1980s, following the 24 January 1980 economic reforms and the 1982 Tourism Encouragement Law (Law No. 2634). Earlier development plans had highlighted tourism and cultural heritage as priorities, but infrastructural shortcomings hindered progress. Economic liberalisation and new incentives for private and foreign investment marked a turning point, as cultural institutions – including private museums – were promoted within broader strategies of tourism development and national branding. In this context, heritage investments by individuals and foundations came to be regarded as both culturally valuable and economically strategic (Kozak et al. 2001, 111–9).

42 The museum's establishment was a milestone in Turkish private museology and filled a notable gap in cultural tourism at a time of increasing state-led investment in the sector. Situated in Büyükdere, a district relatively distant from the city's central art and museum circuits, it nonetheless became a pioneering destination for local and international visitors interested in cultural heritage. In doing so, it offered an alternative to state museums and helped to consolidate the role of private patronage in Turkey's cultural landscape.

43 Kıraç 2006, 20–1. Translated by the author.

Collection in 1983.[44] A discerning collector and personal friend of Koç, Kocabaş was known for opening his home weekly to scholars, collectors, and connoisseurs. His collection – integrated into the newly inaugurated Sevgi Gönül Wing in 1988 – provided a comprehensive survey of Anatolian material cultures from the Neolithic to the Byzantine periods, complementing the Azaryan Mansion's focus on Islamic and Ottoman art (Figure 10).

Today, the Sadberk Koç Collection, together with subsequent acquisitions and donations, occupies multiple galleries over two floors: the ground level displays Ottoman metalwork, Iznik, Kütahya, and Çanakkale ceramics, and Chinese and European porcelains, while the upper level houses the textile collection, including Ottoman garments, silk panels, and embroidered household objects, some of which are presented in domestic *mise-en-scène* reconstructions of historical rituals such as the hammam, circumcision bed, and henna night (figs. 12–14). The creation of these displays reflected a collaborative effort by Koç family members, most visibly in the painstaking arrangement of the circumcision bed, for which a woman from Ankara versed in regional customs was invited to lend her expertise.[45] These installations function not merely as nostalgic tableaux, but as interpretive environments that convey the embodied practices, sensory dimensions, and social meanings of Ottoman and Republican domestic life. Their cultural accuracy underscores both the family's commitment to Sadberk Koç's vision and the museum's role in transmitting nearly vanishing traditions, while visitor engagement affirms their enduring resonance.

Since its inception, the museum's holdings have expanded considerably, with textiles emerging as the most dynamic field. While about nine hundred pieces were initially transferred from Koç's private collection, the department now numbers over 4,600 within a total corpus of some twenty-one thousand works,[46] enlarged through notable acquisitions and individual donations, the latter often accompanied by photographs and oral histories that enhance their scholarly and interpretive value. Among these, donations of the Josephine Powell Collection (2006)[47] and the Murat Megalli Collection[48] (2017) significantly broadened the scope of the textile holdings beyond

44 The majority of this collection consisted of archaeological artefacts; accordingly, the Ministry authorised its conditional transfer to the Sadberk Hanım Museum on the stipulation that it remain intact as of 5 October 1983. The transfer was subsequently executed, as documented in the handover report dated 14 November 1983 (The SHM Archives, Report no. 279/410).

45 This information was obtained during a personal conversation with Semahat Arsel. 3 December 2023.

46 The breakdown of textiles is as follows: 2084 pieces of embroidery, 1906 pieces of garments, 577 pieces of heavy weaving, and 42 pieces of miscellanies from the Hüseyin Kocabaş collection. This figure excludes the Josephine Powell Collection. The SHM Archives, *Annual Inventory Report*, dated 31 December 2024.

47 Protocol signed between the Vehbi Koç Foundation and Josephine Evelyn Powell, 7 November 2006. The Vehbi Koç Foundation Archive.

48 Protocol signed between the Vehbi Koç Foundation and Murad Megalli Estate, dated 26 July 2017. The Vehbi Koç Foundation Archive.

Figure 10. View of the Sadberk Hanım Museum complex, including the Azaryan Mansion and the Sevgi Gönül Wing. The SHM Archives

urban elites to encompass rural and nomadic traditions, the Powell Collection being especially valuable for its associated documentary materials, which provide insight into production techniques, usage patterns, and the symbolic lexicon of Anatolian village and tribal weaving.

This sustained expansion, however, has accentuated the limitations of the museum's adapted residential premises. In 2000, an adjacent property was renovated to serve as storage, conservation facilities, and offices for the textile department, yet spatial constraints continued to limit the acceptance of new donations and the proportion of the collection on permanent display. In response, the museum adopted a strategy of rotating thematic exhibitions – recent examples have focused on late Ottoman and early Republican costume – accompanied by scholarly catalogues that have made enduring contributions to textile studies in Turkey and beyond.[49]

49 Bilgi 2007; Bilgi and Zanbak 2012; Bilgi 2022; Bilgi et al. 2023; Görünür 2010 and 2014; Görünür et al. 2023.

Figure 11. Interior view of first-floor distribution hall of the Azaryan Mansion, reflecting the building's domestic origins. The SHM Archives

Recognising the structural nature of these constraints, the museum's executive committee initiated a relocation project in 2007.[50] The historic Taşkızak Shipyard on the Golden Horn was selected as the new site, a choice that combines proximity to major cultural districts with a symbolic link to Istanbul's industrial–maritime heritage. Plans envisage the adaptive reuse of a nineteenth-century industrial building for permanent displays and conservation facilities, complemented by new spaces for temporary exhibitions, a research library, and public programmes.

In continuity with Sadberk Koç's founding ethos, the new institution is conceived as a place where the sensorial appeal of material culture is brought into dialogue with critical scholarship. Its evolution – from a posthumous act of familial commemoration to an institution preparing for relocation – illustrates the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity, private initiative and public mission. The museum's future presence on the Golden Horn thus represents not a break with its origins, but a

50 This information is based on the author's participation in the Vehbi Koç Foundation's monthly Steering Committee meetings for the relocation project (since June 2020). See also *Koç Cultural Center Final Report* by Lord Cultural Resources, dated June 2008, for the initial project principles.

Figure 12. Hammam mise-en-scène. The SHM Archives. Photo: Aydın Berk Bilgin

rearticulation of them for the cultural challenges of the twenty-first century. In carrying forward the ethos of its founder, the institution not only preserves a material legacy but also extends Sadberk Koç's cultural agency into new spatial, intellectual, and civic domains.

5. Conclusion

The trajectory traced in this study – from the biographical formation of Sadberk Koç's sensibilities, through the cultivation of her collection, to its posthumous institutionalisation – illuminates a distinctive model of cultural agency in modern Turkey. Anchored in the preservation of Ottoman vernacular material culture, her practice emerged at a moment when such artefacts were largely absent from institutional narratives and undervalued within the heritage economy. By focusing on garments, embroideries, and domestic implements – objects deeply embedded in the tactile and symbolic registers of social life – Koç's collecting safeguarded craftsmanship while also sustaining intangible traditions of gendered knowledge, communal exchange, and ritual practice.

Figure 13. Circumcision bed. The SHM Archives. Photo: Aydın Berk Bilgin

This dual commitment – to the object and to the cultural world that produced it – distinguished her from many contemporaries, situating her within a small but significant network of women whose collecting operated at the intersection of connoisseurship, domestic agency, and historical consciousness. The eventual establishment of the Sadberk Hanım Museum, enabled by a decisive legislative shift, transformed a private endeavour into a public institution, inscribing these domestic and gendered histories into the national cultural record.

Over the subsequent decades, the museum expanded and diversified its holdings, refining its curatorial strategies and contributing to the study of Ottoman textiles and decorative arts. Its impending relocation to the Taşkızak Shipyard embodies both continuity and renewal: continuity in fidelity to Koç's founding ethos, renewal in its enhanced capacity to interpret, conserve, and disseminate collections within broader museological and heritage frameworks.

Figure 14. Henna night mise-en-scène with brides and relatives in bindallı *dresses. The SHM Archives. Photo: Aydın Berk Bilgin*

In bridging the domestic and the institutional, the vernacular and the monumental, Sadberk Koç's legacy demonstrates how private initiative can recalibrate national heritage narratives. Her work underscores that cultural memory is sustained as much by the preservation of everyday objects and the practices they embody as by the safeguarding of monumental artefacts. As such, her collecting offers a case study for continued scholarly engagement with gender, material culture, and the shifting boundaries between private connoisseurship and public cultural responsibility in Turkey and beyond.

Figure 15. The concept behind the new museum's space program with the collection at the centre. Grimshaw Architects' Steering Committee Presentation dated 01 April 2021. The SHM Archives

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Islamic, Ottoman Era Artefacts and the Politics of Memory: Dimitrie Papazoglu's Collection of 'Antiquities and Oriental Rarities' for 'The Feeling of Love of the Progress of My Nation'

Abstract

In 1855/1860, Dimitrie Papazoglu (1811–1892) opened a museum in his private residence on Calea Văcărești, no 151, Bucharest, with objects amassed during and after retiring from his military career, ca. 1855. Papazoglu doubled opening a museum with the publication of a catalogue, in 1864, which listed Egyptian and 'Oriental' artefacts, some even sourced locally. Their presence in a private collection from a region in the process of creating a national state, independent from the Ottoman Empire, raises a series of questions. Could these artefacts be attributed to a form of internalized Orientalist discourse or is it simply a consequence of the Westernization process? How do the Ottoman era and Islamic objects reconcile with Papazoglu's discursive goal for collecting being for 'the feeling of love of the progress of my nation'[1]? Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the meaning of these artefacts in the general context of the collection, and the negotiation within the process of articulation a concept of Romanian heritage. The analysis will focus on the museum catalogue published in 1864, supported by additional archival material, to assess the labels Papazoglu used for defining the variety of objects he collected, and how these taxonomies underpin the production of knowledge on the concepts of heritage and of 'Oriental.'

Keywords: heritage practices, museum catalogue, nationalism, Ottoman Empire, Dimitrie Papazoglu, private collection

1. The Mid-19th Century Heritage Turn and the Creation of the Romanian Nation-State

Heritage practices emerging in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century in the Danubian Principalities were closely intertwined with the nation-building process, using artefacts to channel Westernizing projects, much like other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Private initiatives and collections increasingly became integral to state-led, public initiatives. In 1834, the Natural History and Antiquities Museum opened in Bucharest, its collection largely formed from a substantial donation by the private collector Mihalache Ghica. In turn, around 1860 (the date varies in archival records) former military officer and self-fashioned archaeologist Dimitrie Papazoglu used his own collection to establish a museum in his private residence, which visitors could access by appointment.

1 'Concordea', year I, no 28, May 15, 1857.

In a chapter recently submitted for publication, titled *Heritage and civilizational discourse: 'civilized Europe' and 'antiquities' in mid-19th century Romania*,[2] I examined heritage-making practices, including collecting, as outcomes of a broader civilizational discourse. Drawing on Laura Doyle's concept of inter-imperiality, which encompasses Southeast Europe, I explored the dynamics between the creation of the first museums in the Danubian Principalities and the role of private collections. Focusing on the collaboration between archaeologist Alexandru Odobescu and Dimitrie Papazoglu – specifically their effort to exhibit artefacts from Papazoglu's collection in the Danubian Principalities' pavilion at the 1867 Paris Exhibition – the chapter also engaged with Yannis Hamilakis concept of indigenous archaeologies.[3] Dimitrie Papazoglu's biography and (self)identities are particularly complex: his family roots trace to Kastoria/Arvanitochori, yet his autobiographical writings repeatedly assert a Romanian lineage. These aspects of his life are also examined in a recent critical edition I published,[4] where I approached Papazoglu as both collector and publisher, emphasizing his inter-imperial biography.[5] This article therefore will focus on the contents of Papazoglu's collection, specifically what he described as 'antiquities and Oriental rarities,' drawing on the 1864 museum catalogue.

In a 2016 article, Michał Wasiucionek argued for 'bringing the Ottoman Empire back' into the study of the early modern Danubian Principalities – and vice versa.[6] This perspective raises important questions for the 19th century, when the dissolution of the empire and the assertion of national identities often instrumentalized material culture as heritage. Against this backdrop, this article aims to examine Papazoglu's agency in collecting Muslim tombstones from Brăila's cemetery, Qur'an manuscripts, Ottoman-Turkish documents bearing his ex-libris, Ottoman swords, pistols, etc. To what extent can he be analysed comparatively with other late Ottoman era collectors such as General Husayn,[7] Muhammad Khaznadar,[8] Hakky Bey,[9] or Abdüllatif Subhi Paşa?[10]

Papazoglu's family migrated to Wallachia sometime in the second half of the 18th century, and his claim to local nobility, namely the *boyars*, was facilitated through marriage into the Slătineanu family. Both his military career and collecting practices reveal ambivalent, even contradictory, actions. For instance, Papazoglu was awarded the *Nişân-ı iftihâr*[11] for suppressing the 1842 Bulgarian uprising in Brăila, yet in 1878

2 This chapter has been submitted to the publication editors, Prof. Dr. Eleonora Naxidou and Prof. Dr. Yura Konstantinova, in a collective volume titled *Balkan Perspectives of Europe, 18th–21st centuries*, to be published with Routledge Press, estimated 2025—2026.
3 Hamilakis 2011.
4 Coman 2024.
5 See for example, Cristache-Panait 1968; Căzănișteanu 1971; Opaschi 2001.
6 Wasiucionek 2016, 169.
7 Oualdi 2020.
8 Moumni 2020.
9 Türker 2014.
10 *ibid*., 2022.
11 National Library of Romania, Historical Archive, Saint-George collection, Berat, D.508/LII, fol. 4.

he presented a 17th-century sword to Tsar Alexander II in recognition of his war against 'the Muslim yoke over Christian populations.'[12] Such contradictions illustrate his inter-imperial positioning, which is also apparent when engaging with Papazoglu's correspondence, where, aside from an Ernest from Roustchiouk, the geographies point to Russia, Central and Western Europe.[13]

Similarly to collectors such as Muhammad Khaznadar, Hakky-Bey or Abdüllatif Subhi Paşa, Papazoglu's engagement with heritage extended well beyond collecting. In addition to the brochures mentioned in the critical edition of the Danube River travel guide,[14] he drew inspiration from the French model of archaeological excursions to survey and report on heritage sites in Wallachia and Moldavia for the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction.[15] He even ventured into heritage legislation with his *Project for the Archaeology of the Romanian Country.*[16] The taxonimies Papazoglu attempted to define for heritage closely mirrored those he had applied to his own collection, as described in a guidebook he published about Bucharest.[17] The categories in Papazoglu's proposed archaeology of Wallachia included:

> Medals, gold, silver, brass; Coins, idem idem, Big, small, and medium modules; Statues and busts, gold, silver, brass, stone, and clay; Bowls and vessels idem, idem, idem; Sculpted plaques, idem, idem, idem, idem; Jewelry, iron and silver rings, small sculpted stones, golden and silver pins; Iron and brass instruments; Armour and brass and iron clothing; Big stones and columns, with historical fragments and inscriptions; Petrifications with different plants and insects; Manuscripts in different languages; Old books printed in different languages.[18]

These taxonomies and related heritage practices align with other brochures he produced on heritage, in which his definitions of 'antiquities' were deeply intertwined with Romania's national formation and historical narrative. For instance, in a brochure marking the relocation of the remains of Michael the Brave, a 16th century *hospodar*, to Bucharest, Papazoglu emphasized that this act would make the city's inhabitants

12 Romanian Academy Library, Manuscripts Section, Arhiva Papazoglu, S29(2), Bucarest, Octobre 1878. The context was not random; it was in the immediate aftermath of the 1877 Russian- Turkish war which led to the independence of Romania from the Ottoman Empire.

13 Coman, Inter-imperial negotiation and heritage: Moving objects, people, ideas. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12947504, 2024.

14 Coman 2024, 5–6.

15 SANIC, Copy after a report of the Romanați Prefecture to the Ministry of Interior Affairs May 23, 1864, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction Fond, D. 400, fol. 203.

16 SANIC, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction Fond, D 126/1864, fols. 106–13.

17 'If travelers will have the pleasure of visiting my modest collection of antiquities and rarities all discovered in Romania, over the course of 40 years, I shall feel the greatest honor to receive them in my home, Văcărești street, no 151, color of Blue, and I will be content in showing and explaining them all the antiquities within it, and which are arranged in a particular display on categories.' Papazoglu, 2000, 271.

18 SANIC, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction Fond, D 126/1864, fol. 106.

'proud before other nations.'[19] In the 19th century, in the emerging Romanian nation-state, Michael the Brave had become an iconic figure in painting and in national historiography, celebrated for his anti-Ottoman campaigns. Through this brochure, Papazoglu reinforced the anti-Ottoman symbolism associated with Michael the Brave, highlighting not only the *hospodar*'s victories against the invading Ottoman army, but also his knowledge of Turkish (sic!), and his travels to Ţarigrad.

In *Escursiune arheologică 1874 la trei vechi reşedinţe ale României*,[20] Papazoglu expressed concern for the preservation of three former princely courts, even forbidding guards from smoking near wooden scaffolding to prevent fire. He used the *Escursiune* as a platform to recommend that the local administration commission historians to write a history of Târgovişte,[21] and publish ad-hoc brochures for the 'benefit of the youth and the enrichment of national history, to show that the Dâmboviţa district has within it the most historical and beautiful monuments.'[22] As Sharon Macdonald has argued in *Memorylands*, heritage 'implies ownership' and transforms the past 'into an arena from which selections can be made and values derived.'[23]

Beyond his publications exploring how buildings and artefacts could serve the burgeoning Romanian national history, archival sources show that visitors often recorded their impressions of Papazoglu's museum in writing. His correspondence, alongside his consistent practice of sending the museum catalogue to colleagues in the heritage field, was frequently framed as serving the national interest.[24] Laurajane Smith notes that 'the interplay between authorized and subversive identities is quite revealing about the work that the Authorized Heritage Discourse does in helping to de-legitimize and legitimize certain forms of identity.'[25] The identity(ies) in Papazoglu's case operated on two levels: first, his discursive, nationalist-militant agenda, expressed as 'the feeling of love for the progress of my nation;'[26] second, his self-fashioning as an aristocrat, exemplified by the reproduction of his family coat of arms which Papazoglu dated to 1784.[27] (Figure 1). This emblem, which he described in a caption beneath the design, carried an explicit call for preservation at a familial level: 'The crest of my family of Papazoglu. The original is in silver, from the year 1784, left to me by my late beloved father. Recommending my successors to keep (it) for the entire future of my family. Dimitrie Papazoglu.'

19 Papazoglu 1866, 10.
20 Papazoglu 1874.
21 Târgovişte becomes a significant lieu de memoire for 19th century emerging patrimony definitions as one of princely courts used by the hospodars of Wallachia.
22 Papazoglu 1874, 10–1.
23 Macdonald 2013, 18.
24 Romanian Academy Library, Manuscript section, Papazoglu archive, S31/MXXX. Papazoglu corresponds with Ferenc Pulszky, Hungarian National Museum director between 1869 and 1894, offering details of his collections and a copy of Papazoglu's museum catalogue.
25 Smith 2006, 49–50.
26 Concordea, an I, nr. 28 din 15 mai 1857.
27 Opaschi 2001.

Figure 1. Coat of arms drawn by Dimitrie Papazoglu, inv. no 238465, National Museum of History of Romania

The paradox of militant nationalist agency combined with the deliberate preservation of objects symbolizing imperial rule has been described by Linda Nochlin: 'rescued from the fury of the people by revolutionary art lovers and scholars, the visual objectifications of tyranny, superstition and oppression were, through the alchemy of the museum, transformed into the National Heritage, the most precious possession of the people.'[28] In the previously mentioned letter to Tsar Alexander II, Papazoglu framed Ottoman rule in Romania through the 'yoke' paradigm. Although he appears in several portraits wearing the *Nişân-ı iftihâr*, Papazoglu also published a lithograph representing the Dealu Spirii battle against the Ottoman forces, led by Ömer Lütfi Paşa, during the suppression of the 1848 Wallachian uprising (Figure 2). This, in turn, recalls Saphinaz-Amal Naguib's observations on the potential of objects to become clichés, vehicles for the (re)production of cultural or religious stereotypes. As Naguib writes, 'an object refers to something else beyond itself. It is the concrete thing that is bestowed upon it. In the context of museums, representation requires classification and presentation.'[29]

28 Nochlin 1972, 15.
29 Naguib 2015, 68.

Figure 2. Lithograph, editor Dimitrie Papazoglu, with a caption: 'Dedicated to Romanian Armies. The fight of the Romanian soldiers with the Ottoman army'. Inv. no 131532, National Museum of History of Romania

Following Papazoglu's death, his private collection was sold by his son, Constantin Papazoglu, between 1906 and 1909, after being evaluated by a specially convened commission. The objects were dispersed among several public museums in Bucharest, including the National Archives. Since no systematic research into the full contents of Papazoglu's collection has yet been undertaken, and my own investigation into the provenance of the objects is still ongoing, this article bases its analysis on the catalogue Papazoglu published in 1864. This catalogue serves both as a means of identifying the objects in the collection at that specific moment in time, and as an instrument of knowledge production, revealing what Papazoglu himself understood by 'Oriental rarities and antiquities.' As Dahlia Porter has argued,

> processes of sequencing, labelling and organizing objects on paper were deployed to forge and consolidate, or, alternatively, disrupt and dispute, each museum's nascent institutional identity. Catalogues function as 'instituting genres' – that is, genres of

writing that enact and thereby make visible the dynamic processes of institutional formation and evolution.[30]

The case of Dimitrie Papazoglu, a military officer turned collector and self-taught archaeologist, and the objects he considered worthy of being classified as 'antiquities'[31] illuminates shifting paradigms and identities. Scholarship regarding the intricacies of this process in the successor states of the Ottoman Empire is still developing, with notable gaps concerning the histories of heritage, particularly the complex agency of private collectors. Many of these lacunae result from the persistence of Westernizing and nationalist discourses, which have operated multiple layers of selection, not only on the objects themselves, but also on the very conception of patrimony as a symptom of 'looking West.'[32]

The Papazoglu case study is therefore essential for understanding how heritage is constituted: what is chosen, by whom, and how these choices are framed within a civilizational discourse of Westernization, summarized as 'aligning with the good world.'[33] Furthermore, Islamic art and Ottoman-era artefacts have been marginalized in Romanian scholarship concerning museum collections, apart from a handful of museum catalogues and a few studies.[34] By engaging with the taxonomies Papazoglu applied to the objects in the Papazoglu Museum, and examining the categories he labelled 'Oriental rarities from Asia, Egypt, and Persia,' we can gain deeper insight into the politics of memory and the shifting value of Ottoman-era objects in the Danubian Principalities.

2. Museum Catalogues and Collecting 'Oriental' Artefacts: Knowledge Production and Defining Taxonomies

The negotiations inherent in the emergence of nation-states in Southeast Europe from the Ottoman Empire, especially as reflected in 19th-century definitions of patrimony, produce complex challenges for analyzing collecting and heritage practices. One relevant line of inquiry concerns whether other mid- to late-19th-century private collectors in the Ottoman Empire published catalogues as tools of public outreach or didactic engagement. So far, I have found mostly auction catalogues, along with one notable example by Adrien de Longpérier, who produced a catalogue for artefacts loaned

30 Porter 2022, 157.

31 While throughout the article I will use the term heritage, much of the archival material concerning Papazoglu's private collection uses the term antiquities as a taxonomy for collected and displayed artefacts. The meaning of the term antiquities is not defined but can be understood to be one that is quite broad and encompassing. On the topic of the transition from antiquarianism to heritage, see Eriksen 2014.

32 Except for a few studies such as Cristache-Panait and Panait 1968; Căzănișteanu 1971; Ioniță 2002; Ichim 2013, Dimitrie Papazoglu has not been the subject of systematic research concerning the full extent of his private collection.

33 Papazoglu 1866, 10.

34 See here Dunca 2013 and 2015; Beldescu 1997.

Figure 3. Cover of the Kogălniceanu auction sale catalogue, image source: Badea-Păun, Gabriel. 2014. 'În căutarea unei colecţii pierdute – Colecţia lui Mihail Kogălniceanu'. Studii şi Cercetări de Istoria Artei: SCIA. *IV. 89–93*

Catalog
der
Gemälde-Sammlung
Sr. Excellenz des Ministers
Michael von Kogalniceano
in Bukarest.

Gemälde niederländischer, italienischer und deutscher Meister des XVI.—XIX. Jahrhunderts.

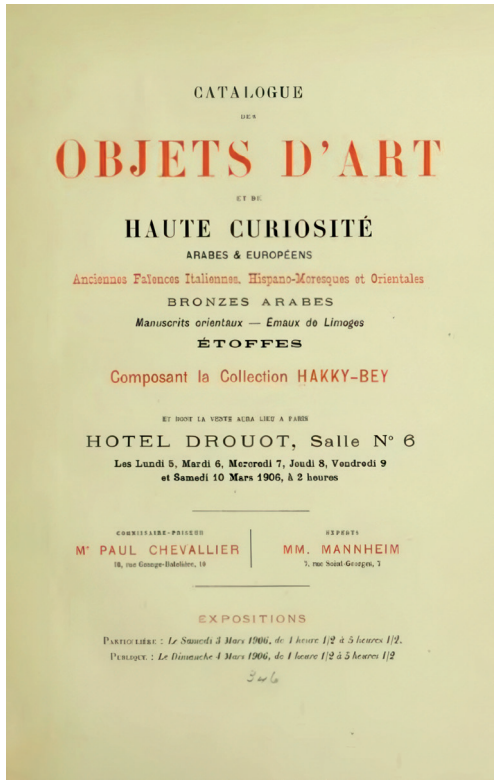
Versteigerung zu Köln
den 9. und 10. December 1887
Vormittags 9½ Uhr
durch
J. M. Heberle (H. Lempertz' Söhne)
im Auctionssaale, grosse Sandkaul 10—12.

Verkaufs-Ordnung und Bedingungen siehe umstehend.

Köln 1887.

Druck von J. S. Steven, Hehlenstrasse 11.

Figure 4. Catalogue of Hakky-Bey's Egyptian and Greco-Roman antiquities collection, May 31–June 2, 1906. Antiquités, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 1906



CATALOGUE
DES
OBJETS D'ART
ET DE
HAUTE CURIOSITÉ
ARABES & EUROPÉENS
Anciennes Faïences Italiennes, Hispano-Moresques et Orientales
BRONZES ARABES
Manuscrits orientaux — Émaux de Limoges
ÉTOFFES
Composant la Collection HAKKY-BEY

ET DONT LA VENTE AURA LIEU A PARIS
HOTEL DROUOT, Salle N° 6
Les Lundi 5, Mardi 6, Mercredi 7, Jeudi 8, Vendredi 9
et Samedi 10 Mars 1906, à 2 heures

COMMISSAIRE-PRISEUR
Me PAUL CHEVALLIER
18, rue Grange-Batelière, 18

EXPERTS
MM. MANNHEIM
7, rue Saint-Georges, 7

EXPOSITIONS
PARTICULIÈRE : *Le Samedi 3 Mars 1906, de 1 heure 1/2 à 5 heures 1/2.*
PUBLIQUE : *Le Dimanche 4 Mars 1906, de 1 heure 1/2 à 5 heures 1/2*

by Muhammad Khaznadar to the Tunisian Pavilion at the 1867 Paris World Fair.[35] Moreover, as Beyza Uzun discusses in her article part of this edition, the catalogues published in Constantinople served the emergent Imperial Museum. Other examples include the catalogue, in German, produced for the sale of Mihail Kogălniceanu's collection (Figure 3), and the one assembled for the Hôtel Drouot auction of Hakki Bey's collection (Figure 4). Further research into collecting and heritage practices within the Ottoman Empire could potentially reveal more such catalogues.

35 Moumni 2020.

Papazoglu's motivations for publishing the 1864 catalogue of his museum become clear from the foreword, in which he frames the act as both an expression of patriotic zeal and a response to personal antagonisms:

> So that everyone can see my faith, and the zeal with which I have searched for the antiquities of our country, in places discovered by me and unknown to her [N.T. the country]; so that the Nation can see that I have devoted my entire life, with the highest zeal and pleasure, to the archaeology of my country and so that I may later combat the venomous enemy of the progress of the Museum, the restless enemy of everything that a Romanian has done well, the stranger to the principles of fraternity and our national love, the honourable gentleman Cesar Boliacu.[36]

Here, the instrumentalization of objects as artefacts serving the nascent Romanian nation, is entwined with heritage as a vehicle for self-promotion and professional rivalry.

The word museum appears prominently on the catalogue's front page, accompanied by Papazoglu's portrait, which had already been widely reproduced in newspapers and in other works he published. The portrait emphasizes his military persona, displaying medals and decorations received from both the Russian and Ottoman Empires. The catalogue's motto underscores its patriotic purpose: 'Everyone with what one can/ To help one's country/ With sweat and with everything/ And even with one's life.'[37] Notably, the catalogue contains no illustrations. Instead, it offers descriptive and often narrative object entries, with provenance details mentioned sporadically. This format provides a clear view of the taxonomies Papazoglu used to classify, organize, and display his collection. Immediately following the foreword, the catalogue lists its divisions and classifications, which closely resemble those in the heritage preservation and legislative proposal he submitted to the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction that same year:

The naming of the Divisions of Antiquities and Rarities that form the Museum of Lieutenant Major D. Papassoglu:

I. Medals, gold, silver and brass
II. Gold and silver coins
III. Bras coins that divide into 6 sizes
IV. Roman jewelry and small sculpted stones
V. Different adornments for both sexes
VI. Bronze, stone and burnt clay statues, and busts likewise
VII. Stone sculpted plaques, of burnt clay, cast and of other metals
VIII. Earthenware vases, metal and stone
IX. Different antique weapons, from the oldest centuries
X. Large stones with various sculptures, busts, roofing tiles and big bricks

36 Pappasoglu 1864, 3.
37 *ibid*., 2.

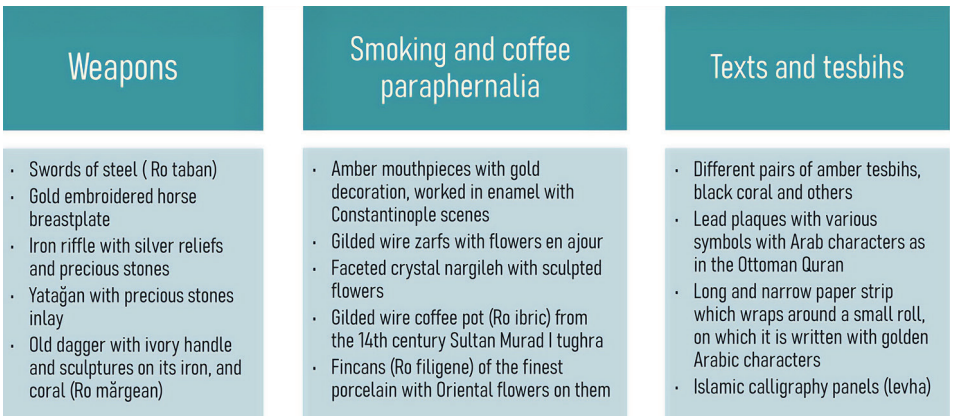
XI. Different petrified bones and plant elements
XII. Different natural rarities in stone, wood, plant, bones and insects
XIII. The mineralogy of the Romanian Mountains, diverse metals
XIV. Antique Church objects
XV. Oriental rarities from Asia, Egypt and Persia
XVI. Different iron, bronze, bone and stone instruments
XVII. Varied manufactured and textile rarities from Romania
XVIII. Old library only with printed books
XIX. Manuscripts on paper and parchment
XX. The painting in oil, copies and lithographs gallery[38]

Closely examining the object categories Papazoglu enumerates, one is struck by the impression of a universalist vision, reminiscent of a *Wunderkammer*, regarding what might be considered worthy of the labels 'antiquity' and 'rarity.' His taxonomies operate simultaneously on material criteria (metal, bone, stone, burnt clay, etc.) and on typological ones, ranging from coins and sculptures to manuscripts, paintings, and mineral specimens. Category no. 15, interestingly titled 'Oriental rarities from Asia, Egypt, and Persia' and positioned between ecclesiastical objects and instruments made from bone, metal, and stone, is the focus of this discussion. In the context of 19th-century Romanian nation-building, which placed heavy emphasis on tracing and exhibiting the Latin origins of the Romanian people, and given Papazoglu's own militant nationalism, it is striking to find in his collection a section explicitly labelled '*despărţirea XVI. Rarităţi orientale în Asia, Egipt, şi Persia*.'

The Egyptian subsection presents a heterogeneous mix: mummies, sarcophagi, small statues of deities, and stone scarabs, alongside an 'Arab sabre holder/girdle made from silk with buckles and gilded ornaments,' bronze adornments, bracelets, earrings, and hairpins 'as the Arab ladies wear,' white clay vessels, and a 'colored tin ink holder/fountain made in Jerusalem.'[39] This conflation of Egyptian antiquities with Arab, Ottoman, Islamic material culture invites questions about Papazoglu's conception of 'Oriental rarities.' Why, for example, are Egyptian artefacts placed within the same geographical frame as Persia and 'Asia'? And what accounts for the differences in representation between the Persian and Asian subsections? This leads to a crucial discussion about the *geographies of collecting*, one that engages the (art) historical taxonomies within Islamic art, and its subsequent divisions between Persian, Mughal, Ottoman.[40] As Frédéric Hitzel notes when engaging with the Turkophilia phenomenon, while distinctions were often made between Iranian and Arab art, the notion of a distinct 'Turkish art' was largely absent; what was commonly described as 'Persian art' could encompass Arabic and Byzantine elements as well.[41]

38 Pappasoglu 1864, 6–7.
39 *ibid*., 59–65.
40 Gadoin 2022, argues that Persian was more of an umbrella term used by late 19th century and early 20th century British collectors to refer to Islamic art.
41 Hitzel 2011.

Figure 5. Examples of objects present in the Oriental rarities section of the Muzeul Papazoglu *catalogue*



The types of objects Papazoglu assigns to category no. 15 include weapons, smoking and coffee paraphernalia, select religious artefacts, and jewellery. His tone in describing them is predominantly factual and itemized, without rhetorical flourishes or explicit hierarchies of value. Notably, many of these items were part of everyday life in the Ottoman provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, as documented in 17th–18th-century archival records. Furthermore, in '*despărţirea XVII-a. Diferităţi rarităţi de manufacturi şi ţesături din Rumîn. Rarităţi*,' Papazoglu uses Ottoman-Turkish terms to designate objects he nonetheless classifies as Romanian: '*teasu*' from Turkish *tas*, '*antirie*' from the Turkish *entari*, '*peşchire*' from the Turkish *peşkir*, and '*imamele*.'[42]

Similarly, other sections contain artefacts with Eastern associations. In section 5, dedicated to adornments for both sexes, he lists earrings and bronze bracelets from Arabia.[43] In the next section, he describes a red granite statue, representing a 'Chinese mandarin sitting down,' and a large, bronze Cleopatra holding the braided snake on her arm and waist, followed by a black bronze statue of Osiris. In section 8, which covers earthenware and metal-ware vessels, Chinese porcelain decorated with landscapes and flowers appears alongside Ottoman brass ewers (orig. Ibric) with gilding and blue enamel.

The weapons category is equally diverse: a sword inscribed with Arabic lettering and fitted with an ivory hilt shaped like a seal; an 'old Arabian' sword inlaid with red coral (orig. *mărgean*) and ivory; a pair of agate stones from the hilt of a sword found in the Adrianople citadel and attributed to Sultan Murad (orig. *Sultan Amuratu*) and Turkish pistols said to have been used by the *Arnavut* participants in the 1821 revolution.

Working with the catalogue as both a source and as a discursive text led me to the discovery of numerous artefacts that could have been classified under 'Oriental rari-

42 Papassoglu 1864, 67.
43 *ibid*., 27–8.

ties,' yet Papazoglu chose instead to assign many of them to material- or function-based categories, rather than to geographical ones. This choice complicates the question of whether his interest in Islamic and Ottoman-era objects can be fully understood through the lens of Orientalist discourse.

A comparative reading of the language Papazoglu employs to describe objects in the 'Oriental rarities' section and those in 'Varied manufactured and textile rarities from Romania' underscores his use of the catalogue as an instrument of knowledge production. Similarly to the 'Oriental' rarities, the items attributed to Romania were described in similar terms: type of object, material from which it was made, any distinctive marks present, possible manufacturer. The types of objects collected by Papazoglu is consistent with other examples of European collections of Islamic and Ottoman-era artefacts.[44]

In the afterword to *Objects and other. Essays on Museums and Material Culture,* James Clifford argues that

> the collector will be expected to label them, to know their dynasty (it is not enough that they simply exude power or mystery), to tell "interesting" things about them, to distinguish copies from originals. (…) Accumulation unfolds in a pedagogical, edifying manner. The collection itself, its taxonomic, aesthetic structure, is valued.[45]

Writing to a certain Mr. Wiess from Severin, Papazoglu notes having sent a copy of his museum catalogue to the director of the museum in Peste, stressing the importance of knowing the country's significant historical monuments and, notably, of recognizing the presence of a substantial 'Oriental' section within his own museum.[46] The letter contains no suggestion of relational geographies, no attempt to situate 'Oriental' material in relation to local Romanian history, yet its inclusion in his heritage discourse indicates its perceived importance.

This raises a key interpretative question: how does 'Oriental' fit into Papazoglu's museum? Rather than being peripheral, the category emerges as a crucial lens for understanding shifting attitudes toward Ottoman-era and Islamic artefacts in the late 19th century Romania. In this context, his ascription of value to Islamic and Ottoman-era artefacts, and his meticulous cataloguing of them as part of a public-facing knowledge project, becomes significant. The catalogue acts not only as a record but also as a purveyor of prestige, both for Papazoglu personally and for the emerging Romanian national heritage.

Therefore, Papazoglu is not merely a private collector amassing eclectic objects. He is a voluntary participant in the formation of institutional heritage practices, fulfilling the expectations Clifford outlines: knowing an object's origins, situating it within a politically charged historical framework, and instrumentalising it as a branding device. In

44 For a discussion on the emergent interest in Islamic art see Gadoin 2022; Gierlichs 2019; Giese, Volait, Braga 2019; Venoit 2000; Eldem 2015; Türker 2014; Volait 2021; etc.

45 Clifford 1985, 238.

46 Romanian Academy Library, Manuscript Section, Papazoglu archive, S32(2), Bucarest.

doing so, he bridges personal legacy with national representation, embodying the tensions and possibilities of heritage-making in a post-Ottoman, Westernizing Romania.

3. Bridging the *Wunderkammer* and Modern Museum Gap: Is Papazoglu a Late Ottoman Empire Collector?

Placing Papazoglu's private collection within established histories of collecting reveals it as underpinning the transition from a *Wunderkammer*, where one can find various elements of Naturalia, to the modern understanding of a museum. The question of whether his choice to collect Ottoman-era and Islamic artefacts was a byproduct of Romania's Westernizing trajectory remains open. Attempts to trace direct links with contemporary Ottoman collectors through correspondence did not lead to meaningful results. Archival records instead point to his professional and intellectual networks being rooted primarily in French, Russian, and German archaeological circles. The opening of the Hagia Irene as a collection of antiquities and of weapons was known in the Danubian Principalities, especially due to being mentioned by Dimitrie Ralet in his travelogue.[47] However, it is not clear in the available archival material to what extent Dimitrie Papazoglu was aware of the emergent heritage institutions in Constantinople and their presence in Romanian travel literature.

Papazoglu records in his 1866 self-narrative brochure that his collection was visited by architect Ambroise Baudry and archaeologist Gustave Boissière, both members of the French *Comité archéologique* sent by Napoleon III and recommended by Alexandru Ioan Cuza's secretary, Arthur Baligot de Beyne.[48] His later selection, in 1870, as a member of the Archaeological Society in Moscow further confirms his integration into a transnational scholarly milieu with established practices of engaging with Islamic and Ottoman era art.[49]

Whether Papazoglu was aware of, or influenced by, the emerging heritage institutions in Constantinople, such as the Hagia Irene collection of antiquities and arms, noted by Dimitrie Ralet in his travelogue, remains unclear. Still, his activity coincided with a wider European appetite for Islamic art, which Mercedes Volait situates within a series of landmark exhibitions between 1851 and 1910, including the Exhibition of Arab and Persian Art (Paris, 1885), *Les Arts musulmans* (1893, 1903), the Stockholm General Art and Industry Exhibition (1897), the Algiers *Exposition d'art musulman* (1905), and Munich's *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (1910).[50] These events codified Islamic art within the European display lexicon, framing it both as an object of aesthetic admiration and as a commodity within a globalizing art market.

47 Ralet 1858.

48 The two were present in Romania, by order of Napoleon III, in order to excavate the archaeological site of Troesmis. See on this Kucsinschi 2021.

49 Odobescu 1961.

50 Volait 2021.

Additionally, Hitzel discusses the collections of Duke of Blacas, acquired by British Museum in 1866; the Iznik ceramics removed by Auguste Salzmann from Rhodos Island, the Charles Schefer's collection of illuminated manuscripts, Hakky Bey, and especially Dikran Kelekian.[51] To what extent did the contacts with members of French archaeological missions in Dobrudja translate into Papazoglu being knowledgeable of the loan show organized by the *Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie* in 1865 and the burgeoning interest in Islamic art in European collections? Volait's framing of the 'commodification and translocation of material culture from a region caught up in a declining Ottoman Empire called to modernize in the face of expanding European imperialism' raises another question: to what degree can Papazoglu's practices be subsumed under this paradigm?[52]

The foreword to his 1864 catalogue, while acknowledging the presence of foreign archaeologists, reframes their activity as part of a predatory process: foreigners, he argues, present a distorted image of Romanians 'as Slavs and barbarians with no name, that we shouldn't let old and precious documents preserved over the centuries to be estranged from us by usurers.'[53] In this catalogue, he underlines the importance of not leaving the archaeological discoveries and acquisitions of artefacts in Romania in the hands of foreigners because 'they buy them incessantly for their private collections and the museums of foreign states. I wanted to put an end to this evil; that is why I submitted to the Honourable Minster of Interior and the one of Public Instruction, but have seen nothing done, and no measures to end this wasteful evil have been taken.'[54] Here, Papazoglu reminds the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction that he had compiled a legislative project intended not only to enact protection and conservation measures for the antiquities of Romania, but also to carbon copy the taxonomies in his museum to a national level.[55]

Oana Damian and Renata Tatomir contend that the Papazoglu collection was of an intellectual antiquarian type, comparable to those assembled by Mihail Ghica or General Gheorghe Mavros. The presence of Egyptian artefacts in these collections is attributed by Tatomir and Damian to both a prevailing trend among private collectors in the Danubian Principalities and the geographical proximity to the Ottoman Empire (sic!), as well as to broader collecting fashions in Europe and the Russian Empire. They further argue that we are dealing with an antiquarian type of collecting practices, dependent upon the taste and personality of the collector, who gathered miscellaneous

51 Hitzel 2011.

52 Volait 2021, 15.

53 Papazoglu 1864, 5. Orig. 'cu atâta mai multu trebue noi care am trasu adesea catigorisea istoriciloru că sântem slavi, sântem barbari şi în sfârşitu navem nici un nume, să lăsăm aceste preţiose documente ce ni le păstreadă atâtea veacuri pământulu a se înstreina peste frontierele nostre dea către Zărăfii.'

54 Papazoglu1864, 4.

55 Serviciul Arhivele Naţionale Istorice Centrale (SANIC), Ministerul Cultelor şi Instrucţiunii Publice, D.126—1864, fols. 106—13.

pieces and with uncertain provenance, some from outside Romania.[56]According to Damian and Tatomir, quoting Miron Ciho, Dimitrie Papazoglu's Egyptian artefacts had been purchased in 1852 from a merchant called I.A. Kheun or J.A. Khneum.

Aurica Ichim provides additional insight into Papazoglu's museum, mentioning that the objects were also gathered during his military career when he was stationed across Wallachia, in a garrison that was active along the left bank of the Danube.[57] Ichim further adds that the pieces seemed to have been collected from the houses of ordinary people, during Papazoglu's archaeological excursions in Wallachia and that many of the weapons were discovered during the urbanization projects initiated during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza or recovered incidentally.[58] In 1909, his collection was divided and dispersed post-mortem, among various institutions such as the State Archives, the Library of the Romanian Academy, the National Art Museum (nowadays the National Peasant Museum), the National Museum of Antiquities, the Geology and Palaeontology Museum, and the Petrography Laboratory.[59] When the selected objects from the Papazoglu collection became part of the National Art Museum founded by Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş, the museum inventory recorded provenance details for some of the artefacts. For example, a *sahan* described as a brass *tepsi* with inscriptions, dated 1691, is recorded to have been commissioned by Antonie voivode to be donated at the Târşor Monastery, an earthenware vessel dated 18th century seems to have originated from a cellar under the Old Post building in Bucharest, on Doamnei street. Stones sculpted in the shape of a turban are registered in the Samurcaş inventory as originating from the Brăila cemetery, which leads to speculations that they were tombstone fragments.[60]

Mircea Dunca has identified that, in the present-day National Museum of Art of Romania, only a Qajar dagger can be securely attributed to Papazoglu's collection. Other Persian artefacts once thought to belong to him were actually part of later transfers from the Tzigara-Samurcaş Museum. Basing his conclusion on a manuscript inventory dated 1909 of the Papazoglu collection remitted to the National Museum of Art and Industry, Dunca summarized the contents and added that under number 954 there is 'a big dagger and its sheath covered with red cloth with golden embroidery.'[61] This artefact, now in the Oriental Art Department of the NMAR, is a Qajar dagger, originating approximately from the end of the 18th century, with an ivory handle and watered steel blade, decorated on both sides with a scene representing a feline hunting a deer. The dagger is signed, probably Hasan (Figure 6).

Dunca argues that the lack of provenance details for this piece reflects limited familiarity with Persian material culture, especially in contrast to Ottoman artefacts. The erroneous description of two other Persian objects from the same ethnographic

56 Damian and Tatomir 2019, 97–8.
57 Ichim 2013, 204.
58 *ibid*., 206–7.
59 Papazoglu 2000, VI.
60 National Museum of the Romanian Peasant archive, Tzigara- Samurcaş museum inventory, 1909, 116–23.
61 Dunca 2013, 38.

Figure 6. End of 18th century Qajar dagger, signed Hasan, National Museum of Art of Romania collection, inv. 880/19869

Figure 7. Safavid armor plate with gold damascened inscriptions, catalogued as 'a fragment of an Arab shield,' National Museum of Art of Romania, inv. 1517/20523

museum, but with a different provenance, leads Dunca to a similar conclusion: a Safavid armour plate with gold damascened inscriptions was catalogued as 'a fragment of an Arab shield' (Figure 7), a *nargileh* with ceramic base was described as 'Chinese porcelain' (Figure 8). The latter is in fact a 17th century Safavid hookah base in the shape

Figure 8. 17th-century Safavid hookah base in the shape of a kendi, with a later addition of the silver mount; National Museum of Art of Romania, inv. 461/19438

of a *kendi*, with a later addition of the silver mount; 'its underglaze Chinese style decoration including a deer by a fence and under a cloud, painted in two shades of blue, as well as the Chinese-like square mark on the bottom, may have caused the confusion.'[62] Cross-referencing the inventory manuscript in the National Museum of Art with the Papazoglu donation to the Tzigara-Samurcaș Museum of Etnography, National Art, Decorative Art and Industrial Art would clarify whether these misidentified objects originated from his collection.

While it can be argued that private collections from the beginning to mid-19th century in the Danubian Principalities/Romania were predominantly focused on Greek, Roman, Egyptian antiquities, Dimitrie Papazoglu was not singular in amassing Ottoman era and Islamic artefacts. The archive of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction for the year 1867 contains a protocol between Cezar Bolliac and Ilie Ciacarovici for a donation of artefacts to the National Museum of Antiquities, Bucharest. The protocol details the contents of the donation, a total of 46 objects.[63] Swords attributed to Ottoman sultans such as Sultan Selim (not specified which one), Suleiman are listed next to pistols, *yatağans* and swords that seemed to have belonged to 1821 Revolution members, namely Sava Bimbașa, Jianu Haidouk or Hagi Prodan.[64] Moreover, in a letter dated 1892, a certain Titus Daşchevici from Dorohoi offers to sell to Dimitrie Papazoglu a series of silver coins, along with a drawing in blue ink which reveals that they were Ottoman coins.[65]

In conclusion, the collection of Dimitrie Papazoglu offers a unique opportunity to engage with the emergent heritage making practices in the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, facilitated by the active choice to amass Islamic and Ottoman era objects. Contextualizing his collecting strategies within the mid-19th century material turn, the impact of a nationalist narrative in tandem with a Euro-centric civilizational discourse, Papazoglu seems to posit a counter-narrative. His dynamic and ambivalent discourses, including those towards the Ottoman Empire, and desire to belong to the grand narratives of heritage, could be speculated as driving forces behind his 'Oriental rarities.'

The objects range from weapons, textiles, Qurans, metalware especially copper and tin, zarfs, coffee pots, to porcelain cups, carpets, calligraphy scissors, pieces of adornment, and so on. Furthermore, placing his 'Oriental rarities' among more conventional objects interrogates how these objects reconcile with a militant Nationalist agenda, and the civilizational discourse concerning heritage practices. Mircea Dunca discusses the ethnographical meanings of the Papazoglu collection as it becomes part of the National Art and Industry Museum, Damian and Tatomir define Papazoglu as an antiquarian, considering his paradoxical eclecticism, and Aura Ichim simply portrays him as an amateur for the exotic, based on his archival correspondence.[66] My current work-

62 Dunca 2013, 38.
63 SANIC, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction Fond, D.112_1867, fols. 77–9.
64 SANIC, D. 112_1867, fol. 78.
65 Romanian Academy Library, Manuscript section, Arhiva Papazoglu, S12/MXXX.
66 Ichim 2013, 205.

ing hypothesis is that 'Oriental' antiquities for Papazoglu became a strategical heritage practice, aimed at both putting Romania on the map of heritage, next to 'the good world,' and amassing as many object categories in a universalist drive.

Papazoglu frequently stated, including in the foreword of his catalogue, that the collected objects had a provenance that could be traced to Wallachia and Moldavia. This translates into a significant issue to be considered, which is the symbolic transference of Ottoman legacy of material culture from items of daily activity to museum artefacts. However, attempts to trace the Ottoman era objects present in the two provinces while and if they enter various mid-19th century collections and the meaning of this process within the historical context of the nation building and Westernization path, are made more difficult by the fragmented nature of the archives, and their absences. Consequently, the case study of Dimitrie Papazoglu as a private collector often attempting to become part of the incipient forms of institutionalized heritage in Wallachia/Romania, and his usage of antiquities as a tool for personal branding facilitates exploring the complexities of heritage making.

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Representing Turkey's Heritage in Art Exhibitions of the 1950s

Abstract

This article aims to explore the intricate interplay between artefacts and identities from the perspective of temporary Turkish art exhibitions planned at American museums in the 1950s by looking into personalities, namely American museum curators and Turkish authorities as agents, and objects that were chosen to be included to represent the artistic and cultural heritage of the Republic of Turkey. The article focuses on the artistic and cultural relations between Turkey and the United States in the 1950s through exhibitions of Turkish art that were planned in American museums to explore how Turkey as a modern republic was represented in art exhibitions that showcased its artistic heritage from the past. To do this, curatorial conceptualisation and objects that were chosen to be displayed in an exhibition that took place in the 1950s as well as an exhibition programme that could not be realised at that time are discussed to understand what was deemed worthy to be represented as Turkey's artistic heritage.

Keywords: Turkish art, Islamic art, exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, national treasures exhibitions

1. Introduction

The decade 1950s marks an important moment for both the United States and Turkey in their engagement with the arts and the potential it provides for cultural diplomacy in the international arena. While the United States emerged as a leader in academic studies in the aftermath of World War II due to the migration of European scholars to the New Continent, it also became more invested in the Middle East as a region politically. Moreover, international travelling exhibitions that showcased national treasures were revived to enhance closer ties between the United States and the exhibiting countries through this soft diplomacy tool.

Around the same time, Turkey as a young republic became more active in the international arena to promote its artistic and cultural heritage through a number of cultural and exhibition programmes in the United States as well as in Europe. The year 1953 marked not only the 30th anniversary of the new Republic but also the 500th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul, and a number of publications and exhibitions were organised in the country to celebrate this important historical moment.

This article aims to understand the dynamics at play in the 1950s by investigating two projects on Turkish art as case studies. The first case study explores an exhibition organised at the Fogg Art Museum in Massachusetts to complement a course offered at the Harvard University in 1954. The second one focuses on an unrealised travelling exhibition planned at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) in New York. Although it was

shelved in the 1950s by the MMA, the exhibition planning process showcases the artistic and cultural politics of the time. However distinct from each other, as one is a small-scale exhibition held at a university art museum whereas the other is a large-scale ambitious project falling into the category of national treasures exhibition at a universal survey museum, these two projects planned around the same time give interesting insights on conceptualisation of exhibitions and perceptions of art from Turkey.

2. Beginnings of Islamic Art History Discipline

The scholarship on the artistic and cultural traditions of the Islamic lands, especially the Near East region, date back to the late 18th century through the exploratory work conducted by European travellers, some of whom were artists while others were architects, engineers or early practitioners of archaeology. While France and Germany became the leading centres of scholarship on Islamic art history, through the World Fairs organized in various European capitals followed by large scale international exhibitions, the general public who could not travel to the region were able to have their first encounters with Islamic art along with the transformation of royal collections into public museums, whose collections from the Islamic lands were formed through activities such as colonial expansion, excavation work and diplomatic gift exchange.[1]

By the late 19th century, the notion of Islam as a 'cultural entity' and a 'religious system' was well established leading the way to new forms of scholarship, hence the 'discipline' of Islamic art emerged. Detailed inquiries focused on the early period of Islam with the aim to trace its formation, development and discover its 'essence.'[2] Another influential trend of the 19th century was the racial theories developed by Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, Ernest Renan, and others. Gobineau in *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines* (1853–1855), made the claim that 'Indo-Europeans and Semites possessed different racial characteristics' giving superiority to the Indo-Europeans. As Persians belonged to this superior race, Persia came to be seen as 'the principle source of artistic inspiration in the Muslim world.' This view dominated the field for multiple decades placing Persians at the top of the artistic hierarchy in the Islamic world, whereas Arabs ranked second as they 'created a flourishing civilization in medieval times,' and Turks occupied the lowest rank.[3]

The impact of the racial theories is perhaps most visibly seen in the early scholarship on Islamic ceramics in the mid-19th century. Ceramics found at Lindos on the island of Rhodes were attributed to Persians and called as 'Lindos' or 'Rhodian' ware, although

1 In the past twenty-five years, many publications appeared dealing with the historiography of Islamic art, some of these are: Blair and Bloom 2003, 152–84; Carey and Graves 2012; Cuddon 2013, 13–33; Flood 2007, 31–53; Flood and Necïpoğlu 2017, 2–56; Gharipour 2016; Junod, Khalil, Weber, et al. 2012; Kadoi and Szanto 2013; Kadoi and Szanto 2019; Komaroff 2000; Lermer and Shalem 2010; Necïpoğlu and Bozdoğan 2007; Vernoit 2000.

2 Vernoit 2000, 32.

3 *ibid*., 6–7. For a discussion on this perception of racial hierarchy, see also Necïpoğlu 2012, 57–75 and Cuddon 2013, 13–33.

they were originally from Ottoman İznik. In a similar vein, another type of İznik pottery, that of pale-purple, found in Damascus, hence called 'Damascus' ware, were again attributed to Persia.[4]

In the United States, first encounters with the Islamic cultures took place later than that of Europe. Although travel to the Near East and Holy Lands were popular among wealthy Americans, the World Fairs arrived at American cities in the last quarter of the 19th century, a few decades later than the first International Exhibition of 1851 in London. The first fair held in Philadelphia (1876), was followed by Boston (1883), New Orleans (1884—1885), Chicago (1893), and St. Louis (1904). While the fairs organized in Europe after the World War I could not reach to their pre-war glory, the ones organized in the United States were more effective in promoting the arts of the Islamic world and more attention was paid to the aesthetic value of the Islamic artefacts.[5]

Specialized exhibitions on Islamic art by public institutions like museums started with the Exhibition of Persian Art at South Kensington Museum, London in 1876. A number of exhibitions followed in various European centres from Paris to Stockholm, the most prominent one being Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst in Munich in 1910.[6] While this exhibition with almost 3600 items loaned from multiple countries marked a turning point for Islamic art in Europe, that same year in the United States the very first museum exhibition of Islamic art was organized at the MMA,[7] which was a loan carpet exhibition with 50 objects.[8]

In the following years, Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston[9] organized an exhibition of Persian and Indian Manuscripts, Drawings and Paintings (1914), the MMA displayed an exhibition of Oriental Carpets (1921) and a loan exhibition of Persian Rugs of the So-called Polish Type (1930), and the International Exhibition of Persian Art (1926) was held at the Pennsylvania Museum in conjunction with the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition.

4 Vernoit 2000, 8; Lukens 1965, 38–9.

5 Vernoit 2000, 16–8.

6 Sarre and Martin 1912. For more information on the 1910 Munich exhibition, see also Lermer and Shalem 2010; Troelenberg 2011. For the Ottoman participation to this exhibition, see Başak Ünlü 2011 and Berksoy 2020, 173–204.

7 The MMA, founded in 1870, acquired its first Islamic art objects in 1871. In the 19th century, artworks from the Islamic lands were displayed among decorative arts objects divided according to material, such as porcelain, metalwork etc. Collectors' demand for their gifted objects to be displayed together pushed the museum for exhibiting this material as an assemblage. Another factor was the museum's move toward 'specialized temporary exhibitions,' which, for Islamic art, started with the 1910 carpet exhibition. Before that there was no attention given to present these Islamic works consistent in time, place and style. For an evolution of the displays of Islamic art at MMA, see Lindsey 2012.

8 Valentiner 1910, 221–2.

9 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston is founded 1870, the same year as the MMA, and opened to the public in 1876. Denman Waldo Ross (1853–1935) was an important figure in developing the Islamic art collection of the museum in its early years (Vernoit 2000, 25). See also Cuddon 2013, 13–33, for more information on the Islamic art collections of Boston area institutions.

It was only in 1930 that the first comprehensive survey exhibition on Islamic art was organized. Taking place at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), this exhibition was curated by their newly appointed curator, Mehmet Aga-Oglu who arrived at Detroit from Istanbul in September 1929.[10] As the few exhibitions held in the United States focused only on a certain medium and represented the material in ethno-racial terms, such as Persian, Turkish etc., Aga-Oglu's aim to represent the Islamic art tradition as a whole was a first at its time.[11] Consisting of 171 objects, the exhibition of Mohammedan Decorative Arts featured works of calligraphy, manuscripts, miniature and lacquer paintings, pottery, glassworks, metalworks, works in ivory, stucco and wood along with carpets and textiles. Among these, Turkish art was represented with 9 objects only: 4 ceramics, 4 brocades and a prayer carpet.[12]

In the early 20th century, Turkish art was a rather unknown, hence understudied subfield of Islamic art history. When wealthy American patrons emerged on the art collecting scene in the 19th century, the restrictions on the export of art and archaeological materials had already come into effect preventing individuals taking cultural artefacts out of the Ottoman lands for private or public collections. Lack of Turkish material in the American collections and inaccessibility of collections in Turkey to researchers due to the shifting political circumstances until the first half of the 20th century as a result of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, and the new regime's transformation of the sites of the Byzantine and Ottoman past into museums played a role in this hiatus on the study of Ottoman art history.[13] Therefore, even a figure like Aga-Oglu, who had access to the collections in Turkey in the 1920s through his curatorial role at the Evkaf Museum, did not have much to show for Turkish art in the United States and his first survey exhibition echoed the conventions of its time where prominence was given to Persian art in terms of the objects featured.[14]

In 1937, a second survey exhibition of Islamic art was organized by Aga-Oglu in San Francisco at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. Among the 262 objects, Turkish art was again represented with ceramics (11 objects), textiles (2 objects), and carpets (8 objects), with the addition of arms and weaponry (4 objects).[15]

The 1930s were quite productive years for Islamic art at other American museums as well. The MMA showcased Turkish art specifically through three exhibitions: Turkish Embroideries of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries (1931–1932), Turkish and Balkan Arms and Armor (George C. Stone Bequest) (1937) and Turkish

10 For Aga-Oglu's contributions to the study of Islamic art in the United States, see Simavi 2012 and Simavi, Cephanecigil 2023, 463–79.

11 *The Art Digest* on November 1, 1930 announced the exhibition as 'the first exhibition in this country to assemble all branches of Islamic art into a single comprehensive group' (11).

12 Aga-Oglu 1930.

13 For a detailed discussion on the perceptions of Ottoman art in the United States, see Simavi 2023.

14 Simavi and Cephanecigil 2023, 470–1.

15 Aga-Oglu 1937.

Textiles (1939).[16] In addition to these, Turkish art was also featured in the museum's exhibitions on Islamic arts such as Ceramic Art of the Near East (1931), Plant Forms in Ornament (1933), Exhibition of Islamic Miniature Painting and Book Illumination (1933–1934) and Oriental Rugs and Textiles (1935).[17] However, in these exhibitions there were only a handful examples of Turkish art, and Persian artworks took the lead in the number of objects featured, again mirroring the taste of the period.

In Boston, the Fogg came to fore with exhibitions on Persian art: Persian paintings from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century (1930), photographs of Persian architecture from the collection of Arthur Upham Pope (1934), Persian miniatures, pottery, and textiles (1934), Persian miniatures from the Ross Collection (1935), Persian pottery (1936), and Persian miniatures, pottery, and sculpture (1937).[18] Some other small exhibitions on Islamic art were organized in Brooklyn, New York and Toledo, Ohio.[19] However, none of these exhibitions could match the 1910 Munich exhibition in terms of their scope or grandeur.

The only major international exhibition was the Six Thousand Years of Persian Art exhibition (1940) in New York organized by Arthur Upham Pope, rivalling his own 1931 London exhibition with over 2500 objects on display. This exhibition was followed by other smaller scale exhibitions on Persian art in Baltimore in 1940, on Islamic art at Cleveland Museum of Art in 1944 and again on Persian art at the MMA in 1949.[20] The MMA's 1944 exhibition of Turkish art of the Muhammedan period stands out with its highlight of Seljuk and Ottoman artworks from its Islamic art department along with a number of loans.[21] While it was organized in connection with the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople exhibition (1944), it still was an important first step for Turkish art with its historical contextualization and representation of objects in a variety of mediums in contrast to the earlier exhibitions on a single medium.

World War II inevitably had an impact on the field. Due to the war several European scholars migrated to the New World later on transforming the United States into a leader in academic studies. Also, by the end of the 1940s, many of the scholars that shaped the early period of Islamic art history discipline passed away one after another bringing new names and perspectives to the field in the 1950s and after.[22]

16 Goldsmith Phillips 1931, 239–42; Grancsay 1937, 54–8; McAllister 1939, 206–8.

17 Dimand 1933, 133 and 141–5; Dimand 1933, 165–71; Dimand 1935, 97 and 101–6. For a full list of the MMA's exhibitions, see 'The Metropolitan Museum of Art Special Exhibitions, 1870–2022', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/files/art/watson-library/museumexhibitions1870-2022.pdf?sc_lang=en (last accessed 12 August 2025).

18 Cuddon 2013, 20.

19 Vernoit 2000, 203.

20 *ibid*., 47 and 204.

21 Dimand 1944, 211–7.

22 Vernoit (2000) provides a list of these scholars with years of death: Edward Denison Ross in 1940, Robert Byron and Josef Strzygowski in 1941, Laurence Binyon and Marc Aurel Stein in 1943, Alois Musil in 1944, Friedrich Sarre in 1945, Ananda Coomaraswamy in 1947,

Another important development coinciding with this period was the 'fundamental changes' in the relationship between the United States and the Middle East. While the United States emerged as a world power after the war, the Middle East became a critical region due to its rich oil reserves and its risk of falling to Communism during the Cold War, hence making the region a priority for the American foreign policy, which resulted in the establishment of regional studies centres.[23]

In fact, a manifestation of this sudden interest and perception change can be traced back to a five-day conference titled 'The Near East, Problems and Prospects' taking place in June 1942 at the University of Chicago, which 'brought together a considerable group of… Americans interested in the Middle East as well as some foreign luminaries,' demonstrating that 'the United States government, faced with a need for regional specialists of many sorts, turned to the universities for help.'[24]

In 1947, following Michigan University's Research Seminary in Islamic Art programme founded by Aga-Oglu in 1935,[25] the second area studies programme on the Middle East was established at the Princeton University. Prior to this endeavour, Princeton offered three summer seminars in Arabic and Persian Studies in 1935, 1938 and 1941, with funding provided by the American Council of Learned Societies and Princeton. In addition to Aga-Oglu, Maurice S. Dimand and Richard Ettinghausen taught in these summer seminars, which were highly reputed since they were 'the first integrated effort to study the Islamic Near East in American higher education' and the young scholars who participated 'later made their mark' in the field.[26]

In 1954, Harvard University set up the Center for the Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) and Sir Hamilton Gibb became its director in 1955. Gibb was a strong supporter of cross-disciplinary work, hence Islamic art history became a key discipline in studying and understanding the region, making CMES an important centre for the study of Islamic art at Harvard. Even before Gibb's arrival, an exhibition of Turkish art organised in 1954 interestingly signalled a turning point for Islamic art history as a new focus on historical development and contemporary politics were observed in this exhibition's organisation demonstrating the early influence of CMES.[27]

Ernst Herzfeld and Fritz Saxl in 1948, Mehmet Aga-Oglu in 1949, Jean Sauvaget in 1950, Mehdi Bahrami in 1951, Prosper Ricard in 1952, Ugo Monneret de Villiard in 1954 (47).

23 Cuddon 2013, 25.

24 Winder 1987, 40–63.

25 Simavi 2012, 6.

26 Winder 1987, 41. Winder lists Florence Day, Sydney Nettleton Fisher, Richard Frye, Harold Gridden, Harvey Hall, A.I. Katsh, George Miles, E.E. Ramsauer, George Rentz and Myron B. Smith as participants to these summer seminars.

27 Cuddon 2013, 25.

3. The First Exhibition of Its Kind: The Turks in History

A correspondence dated October 30, 1953 signed by J. V. McMullan[28] as the honorary research fellow in Islamic art at Harvard University is the earliest archival record on The Turks in History exhibition at the Harvard Art Museums Archives. In the letter, McMullan informed Emin Hekimgil, Turkish educational attaché in New York, of the new courses on the Turkish culture that the University introduced such as Introduction to the Civilization of the Middle East; the Ottoman Empire and the Near East Since the End of the 13th Century; Old Turkish; and Turkish and Related Languages. McMullan added that a visual exhibition of Turkish culture would also be organised at the Fogg Art Museum in February 1954 divided into three sections dedicated to the Seljuk and early Ottoman period, Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey respectively, and requested Hekimgil's help in providing the material for the Modern Turkey section.[29] Considering earlier exhibitions, this was indeed a unique proposal in its inclusion of the Republican era artistic production.

A catalogue was not produced for this exhibition.[30] While the full list of exhibited objects and curatorial narrative are not available, exhibition's press release and object loan records provide important information on this undertaking. In the correspondence dated December 29, 1953, sent by the Fogg director John Coolidge to the MMA director, he introduced the exhibition idea in these words:

> Early next semester, we are trying an experiment, presenting a major loan exhibition in close connection with a course outside our [Fine Arts] Department. The course is History 157, the Ottoman Empire and the Near East since the end of the 13th century. The exhibition will be called "The Turks in History". The purpose of the exhibition is to show the influence of the Turks upon European culture and of European culture upon the Turks.

A press release from the museum dated January 4, 1954 commented further on the exhibition's scope and contents. Running from February 1 to March 15, 1954, the museum relied on a number of museum and private collections to represent Turkish art as there was not a comprehensive collection existed in the country at the time. While the release reiterated that a section would be devoted to 'the Islamic background of the Turkish empire' and another on 'the modern Turkey and the influence of the West,' it also detailed that the main part of the exhibition would be:

> …an attempt to identify visually the characteristics of the Turks themselves. The immense range of their wanderings and their extraordinary importance as conquer-

28 Joseph McMullan (d. 1973) is a prominent collector of Islamic art, especially of rugs, and he was an Honorary Research Fellow in Islamic Art at the Fogg Museum from 1950 to 1951, for more information see Cuddon 2013, 24.

29 All records on this exhibition mentioned here are located in Exhibition Records (HC6), folders 2881–2883, Harvard Art Museums Archives.

30 Phoebe October 21, 1974.

> ors and military rulers will be diagrammatically shown; some portraits of their leaders, and objects in some cases specifically associated with historic chiefs; also some weapons, dress, and ornaments will illustrate their rule and style directly. A contrast between Turkish and non-Turkish art in the medieval Islamic style will be the basis of an attempt to connect formal differences with national characteristics.

Cuddon interprets this statement as a continuation of certain pre-existing trends in Islamic art history, e.g. the ethno-racial paradigm as a contrast between Turkish and non-Turkish elements would be made. On the other hand, the exhibition's aim to explore 'the development of the Turks through history in order to understand their position in the contemporary world,' is considered as an indication of a shift in perspective in line with the interest of CMES in contemporary politics. Hence, in its attempt 'to consider objects through their function and meaning in their original historical context… [The Turks in History] signified a moment where the study of Islamic art began to move away from a purely aesthetic approach toward situating objects in the wider sphere of socio-political history.'[31] Indeed, while the 1944 MMA exhibition also historically contextualized Turkish art of the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, the Fogg exhibition stands out as an attempt to bring in contemporaneity to the exhibition discourse.

Throughout December 1953 and January 1954, the museum secured loans from institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum, Yale University Art Gallery, the MMA, Worcester Art Museum, MFA in Boston, Rhode Island School of Design and Wadsworth Atheneum; from individuals like John D. Rockefeller Jr, Diana Volkmann, Stuart Cary Welch Jr, Mrs. R. L. Wolff, Sevine I. Doblan, Theron J. Damon, Kerekin Beshir as well as from a number of Harvard-affiliated units such as the Semitic Museum, Harvard Law School, Houghton Library and Peabody Museum. Loaned objects were various and in different mediums, ranging from Ottoman and Persian miniature paintings to Colonial portrait paintings that depict Turkish rugs as ornaments,[32] from carpets (especially from McMullan's own collection) to textiles and embroideries, from ceramics to metalwork such as arms and armour to accessories such as belts, rings, necklaces etc. (Figure 1 and 2).

Object loan records indicate that the MMA loaned a portrait of Ahmet I (44.30) and tughra of Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent (38.149.1), whereas Worcester loaned an illustrated folio from the Hunarnama of Loqman depicting Bayezıd I, 'The Thunderbolt,' Routing the Crusaders at the Battle of Nicopolis (1935.13) and a 16th century Persian painting of a prisoner (1935.9) as works on paper.

MFA in Boston agreed on a number of loans ranging from İznik and Kütahya ceramics (85.482, 95.420, 95.422, 19.1203) to illustrated folios from Ottoman and Persian manuscripts (14.636, 14.691, 14.692, 14.693, 14.694) and a page of 17th century

31 Cuddon 2013, 25–6.

32 The press release as well as loan letters indicate that four Colonial portraits were loaned from the following: Yale Art Gallery, Smibert's 'Bermuda Group'; Harvard Law School, Feke's 'Isaac Royall and Family'; Brooklyn Museum, G. Stuart's 'George Washington'; Wadsworth Atheneum, Copley's 'Portrait of Jeremiah Lee.'

Figure 1. View of gallery installation for 'The Turks in History,' Fogg Museum, February 1– March 13, 1954. Photographs of the Harvard Art Museums (HC 22), folder 1.329. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Ottoman calligraphy (34.1335). Interestingly, misattributions of some of these folios demonstrate the limited knowledge on Turkish art at the time. For instance, the folios from the Shahnama-i Selim Han (14.693 and 14.694) were described as funeral of Murad III in the loan documents, whereas they are now recorded as the accession of Sultan Selim II in Belgrade and the funeral of Sultan Selim II in the museum records. Among the two pieces of metalwork, a 13th century candlestick (50.3628) and a silver salver dedicated to Alp Arslan (34.68), the current museum records define the object as 'Salver dedicated to Alp Arslan (ruled 1063–1072, inscribed with an Islamic date equivalent to 1066–67, but possibly a modern–day forgery.'

Other loan requests included a number of arms and armour from the MMA, such as reflex bow (36.25.2526), priming flask, powder measure and suspension cords (36.25.2444), miquelet rifle (43.82.7), helmet (04.3.461) and two other objects that could not be verified in the MMA collections: a *yatağan* with scabbard (accession number given as 32.75.261 AB) and a flintlock pistol (accession number given as 36.25.22448).

Figure 2. View of gallery installation for 'The Turks in History,' Fogg Museum, February 1–March 13, 1954. Photographs of the Harvard Art Museums (HC 22), folder 1.329. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Loans from individuals included a Persian miniature painting, a bronze 14th century Persian candlestick, 16th century Persian shirt (textile), puzzle ring, silver necklace, 19th century pin, two Turkish belts (one in silver), three pieces of Turkish embroidery, two pairs of doors, brazier with a stand and a fez mold.

As seen in this extensive list of objects, the exhibition aimed to showcase representations of Turkish art in as many forms as possible. The inclusion of Persian art works must be to provide a comparison and demonstrate the distinctiveness of these two schools of Islamic art (Figure 3), whereas the Colonial portrait paintings must have served to showcase the representation of Turkish rugs in the Western painting tradition and probably with an aim to make the exhibition relevant in an American context.

Although 'Modern Turkey' section is not elaborated on in the press release, McMullan's letter dated February 16, 1954 sent to Nuri Eren, director of the Turkish Information Office, during the run of the exhibition, stated that the exhibition was divided into three sections: 'First. Entrance of the Seljuk Turks into the Islamic World and its far-reaching consequences. Second. The Ottoman Empire. Third. The Republic.' The same letter

Figure 3. View of gallery installation for 'The Turks in History,' Fogg Museum, February 1–March 13, 1954. Photographs of the Harvard Art Museums (HC 22), folder 1.329. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

also confirms that the Information Office contributed material on the Republic section. Eric Schroeder on December 1, 1953,[33] as the co-organiser of the exhibition along with McMullan, had written to İhsan Atakent at the Turkish Information Office in New York with a wish list of objects for the planned exhibition. His list for the 'Modern Turkey' section included a modern Turkish newspaper; an illustrated popular magazine of the Life or Look variety; an example of the best modern Turkish bookmaking; an example of textile weaving, if possible figured; an example of modern figured ceramics as well as two modern paintings shown to him at the Consul's apartment during his visit (Figure 4). While the letter does not specify particular works, the intention is made quite explicit in the wish to include figurative examples of textiles and ceramics as well as Western style publications. Cuddon's comment that 'the entire exhibition was organized to celebrate the emergence of the modern-nation state of Turkey from the Ottoman Empire' may or

33 Eric Schroeder (1904–1971) joined the Fogg Museum in 1938 as 'Keeper of Persian Art,' for more information see Cuddon 2013, 22–3.

Figure 4. View of gallery installation for 'The Turks in History,' Fogg Museum, February 1–March 13, 1954. Photographs of the Harvard Art Museums (HC 22), folder 1.329. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

may not be the case, however, there is a clear implication that the exhibition would have a political narrative demonstrating 'a rigid distinction between the premodern Islamic empire and the modern Turkish nation state' in its layout as explained by the organizers.[34]

The Fogg was not the only place where programmes on modern Turkey were discussed. Around the same time, Turkish Embassy and Turkish Information Office were also in touch with the MMA on a variety of cultural initiatives once again 'to illustrate dramatically the transition that Turkey has made from the old to the new.'[35] However,

34 Cuddon 2013, 22–3, fn. 105.

35 Letter from Nuri Eren to Francis Henry Taylor, June 3, 1954, Box 10, Folder 7, Francis Henry Taylor records, The Metropolitan Museum Archives, New York. The same folder has correspondence between the MMA director and the Information Office for requests of collaboration on a variety of programs such as a fashion show of the Turkish Fashion Institute, the arrival of a Turkish good-will ship to New York and hosting an evening event at the MMA restaurant on that occasion. Furthermore, correspondence recorded on "The Turks in History" exhibition of 1954 at Harvard Art Museums Archives (HC6) folder 2883 refer to President of the Republic Celal Bayar and Madam Bayar's visit to the United States in

one project that took attention more than any other was a travelling art exhibition from Turkey, initiated by the MMA curators.

4. Complexities of Planning an International Travelling Exhibition

Earliest records in the MMA Archives discussing cross departmentally the idea of an art exhibition from Turkey date back to 1951. Curators that were involved in this project were Maurice S. Dimand from the Near Eastern art department and James J. Rorimer, director of the Cloisters and curator of Medieval art.

During the Summer of 1951, Dimand and Rorimer exchanged notes on their wish list of objects for a possible loan exhibition.[36] Then in September 1951, while in Istanbul for the International Congress of Orientalists,[37] Dimand sent a letter to Rorimer giving advice on his upcoming trip to Turkey.[38]

In a confidential memo dated March 6, 1952, Rorimer reported to Francis Henry Taylor, director of the MMA, all the official steps undertaken on behalf of the MMA for a possible loan exhibition from 1950 onwards.[39] According to his account, in 1950 as a first step Taylor and Rorimer had lunch with Feridun Cemal Erkin, Ambassador of Turkey to the United States in Washington, D.C. Taylor contacted Dimand while he was in Istanbul for the Congress of Orientalists informing him of Rorimer's upcoming trip. Dimand and Rorimer met in Paris in early October 1951 to discuss 'the various angles of exhibition.' When Rorimer arrived in Istanbul, he contacted Archibald V. Walker, an old friend of the Byzantine scholar Thomas Whittamore, who introduced him to Aziz Ogan, director of the Byzantine, Ancient, and Hittite Museum in Istanbul. Ogan suggested him to contact Cahit Kınay, acting director general of museums and antiquities in Ankara, as he oversaw both Ogan's and Tahsin Öz's, director of Topkapı Palace, work as well as all excavations and artistic matters in Turkey. Upon the confirmation of this fact by the vice council and the consul general of the United States in Istanbul, Rorimer travelled to Ankara. In his meeting with Kınay, Rorimer conveyed his conversations with his MMA colleagues, Taylor and Dimand. Rorimer further commented on this meeting as:

1954, which most probably is the reason for the cultural programming offers by the Turkish Information Office in the United States.

36 Interdepartmental memorandum from James J. Rorimer to Maurice Dimand, June 19, 1951, Box 26, Folder 2, James J. Rorimer records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

37 The Twenty-Second International Congress of Orientalists took place in Istanbul between September 15 and 22, 1951. For more information, see Dandekar 1951, i–xxiv.

38 Letter from Maurice Dimand to James J. Rorimer, September 21, 1951, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

39 Memo from James J. Rorimer to Francis Henry Taylor, March 6, 1952, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

> Kınay's selection of objects for a Turkish exhibition in America was atrocious. He only wanted to send Turkish objects after 1453 and most of these were unworthy of an international exhibition. I know you don't like beaded bags, mother-of-pearl inlaid tabourets, eighteenth-century studded book covers, some helmets and swords, any more than I do. He said that Dr. Dimand had not discussed anything but Mohammedan art with him. I informed him that Dimand told me otherwise. There followed five amusing hours with Ambassador Wadsworth, who was anxious to have a bang-up, good show in America and to help us with our furthering of "Cultural Relations" – including a mosaic, or a fresco or two. I neither begged for too much, nor asked for too little, but "oiled" up the proposal.[40]

Rorimer went on mentioning the interest of Mrs. Fuat Köprülü on the project, who arranged a meeting with Halim Alyot, director of Turkish press, broadcasting and tourism department. At this meeting, they 'discussed the importance of having a really important Exhibition in America and the need for preserving monuments in Turkey.' Rorimer also met Nuri Gökçe, director of Archaeology Museum (Hittite Museum) and 'discussed the possibility of sending some of their recent finds.' The following day, Rorimer had a conference with Alyot and his associates followed by more conversations at the American Embassy. The same afternoon, he attended a meeting at the Ministry of Education with Reşat Tardu, permanent undersecretary; Emin Hekimgil, director of foreign cultural relations and UNESCO affairs; and Kınay. They reviewed the photographs selected by Kınay for the exhibition and stated that Kınay 'was given forty five days in which to prepare a "decent" list of possible loans. That was on the 26th of November 1951.'

Correspondence exchanged between the American Embassy officers and the MMA staff dating from March 1952 indicates that the intended collaboration between the two countries for an art exhibition was moving much slower than the MMA had anticipated as the loan list did not reach them in the time frame promised by the Turkish authorities. During this period, the project was closely followed up by the American diplomatic staff on behalf of the museum.[41] Enthusiasm expressed by the Embassy officers demonstrates the support from the diplomatic side on such an undertaking. However, from the MMA perspective, already by August 7, 1952, Rorimer was discouraged with the lack of progress, and he decided not to extend another trip to Turkey to further the conversations on the project.[42]

In February 1953, the exhibition idea was brought up by the American Embassy informing the MMA of an informal conversation they had with Necati Dolunay, assistant director general of antiquities in Turkey, that an exhibition could be arranged for

40 Memo from James J. Rorimer to Francis Henry Taylor, March 6, 1952, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

41 Letter from Alan W. Lukens to James P. Rorimer, March 4, 1952; Letter from Lewis Rex Miller to James P. Rorimer, March 14, 1952, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

42 Letter from James J. Rorimer to Robert Mandel, August 7, 1952, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

the Autumn of 1953 if the museum desired. They explained that the lack of interest on the Turkish side 'was due to the fact that the French government had made a prior request through official channels for an exhibition in Paris, which is now going on, and that it had been necessary to concentrate their efforts on gathering material for this exhibit.'[43]

The exhibition in question here is the 1953 exhibition of Splendour de l'art turc that took place in Petite Palais, Paris, France. Basil Gray in his review of the exhibition in the Burlington magazine mentions 776 objects filling five floors of Pavillion Merson, out of which 208 are from the French collections.[44] The exhibition catalogue lists all 776 objects in a variety of mediums from arms and armour to manuscripts, from metalwork to ceramics, from textiles to carpets and rugs, spanning a long chronology of Turkish art of Seljuk and Ottoman periods from 12th through 19th centuries.[45] Gray, in the review, refers to Turkish art as little known in Western Europe despite the physical proximity of the country to Europe. Apart from the collections in the United Kingdom, Gray states that there really is not much in the collections in Europe, hence making this first exhibition from Turkey in Europe[46] particularly important and the content fitting the title of the exhibition, reflecting the splendour of the arts of Turkey.[47]

After Paris, the intention of the Turkish authorities was to exhibit the objects in Istanbul on the occasion of the 500th Anniversary of Istanbul's Conquest.[48] Dolunay proposed to American colleagues that a considerably better and bigger exhibition could be sent to New York once the Istanbul viewing was over. Rorimer responded by re-emphasizing his interest, 'We very much appreciate your continued interest in the possibility of having an outstanding exhibition from Turkey which would include antiquities other than Turkish art.'[49] However, Rorimer did not decline the proposal right away. He mentioned the difficulty of arranging an international loan exhibition on such short notice, as they took much longer time to organise at his institution, and he needed to consult with the MMA director, and the director's possible wish to speak with staff policy committee and trustees for a decision on this matter.

43 Letter from Frederick P. Latimer to James J. Rorimer, February 24, 1953, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

44 Gray 1953, 136.

45 Splendour de l'art turc 1953.

46 In 1932, an 'Exhibition of Turkish Art' was held in Vienna, which according to Vernoit (2000), gave 'a foretaste of changes to come' (21). Blair and Bloom in *the Grove Dictionary of Islamic Art* also mention this exhibition. However, neither elaborates on the exhibition's content. For detailed information and discussions on the 1932 Vienna exhibition, see Sadberk Hanım Museum Annual VI / 2023.

47 Gray 1953, 136.

48 In addition to exhibition programmes, multiple publication projects were carried out for the 500th anniversary, for a full list of the publications, see Mercanlıgil and Özerdim 1953, 413–28.

49 Letter from James J. Rorimer to Frederick P. Latimer, Jr., March 4, 1953, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

In July 1953, the MMA sent a polite decline letter to their contact at the American Embassy in Ankara saying an exhibition from Turkey was not possible at this stage as their focus was on the reconstruction program of the museum, but they were in touch with the Turkish Ambassador in Washington, D.C. for 'possibilities of mutual co-operations.'[50] From the beginning Rorimer, on behalf of the MMA, insisted on including works from ancient civilisations of Anatolia, the Hittite, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods for a loan exhibition from Turkey and his remarks indicate that the museum was not interested in a project that showcased only works of Seljuk and Ottoman art. This statement, rather than reflecting a matter of personal taste, demonstrated a trend in the museum field at the time. Rorimer, in fact, had a collection of Turkish ceramics, which he loaned to the 1931 ceramic art exhibition at the MMA as well as to the 1937 exhibition held at the de Young Museum.[51] The early 1950s were a time when national treasures exhibitions were revived and received much attention from the public with high visitor numbers. Therefore, bringing an exhibition covering a long chronology and representing multiple civilizations of Anatolia must be seen as more promising along with the perception that an international large-scale exhibition focusing only on Turkish art would not be appealing to large crowds due to the limited knowledge on this field.

A careful look at the exhibition wish list (date unknown) proposed by Rorimer on behalf of the Medieval art department and Dimand on behalf of the Near Eastern art department demonstrates that their list was sourced from publications that refer to the works in question.[52] Although Dimand seems to have a better grasp of what Turkish national collections contain in his area, Rorimer's list is more general, referring to categories that he wished to be represented rather than specific objects.

For instance, the undated document entitled 'Objects Selected for the Proposed Exhibition of Masterpieces from Turkish Museums' lists 11 objects for the Ancient Oriental Art, sourced from secondary material such as Guide Sommaire and Helmuth Bossert's Alt Anatolien; for the Greek and Roman art, the sources are Martin Schede, Gustave Mendel and Pierre Devambez and featured 11 objects in various mediums such as marble sarcophagi, marble statues and reliefs, bronzes and gold objects. While there are specific mentions to the objects, such as a request for the Alexander sarcoph-

50 Draft letter to Frederick P. Latimer, Jr., July 13, 1953, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

51 Simavi 2023, 135.

52 Objects Selected for the Proposed Exhibition of "Masterpieces from Turkish Museums", Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA. This folder also has the library loan cards for the books Rorimer used for his object research in the Turkish collections such as Gustave Mendel's *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines, et byzantines* (Constantinople: En vente au musee imperial, 1912-1914); Jean Bersolt's *Mission archeaologique de Constantinople* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921); Andre Joubin's *Musee Imperial Ottoman: Bronzes et bijoux: Catalogue sommaires* (Constantinople: Typ. Lith. E. Loeffler, 1898); Charles Rufus Morey's *Sardis Sarcophagus of Cladia Antonia Sabina* (Princeton, New Jersey: American Society for the Excavation of Sardis, 1924) and museum catalogues such as *Musees des antiquites de Stamboul and Musees d'Istanbul guide illustre*.

agus, there are also certain categories such as a fine Hittite slab of sculpture in good condition, from Bogaz-Koy or Euyuk, and gold objects from Troy and Sardis. As for the Byzantine art, the list has five items, with only three objects identified and the rest specified as categories such as Byzantine frescoes and mosaics if available and gold objects, jewellery, and bronzes if available.[53]

While pre-Islamic civilisations list is more tentative, Islamic works are quite well outlined in the list. With a total of 46 objects, it is divided by collections such as Top Kapu Saray general treasury, Top Kapu Saray manuscripts, Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi etc. While in some, general categorisations are used such as *tugras* of Sultans, kaftans of Sultans etc., majority of the objects in the list have tombstone information with inventory numbers. There was also a desire to display non-Turkish Islamic art; for instance, Automata by Jazari is included along with multiple copies of Shah Nama and Kalila wa Dimna in Persian.

In comparison with earlier exhibitions drawn from the material in American private and public collections, this loan exhibition was indeed envisioned to be quite ambitious and larger in scale featuring material from Anatolia all throughout time falling into the category of national treasures exhibitions that were quite popular during the inter-war period and revived especially during the Cold War years in the United States.[54]

5. End of 1950s: Start of a New Era for Turkish Art

The year 1959 was a pivotal moment for art history in Turkey. Suut Kemal Yetkin inaugurated the First International Congress of Turkish Arts (ICTA) in Ankara bringing scholars around the world to discuss Turkish art history.[55] That same year there was a

53 Memo from James J. Rorimer to Maurice S. Dimand, June 19, 1951, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA. In a memo entitled "re Loan Exhibit from Turkey" to Dimand dated June 19, 1951, Rorimer lists the following for the Byzantine exhibition that were fed into the final object list: "One key big piece such as the Sidamara sarcophagus (Selefkah sarcophagus second choice) and/or the monumental statue of Valentinian II from the Aphrodisias, in the Archaeological Museum Istanbul. (Mendel, Catalogue, vol. II, 504 (2269). A fine portrait head or decorative sculpture in porphyry if available. A choice group of capitals selected from such examples as those published by Mendel, II, 745 (2366), 749 (2253), 750 (2404), 755 (942); III, I244 (2706). Frescoes and/or mosaics if transportable. Jewelry, bronzes and enamels, if they are available and of our quality. It would be interesting to show the decorated gold cup (pokale) from Albania associated in style with our Albanian treasure (Istanbul museum, Inv. no. I53I, acquired March 9, 1902. See Stryzgowski, Altai Iran, pl. I.).

54 Later on defined as 'blockbuster exhibitions,' there is a long list of publications that deal with this trend as well as with specific exhibitions. See especially Spear 1986; Freedberg, Jackson-Stops, and Spear 1987 for an early discussion on this topic in *The Art Bulletin* as well as the 1986 issue of *Art in America*, where a special section is dedicated to the museum blockbusters. In 2016, *Journal of Curatorial Studies* also dedicated an issue on the topic 'Curating Cultural Diplomacy.'

55 Yetkin 1961, 1–7.

revival of interest for a potential loan exhibition to the United States from Turkey. Nuri Eren, director of Turkish Information Office in New York, wrote twice in a week apart, on January 22 and January 29, urging Rorimer, who by then became the director of the MMA, to go to Turkey and discuss the exhibition project with the officials there.[56] Eren informed Rorimer that 'there has been a lack of logical sequence in the pursuit of the project' after reading the correspondence and memos on the discussions in 1952 and 1953. Hence Eren wrote:

> …since I know you are definitely interested in the project and have already set a tentative date, and because, we, on our part, realize that it is bound to be of great cultural value to us, I am convinced that we should start to proceed in logical sequence, leaving aside generalizations and tackling practicalities.
> …I understand that you have in mind representative pieces of art of the Hittite, Phygian, Lydian, Ionian Roman Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman periods. The theme of the exhibit would be to show the rich cultural tradition of the Turkish homeland. As I have already explained to you, I feel that an agreement in principle can best be obtained by extending your trip to Ankara.[57]

In his second follow up letter a week later, Eren in general conveyed the same message and urged Rorimer to travel to Turkey to re-start the conversations in person in Ankara. Despite Eren's urges, and contacts between Rorimer and Osman Faruk Verimer[58] on a possible meeting in Turkey, this attempt did not result in any solid action.

On April 28, 1959 Rorimer[59] wrote a letter to Seyfullah Esin, permanent representative of Turkey to the United Nations with whom he seemed to be on a good personal relationship, hence he could be more direct about his sentiments and reservations for this project. Rorimer stated his interest in having an exhibition from Turkey provided that it would not come before the Fall 1961 and requested Esin to 'pave the way for an official request from your Government telling us what they could do and asking we could cooperate.' Rorimer also briefed him on the contacts he made in Turkey back in 1952, his discussions with Kınay at the time, and Hekimgil's letter to Dimand where he requested the museum to pay all the expenses. Rorimer stated that compensating all the expenses were not in accordance with the museum procedures and attached a sample contract for Esin.

56 Letter from Nuri Eren to James J. Rorimer, January 22, 1959; Letter from Nuri Eren to James J. Rorimer, January 29, 1959, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

57 Letter from Nuri Eren to James J. Rorimer, January 22, 1959, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

58 Letter from Osman Faruk Verimer to James J. Rorimer, June 8, 1959; Letter from Executive Assistant to James J. Rorimer Director to Osman Faruk Verimer, June 23, 1959, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

59 This letter is at the National Gallery of Art Archives, (7A2 Central Files, Box 38, C-25 Exhibitions Travelling Exhibitions – Art Treasures of Turkey [Folder 2 of 4]), Washington, DC, United States.

One last attempt to realise a loan exhibition from Turkey recorded in the archival sources came from Ernst J. Grube, curator of Islamic art at the MMA. While Grube was in Ankara for the 1st ICTA, he reported on October 22 to Rorimer that he 'had a long and rather fruitful talk with the General Director of Museums and Monuments in Turkey, Kemal Su, about the planned Turkish Exhibition in New York.'[60] He passed on the interest from the Turkish side for such an endeavour and outlined the conditions put forth by Turkey for such an undertaking. The list of conditions included that either the MMA, 'or the United States Government covers the expense of the exhibition from Istanbul harbor to New York, the possible travel of the exhibition through the United States, and the transport back to Istanbul' as well paying for the insurance fees. Two scholars would accompany the exhibition during the tour and all their travel and living expenses would be covered by the United States. The MMA would 'prepare and print the catalogue of the exhibition' and make 'postcards of the most important objects in the exhibition' as well as 'a 16 mm colour film should be made of the exhibition (12 to 15 minutes) for educational and propaganda purposes in Turkey.' Grube also stated that the Turks were 'in favor of an exhibition of Turkish art, much more than in an exhibition of any kind of great works of art in their collections.' On the other hand, he assured Rorimer that:

> …as the term Turkish art is here understood in a rather vague and general way it seems to be possible to include practically everything which one could relatively sure of being made by Turkish people in Turkey. It may even on this basis be possible to include some Byzantine and late classical material, and naturally some ancient oriental material. But it would nevertheless turn out to become mainly an exhibition of Islamic Turkish art.

Another important point Grube made is the objects in the exhibition should not only include the highest quality but also be not well known to most. In this way, it would not only attract the general public but also would contribute greatly to their knowledge of Turkish and Islamic art in the West.

Grube's letter demonstrates once again the differences of stance between the two parties in this attempt for a joint project. At each contact made between Turkish and American authorities, the Turks' emphasis was on the Turkish and Islamic material whereas the MMA's interest in that material seemed to be the least, with the exception of Dimand and Grube as both being curators of Islamic art and probably somehow familiar with the material in Turkish collections. Rorimer not willing to take on the expenses of an exhibition that he probably deemed too narrowly focused responded to Grube with a definitive no on October 29.[61]

In the early 1960s, the conversations on a possible loan exhibition resumed with Walter Heil, director of de Young Museum; Richard Ettinghausen, curator of Near

60 Letter from Ernst J. Grube to James J. Rorimer, October 22, 1959, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

61 Letter from James J. Rorimer to Ernst Grube, October 29, 1959, Folder 26, Box 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

Eastern art at the Freer Gallery of Art; and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services (SITES). Along with Grube, Ettinghausen also attended the 1st ICTA in Ankara, hence it is likely that Ettinghausen was aware of the conversations between the Turkish authorities and Grube, he may even be a part of these conversations. As indicated in the Congress proceedings, Ettinghausen was selected as the American member of the permanent executive committee of the Congress. This close and firm relationship he had with the Turkish authorities and scholars must have helped in making the first travelling exhibition a reality in the 1960s.

Another important figure in realising this endeavour was Walter Heil,[62] as seen in his September 27, 1962 dated letter to İlter Türkmen, Counselor at the Embassy of Turkey in Washington, DC. Heil began his letter as a follow up on Türkmen's conversation with Ettinghausen, where he expressed his wish for an exhibition from Turkey in the United States and elaborated on the relationship between the two countries and advantages of having such an exhibition for the American public. Heil wrote:

> The chief purpose of the exhibition would be to acquaint the American public with Turkey's great historical past and artistic contributions. Arranging such a show soon would seem to be particularly timely. For, while Americans are fully aware of the military strength and the conspicuous economic progress of their gallant NATO ally, Turkey, they are sorely ignorant of the cultural achievements of the Turkish people, especially of the great art treasures they produced or possess. Even well educated Americans who have visited many of the great art centers of Europe and Asia have never been in Turkey, and are therefore unaware of the immense wealth of great art that Istanbul alone consists.
>
> The proposed exhibition could remedy this situation at once. (For one thing, it would doubtless induce many Americans to include Turkey in their next itinerary).

As Heil introduced the idea of an exhibition's impact to draw travelers to the country, he took this opportunity to re-iterate what Rorimer had been lobbying for since the 1950s to make sure art works from all across Anatolia throughout time would be included in the exhibition. Hence, he resumed with the following:

> It [the exhibition] should therefore consist of outstanding masterpieces, with quality not quantity being the determining factor in their selection. In order to enlarge its scope and enrich its variety, the exhibition, in our opinion, should not be limited to Turkish art works exclusively, but should also contain significant tokens of the various cultures which once flourished on Turkish soil: particularly masterpieces of Hittite, Phrygian, Lydian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine art.

Heil continued on with other logistical details that were in line with the points expressed by Grube to Rorimer, probably to make sure that the proposal this time would be lucrative and an agreement could be reached. For instance, expenses of shipping, insurance,

62 Heil was a former colleague of Aga-Oglu at DIA in the early 1930s and he invited Aga-Oglu to organize the first exhibition of Islamic art in the West coast of United States in 1937.

and travel of the accompanying Turkish curators could be borne by the American museums along with a promise to ensure the security of the objects from physical as well as climate related hazards, both during shipment and throughout their display at various museums. Considering how carefully this letter was crafted, outlining all the conditions in a way that would please both parties, Heil might have been informed of the previous exchanges between the MMA and Turkish authorities.[63] Moreover, his experience with previous national treasures exhibitions must have provided him the insight on how to navigate diplomatically for such projects.

To further his point on the prospects of popularity and success of such an endeavour, Heil referred to two exhibitions that his museum hosted previously, with solid data on the visitor numbers and the cultural influence that came out of them. Apparently, Vienna Art Treasures exhibition sponsored by the Austrian Government in 1950 received 245, 418 paid visitors 'while over 250,000 enjoyed the exhibition.' The following year, in 1951, Art Treasures from Japan exhibition sponsored by the Japanese Government received a similar attendance number overall. According to the museum's market research, these exhibitions not only reached local audiences but visitors from neighboring locations also made the trip to the museum, underlying the 'cultural propaganda' impact of these national treasures exhibitions to new audiences. In this sense, Heil's letter functions as real time reporting of the blockbuster exhibition phenomenon as it happened in those years. Heil was indeed quite persuasive by providing all the essential information to lure the Turks into an exhibition arrangement with the United States highlighting the significance of the cultural propaganda that could be achieved through the national treasures exhibitions. Immediately after this correspondence, already on December 21, 1962, Turgut Menemencioğlu, Ambassador of Turkey to the United States, wrote to John Walker, director of the National Gallery of Art, that the Turkish authorities approved in principle the proposal concerning an exhibition of selected art objects from Turkish museums and collections.

The SITES reached out to the MMA as early as January 1963 to see if they were willing to be one of the participants of the planned traveling exhibition.[64] After the SITES settled much of the logistical details and shared the object list and exhibition contract, the MMA agreed to be one of the host venues of what came to be called Art

63 The only record which shows that the MMA shared documents with the National Gallery of Art (NGA) of their exhibition planning in the 1950s is a letter dated February 21, 1963, a year later after Heil's letter to Türkmen, from the executive assistant of Rorimer to John Walker, director of the NGA, sharing with him the copies of their object list of the 1950s proposed exhibition, Rorimer's memo to Taylor dated March 6, 1952, Rorimer's letter to the Turkish Ambassador to the U.N. dated April 28, 1959, and a reply received to this letter on June 8, 1959 from Osman Faruk Verimer, the director of the Ministry of Education, located in the Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA; the same document is also in the NGA Archives, NGA-007, Central Files - Subject Files 1939–1970, box 39, Travelling Exhibitions – Art Treasures of Turkey (Folder 3 of 4).

64 Letter from Mrs. John A. Pope to James J. Rorimer, January 31, 1963, Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

Treasures of Turkey becoming the final stop of a ten-venue touring exhibition from 1966 to 1968.[65]

In conclusion, the 1950s was the start of a new era for Islamic art history in the United States as well as in Turkey for Turkish art. With the establishment of Middle East Studies departments at American universities, the scholarship on the region began to flourish. In the case of Harvard, it led to an experimentation at an early phase where an art exhibition is organized to complement a university course outside of the Fine Arts department. The University and the Fogg Museum collaborated with the Turkish Information Office along with multiple public and private lenders on an exhibition aimed 'to identify visually the characteristics of the Turks.' While the Turkish Information Office was in the position of content provider for the Modern Republic section of The Turks in History exhibition, the same office is seen as a facilitator between Turkey and the MMA during the conversations to organize the first travelling exhibition from Turkey. Although the exhibition idea could not be realised at the time, its recorded correspondence offers valuable insight on the complexity of organising an international loan exhibition. Having different stances and priorities in terms of the exhibition content as well as not having direct or clear-cut guidelines for a project of this scale at the time seem to be the main reasons for the miscommunications and misunderstandings between the two parties. However, all these interactions still served the purpose of cultivating cultural relationships between the two countries. In the following decade Art Treasures of Turkey became the first travelling exhibition from Turkey to the United States showcasing 8000 years of art from Anatolia touring ten venues. While the MMA's vision of displaying works of ancient civilizations of Anatolia, Greek, Roman and Byzantine along with the Seljuk and Ottoman art came true, in contrast to the perceptions a decade earlier, the works of Ottoman art especially from the Topkapı Palace collections received attention more than any others by the press and the public in the late 1960s (Figure 5 and 6).

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the anonymous peer reviewers for their constructive criticism and feedback as well as to Megan Schwenke from the Harvard Art Museums Archives, Sarah Rappo from the Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives and Shannon Morelli and Kelly Schulz from the National Gallery of Art Archives for their generosity in sharing their resources and double-checking references.

65 Letter from James Bradley to James J. Rorimer, September 28, 1965 mentions the MMA 'is seriously considering booking the exhibition TREASURES FROM TURKEY.' In Box 26, Folder 2, Rorimer records, MMA.

Figure 5. The Art Treasures of Turkey - opening (includes Earl Warren), 4 June 1966 (source: NGA-026, Images - General Events). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art Archives

Figure 6. The Art Treasures of Turkey - opening, 4 June 1966 (source: NGA-026, Images - General Events). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art Archives

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EINZELBEITRAG / INDIVIDUAL PAPER

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Ottoman Muslim Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Vienna

Abstract

Once ubiquitous, the fact that Muslim merchants were overshadowed by their non-Muslim counterparts in the later Ottoman Empire helped engender the misconception of an antagonism between Islam and enterprise. Based on a document in the Austrian State Archives, my paper presents evidence of a small 'colony' of Ottoman Muslim merchants in mid-eighteenth-century Vienna. It provides insights into the workings of a community, the motives of those involved, and the dynamics of entrepreneurship and trans-regional networking.

Keywords: Ottoman-Habsburg relations, 18th-century Vienna, Muslim expatriates

1. Introduction

Occasional appearances notwithstanding,[1] the Muslim merchant operating within the Ottoman orbit is generally overshadowed by his non-Muslim peer. A 'reading back' of the situation at the end of the empire, when commerce firmly rested in the hands of non-Muslims, helped consolidate the idea that this had always been the case. In Bernard Lewis' influential book on *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* of 1961, for instance, we read that in the Ottoman 'military empire' the Muslims 'knew only four professions – government, war, religion, and agriculture.' Industry and trade, according to this author, 'were left in large measure to the non-Muslim subjects.'[2] One of Lewis' students, Fatma Müge Göçek, later sought to explain the predominance of non-Muslims in nineteenth-century commerce by the very tenets of Islam. This faith's attitude toward 'making large fortunes through usury,' she argued, was principally negative. Unlike the skilled manual labour of artisans, 'merchants' profits from charging interest were regarded as unearned gain, profiteering.'[3]

One might argue that if these were the social challenges faced by a successful Muslim merchant, his situation may not have been all that different from his Catholic and

1 See e.g. the contributions to Faroqhi/Veinstein 2008, the papers collected in Gilbar 2023, and other publications cited in the following footnotes and the bibliography. I am grateful to Wolfgang Göderle, Ünver Rüstem, Maria Stassinopoulou, and Anna Ransmayr for their feedback on earlier versions of this paper. It reproduces the text of a study researched in 2008 and presented first in 2011 at a conference on 'Ottoman-European Exchanges in Commerce, Finance and Culture' at the University of Cambridge. Due to different priorities thereafter, publication was not pursued.

2 Lewis 1968, 35.

3 Göçek 1996, 34.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 392–404, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-392

Protestant counterparts in fourteenth-century Italy or seventeenth-century Netherlands, as argued by Simon Schama in his book about the latter, aptly titled *The Embarassment of Riches*.[4] By looking at court records rather than the Qur'an for insights, Nelly Hanna was able to paint a very different picture of the Muslim merchant class in Cairo around 1600. Its representatives were, she argued, 'quite comfortable exhibiting their success [and] making public their level of expenditure.' Hanna even went as far as to diagnose 'a cultural attitude diametrically opposed to a Protestant or Calvinist approach, which emphasized frugality even when wealth was available.' According to her, the Islamic culture of Cairene merchants indeed expected 'a certain degree of public and private spending from one who had material means – partly for the benefit of those around him and partly for his own image, which was expected to be in keeping with his social position.'[5]

In addition to Hanna's study, focused on the Red Sea trade, we have also learned of the existence of other Muslim merchant communities involved in maritime trade; such as the Muslim merchants of Thessaloniki that were engaged in commerce with Egypt in the eighteenth century,[6] or the 'Muslim Turks' Panzac found controlling the Black Sea wheat trade with Istanbul at the end of the same century.[7] Relatively little is known about the involvement of Muslims in inland trade throughout Southeast Europe, which grew to great importance during that century. In an influential article of 1960, Traian Stoianovich had highlighted the new prominence of Greeks, Vlachs, and Serbs in the trade of that period, referring to them collectively as 'the conquering Balkan Orthodox merchant.'[8] While that scholar's claim for the predominance of the Orthodox Christian element in eighteenth-century trans-imperial trade remains uncontested, its general recognition may have hindered the study of other groups active at the same time, even if they were numerically less significant.

The presence and activity of a number of Muslim merchants in Vienna in the third quarter of the eighteenth century was in fact well-known to the many researchers of that city's 'conquering Balkan Orthodox merchants.' For, at one point, scholars would routinely make reference to one Austrian State Archives document that provides detailed insight into the commercial milieu of the Habsburg capital at that time.[9] It was in 1766/67 that all resident Ottoman-subject merchants were first registered. When this register was partially published in the 1950s by Polychronis Enepekides, only the section dealing with the Orthodox Christian merchants – the largest community among the Ottoman subjects – was edited.[10] Though the same historian also publicized his archival discovery

4 See e.g. Schama 1987 or Jenkins 1970.
5 Hanna 1998, 106.
6 Ginio 1999.
7 Panzac 1992.
8 Stoianovich 1960, revised in Stoianovich 1992, 1–77.
9 AT-OeStA/HHStA StAbt Türkei V 27-6 ('Conscription deren allhier in Wien sich befindenden Türken und türkischen Unterthanen').
10 Enepekides 1959. The contents of the document were first summarized, with errors, in Popović 1940. For a bibliography that includes other partial editions, see Ransmayr 2018, 247–50.

at a congress in Istanbul in 1951, and also in the proceedings of that event published two years later,[11] the interest in this source among Ottomanist historians has been modest.[12] This is surprising given not only the apparent consequence of a document proving the very existence of a Muslim community of merchants in the Habsburg capital at that time; the level of detail in the information it contains also helps to paint a tentative portrait of the Ottoman Muslim merchant active in 1760s Vienna.

All resident Ottoman subjects were asked a series of questions about their status, livelihood, and future plans. The census official was interested neither in biographical details, nor even in the quantities of goods the merchants traded and the profits they made. This, too, may have deterred some economic historians from further investigating this source. Indeed, to gain insight beyond descriptive analysis, the document requires a reading between the lines and necessitates speculation. Consequently, this paper focuses more on the historical phenomenon of the Muslim merchant 'colony' in Vienna than on economic aspects. It is interested in the causes for its emergence and demise, and in the protagonists of this story, their lives, their motives, and their interaction with their surroundings. Finally, I would like to consider what these findings could mean within the framework of the historiographical paradigm discussed in the first part of my paper.

2. Why Vienna?

Before turning to an analysis of the data recorded in the source, I will attempt to outline the conditions that must have made possible the emergence of a Muslim merchant colony in Vienna in the first place. However limited their number, this city seems an odd-enough site for Muslim merchants – supposedly a rare breed anyway – to establish themselves. Following the failed Ottoman siege of 1683, Vienna came to epitomise the failure of Islamic expansion into Western Europe. Therefore, it should not surprise that the appearance of an Ottoman-Muslim colony in the Habsburg capital coincided with an unusually long period of peace between the two empires, which roughly corresponded to the reign of the Austrian archduchess Maria Theresia (1740–1780). In a similar vein, a long period of peace with Venice (1573–1645) previously seemed to have boosted the Muslim element in trans-Adriatic trade.[13] In light of this dynamic, it may well have been the (largely inconclusive) Habsburg-Ottoman war of 1787–1791 that marked the end of this colony; at least temporarily, as resident Muslims reappear in early-nineteenth-century sources – and art (Figure 1 and 2).[14]

While the presence of an Ottoman merchant community in Vienna was clearly linked to the city's general thriving after 1683, the main incentive for trade on a larger

11 See Enepekides 1959, vii.

12 Studies that have referenced this source with regard to its insight on Muslim merchants include: Do Paço 2010; Do Paço 2011; Do Paço 2013; Do Paço 2015; Numan 2004.

13 See Kafadar 1986, esp. 201.

14 See also Ransmayr and Ruscher 2024.

Figure 1. Johann Adam Klein, Three Turks or Greeks in Augustini's coffeehouse on Rotenturmbastei, 1817, pencil drawing with watercolour, modified by author. Wien Museum collection, inv. no. 96626

scale must have been the trade agreement between the two empires concluded at Passarowitz (Požarevac) in 1718.[15] In the following year, a new Habsburg port was instituted at Trieste, but Austria also sought to develop closer economic ties with its southern possessions and the formerly Ottoman territories in the east. In the following decades, rivers were made navigable, roads were built, and depopulated areas were repopulated. Toward the end of the century, it had become both feasible and profitable to transport grain from Hungary to Italy via Trieste.[16]

Vienna became a hub for trade between western Central Europe and the Ottoman Empire. It became a destination for goods from Anatolia and the Balkans and a marketplace where Ottoman merchants purchased products from Styria, Bavaria, and Bohemia to be re-sold in Istanbul and elsewhere in the empire. Overall, Vienna became an interesting location for Ottoman merchants due to changes in the political and economic landscape. The Adriatic was challenged by the Morava-Vardar corridor in the Balkan interior as the major trade route in the region. The participation of Muslims in this trend appears to have been due to a favourable climate between the two empires, which affected Muslims abroad to a greater degree than it did non-Muslims.

15 On the economic impact of which, see also Rauscher 2021.
16 See Stoianovich 1992, 44–6; also Erceg 1985, esp. 208–9.

Figure 2. Theodor Leopold Weiler, Greeks and Turks in a Viennese coffeehouse (Fleischmarkt 22?), 1824, oil on panel, photograph by Birgit and Peter Kainz, reproduced without frame. Wien Museum collection, inv. no. 58778

In 1766 the Austrian authorities decided to take record of all 'Turkish subjects' in the capital, almost all of whom were merchants. The outcome was a 242-page manuscript entitled *Conscription deren allhier in Wien sich befindenden Türken und türkischen Unterthanen*

(literally: 'A record of all Turks and Turkish subjects in Vienna'). It recorded 268 Ottoman subjects (including a few former subjects) operating in the city. However, at the time of this census, only half of these individuals were actually present in Vienna, which is evidently a sign of the mobility required by their occupation. This group of 135 persons included 13 Muslims (10%), 19 Jews (14%), 21 Armenians (16%), and 82 Orthodox Christians (61%), who were collectively recorded as 'Greeks' on account of their confession.[17] Those present were asked to respond to a number of questions, including their name, place of residence, age, town and province of birth, ethnicity and/or religion, marital status, subjecthood, tax-paying status, business partnerships, ownership of a depot, the place and date of their first entry to and last exit from the Habsburg domain, and their intention to make the area their permanent residence.

The reason for undertaking this census is not explicitly stated, but it must have been driven by the need to clarify the tax-paying status of certain merchants.[18] At the same time, this was also simply an age in which the collection of data for the purpose of efficient administration was becoming more common. A systematic registration of Vienna's foreign subjects had only been instituted in 1751.[19] In 1770, only four years after the *Conscription*, Maria Theresia implemented a general census of Austria's population, in which all houses were first given numbers (called *Conscriptionsnummer*) with a view to facilitating taxation and military recruitment.[20] The *Conscription deren allhier in Wien sich befindenden Türken und türkischen Unterthanen* was clearly (also) a product of its time.

3. Muslim Merchants' Geographies

Having outlined the framework for the emergence of a Muslim colony in Vienna and the probably reasons that led to the creation of the relevant documentation, I will now analyse the information provided in this document as such.[21] What is immediately striking is that, of the thirteen Muslim merchants recorded in 1766/67, all but two hailed from Anatolia rather than the Ottomans' European territories, and that they thus appear to have been Turkish-speakers. This contrasts with the case of Muslim merchants active in Venice in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, who were principally from Bosnia and Albania.[22] Looking at the origins of the merchants recorded in the *Conscription*, there is another striking common denominator: No less than seven of

17 See Ransmayr 2018, 247, for a corrected count.

18 On this point, see also Katsiardi-Hering 2011, esp. 239. The competition that foreigners posed to local merchants may also have prompted the state to desire greater control. The Catholic merchants of Pest, for instance, complained in 1765 of the dominance of Ottoman subjects there, warning that 'Hungary might become Macedonia' (*ibid.*).

19 Mattl-Wurm 1999, 161.

20 Tantner 2007.

21 As the section on the Muslim merchants only covers twenty pages of the manuscript, I will not refer to specific page numbers each time I use data from this source. The information is organised by individual and can thus be easily retrieved.

22 See Pedani 2008, esp. 5–8; Stoianovich 1992, 1, 50–1.

the total of thirteen Muslim merchants recorded hailed from the Mediterranean port of Alanya,[23] and at least two more came from the inland towns of Konya and Karaman, situated across the Taurus Mountains.

Once a thriving cosmopolitan port with a renowned arsenal, Alanya had lost its importance after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571.[24] Though the town remained a significant regional marketplace, the surrounding plain became impoverished and partly abandoned. From the fact that the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi visited Alanya in 1671 and specifically noted the lack of a cloth hall (*bedesten*) in the town, we may infer that Alanya was not a hub in the sale of top-notch luxury goods. The same traveller described the locals as 'very brave and courageous people' and as 'handsome, wild-looking adventurers with swords at their waists and Italian muskets in their hands.'[25] It may have been their homeland's economic desolation and their adventurous spirit that prompted some to seek lucrative work abroad in the following century.

While the Alanya natives registered in Vienna in 1766/67 were apparently not directly related, all but one had a brother or cousin figuring as a business partner in Istanbul. The Ottoman metropolis appears to have been their bridgehead to the commercial landscape of Europe's eastern half. Here, we may see parallels with factors that Stoianovich believed were responsible for the success of his 'conquering Balkan Orthodox merchants' in the eighteenth century: These merchants' businesses were often family affairs, with different members of one family resident in different locales of relevance to their trade. This enabled them to avoid the expensive middlemen or brokers to which non-Ottoman merchants had to resort.[26]

Interesting, if somewhat untypical, is the case of the 40-year-old Alanya native Emir Ahmed Efendi. The course of his career can be reconstructed to a good extent from information provided in the *Conscription*: Born in Alanya around 1725, he established himself at the two empire's Danube border, at Belgrade, around 1750. Apparently without a partner in Istanbul, Ahmed initially resided in Habsburg towns close to the Ottoman border before eventually moving to Vienna in 1762. This was perhaps in order to be closer to the source of his trade. For he mainly exported Viennese embroideries

23 I have used the modern name of the city used since the 1930s, when under Atatürk the old name 'Alaiye" was replaced with 'Alanya'. In the *Conscription* the town's name is rendered as 'Alaja' and 'Allaja'. The old Italian name for the place, Candelore, though still used in the late Middle Ages, seems to have been forgotten by that time.

24 Alanya gained prominence under Seljuk rule in the thirteenth century, when it became the sultan's winter residence and site of an arsenal. After the Mongol invasion of 1242 it changed hands from the Karamanoğulları and the Lusignan of Cyprus to the Hamidoğulları, the Mamluks, and finally to the Ottomans in 1471. After the conquest of Cyprus, Alanya ceased to be, as travellers had described, 'one of the best cities of the world' or 'the greatest spice market for Asia Minor.' For these quotations, see Halil İnalcık, 'Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant'. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3.2 (1960): 131–47, 143.

25 Crane 1993, esp. 164–5 and 167–8.

26 Stoianovich 1992, 53.

to the Ottoman domain, storing them in his Vienna apartment. Luxury goods made of glass, textiles, or metal, such as clocks, were in fact the typical exports of Muslim merchants. They brought cotton, mastic, alum, leather and coffee to Vienna. Currency was also frequently traded.[27]

On average, the Muslim merchants in Vienna were in their mid-30s. This made them slightly younger than the Jewish and Armenian Ottoman subjects registered in the *Conscription*. Typically, they had first crossed the border to Habsburg territory in their mid-twenties. By the time of the census, they had spent an average of two years on Habsburg soil without re-crossing the border.[28] This suggests that they were indeed well-established in Vienna and clearly not constantly on the move. It is because of their remarkably stable situation and perhaps also because of their concentration in a certain area of Vienna, as will be discussed below, that it might be defensible to continue to qualify this group as a 'colony.'

Regarding their itineraries to Vienna, almost all of them first entered the Habsburg domain at Belgrade, which had been a border city since 1739. Only the two natives of Inner Anatolia entered through Trieste. Of these two, Emir İsmail is of particular interest due to the extensive scope of his business activities: Originally from Konya, he relocated to Istanbul and specialised in importing yarn and pipe heads made of sea foam from Ankara to Vienna, while exporting merchandise from Nuremberg and Styria to the Ottoman Empire. Prior to settling in Vienna, he had lived in Venice and Ancona.

Vienna was also not the first station in non-Ottoman territory for other Muslim merchants. The case of the embroidery-exporting Emir Ahmed Efendi, who first resided in Zemun and Petrovaradin – that is, within the orbit of the Belgrade borderland – has already been touched upon. Another Alanya native, Molla Hasan, who specialized in exporting Central European glassware, declared that he had previously resided in Timişoara and Pest. In most cases it is unclear from the document's wording whether the merchants personally travelled to places like Nuremberg, Graz, or Prague, or if they merely purchased goods produced there in Vienna. In the case of a merchant named Molla Hüseyin, however, it is specifically mentioned that he travelled 'throughout the Holy Roman Empire.'[29] This native of Alanya, whose business partner was his brother in Istanbul, possessed no fewer than six depots in Vienna. However, Hüseyin told the census official that he was keen to return to his Ottoman homeland, which he had visited relatively recently.

27 On this point, see Panova 1993, esp. 323.

28 On border-crossing in this period and space, see Pešalj/Ehmer 2023.

29 At the eve of the French Revolution, this 'empire' would still include the territories of the modern nations of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, and Slovenia, as well parts of Croatia, Italy, and Poland.

4. The Social Life of Expats

The *Conscription* is relatively silent with regard to the merchants' interaction with each other, with the non-Muslim Ottoman merchants, and with the locals of their host city. Given that most of the Muslim merchants came from the same region south of the Anatolian plateau, it appears rather likely that they had close bonds. At the same time, we must also consider that they were competitors, trading in very similar goods. Their business partners resided elsewhere, usually in Istanbul, and their partners in Central Europe appear to have been mostly non-Muslims, both Habsburg and Ottoman subjects. From the dates and places of their first and last border crossings, meticulously recorded in the census, we can also establish that none of them made their first entry or last exit at the same time. Hence, they appear not to have travelled together. Perhaps they only met in Vienna after stopping in Istanbul or other places along the way.

It is much harder to establish how they interacted with the Viennese. It is perhaps unlikely that all of them knew German or other languages that would be useful for doing business abroad. This is possibly confirmed by the fact that an Armenian and a Greek compatriot are recorded as having worked as interpreters for Ottoman merchants in Vienna. Two Jews from Sofia and an Armenian from Constantinople (named 'Jean Paul') are recorded as primarily reselling goods purchased by other Ottoman merchants in Vienna, Bratislava and Pest. This may illustrate some of the problems faced by Muslim merchants in Vienna with regard to direct business contact. And although the *Conscription* provides no such hint, it is tempting to imagine that the Muslim merchants may have had contacts with the many local 'ex-Muslims': prisoners from the Habsburg-Ottoman wars who (were) converted to Catholicism. As late as 1766, first-generation converts appear to have lived in Vienna.[30] It is also tempting to imagine that students at the *Orientalische Akademie*, which was founded in 1754 to provide the state with competent interpreters of Eastern languages, may have had contact with Muslim merchants in order to practise their Turkish.

The limited available data offers no ready answer to the interesting question of whether there was a sense of community among Ottoman merchants of different creeds. However, it does seem to suggest considerable interaction between different faith groups. The aforementioned examples demonstrate this at a business level, corresponding to the nature of the document. A curious example of social interaction is the case of Todor Dimitrović, who, according to the census, was the barber to all the Ottoman merchants – a business he ran from his apartment. We also learn that Emir İsmail of Konya was on good terms with the Greek 'Demetr Christoph,' with whom the former stored his goods. Also, the 24-year-old Istanbul Armenian 'Emmanuel Baptista' was recorded as doing business with a certain Hacı Musa, who was in Istanbul at the time of the census, and as having a Greek-sounding assistant named 'Nicolas Phronis.'

30 Tomenendal 2000, 30, relates that conversions under the patronage of members of the royal house are recorded as having taken place at the city palace's chapel until 1746.

Finally, Emir İbrahim of Karaağaç even seems to have found a local partner in the Danube captain named 'Johan Woina.'

That there was more interaction on a personal level than the above suggests may be inferred from the fact that almost all Ottoman merchants lived or worked in the same areas of Vienna: either in the quarter between the St Stephen's cathedral and the Danube – a part of this area once being labelled the *Griechenviertel* (Greeks' Quarter)[31] – or across what is now the *Donaukanal* in the formerly insular suburb of Leopoldstadt. Like their businesses, the Vienna of the Ottoman merchants was oriented towards the Danube.

An indicator of how the Ottoman merchants, Muslim or not, may have managed to survive socially in a foreign and possibly even hostile place like Vienna is found in a letter of Lady Montagu, who visited the city in 1717 (admittedly, a very different time): 'It is true,' she wrote, 'the Austrians are not commonly the most polite people in the world, nor the most agreeable. But Vienna is inhabited by all nations, and I had formed to myself a little society of such as were perfectly to my own taste.'[32]

Perhaps the Ottoman merchants did just that. Their presence does not seem to have been widely regarded as disconcerting. They were just one group among many foreigners.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to revisit the statements cited in the introduction to this paper, particularly those concerning the supposed unbridgeable gap between careers in the military, religious institutions, and trade. All of the Muslims registered in 1766/67 provided their names to the census official alongside certain titles. These were not hereditary aristocratic titles, which did not exist in this form in the Ottoman Empire, but titles (such as *ağa* or *beşe*) that suggest their association with administrative and military institutions, or titles (such as *molla* or *imam*) that betray their training in an institution of higher education, a *medrese*. Among the thirteen merchants registered, *molla* appears no less than five times, *beşe* three times, and *imam*, *efendi*, and *ağa* once each. This seems to suggest that, quite remarkably, six or seven of these merchants probably had a *medrese*-education while several others had connections to janissary regiments, their specifics of which were occasionally recorded by the census official. One has to be careful not to read these titles as indicating much more than that the individuals in question had successfully acquired the tax-exempt status reserved in the Ottoman system for members of the *askerî* class, which included both men of the sword and men of the pen. In the case of the Muslim merchants of Vienna, their titles quite evidently signify their membership in certain networks rather than active military service.

The case of Molla Mustafa Boşnak, a 40-year-old Bosnian who became wealthy importing Macedonian cotton, is of interest in this regard. Recorded as associated with the 97th Janissary Regiment, he also used the title of *molla*. It is an exceptional circum-

31 On which, see also Ransmayr 2018, ch. 4.2.
32 Montagu 1888, 60.

stance that this individual can also be identified in an Ottoman source: His death in H. 1193 (AD 1779/80) was recorded in a local chronicle of Sarajevo, in which Mustafa the merchant was also remembered as once having operated as the *müezzin* of that city's Sultan's Mosque.[33] This seems to confirm that he began his career in religious-educational institutions but eventually opted for trade.

In summary, irrespective of the possible exceptional nature of our case, the source examined in this essay provides clear evidence of a significant number of Muslim merchants conducting business in Vienna and, therewith, outside the Ottoman realm. It also shows that such activity took place in the eighteenth century as well, not merely in earlier times, and that the merchants involved also hailed from Asia Minor and not only from the Balkans. In this case, changes in Ottoman-Habsburg political and commercial relations in the eighteenth century, coupled with a shift in the economic geography of the region from the Adriatic to the Danube, appear to have facilitated their enterprise. Specifically, the 'long peace' between 1739 and 1787 created an opportunity for Muslims to engage in trans-imperial trade from outside Ottoman territory. For at least a couple of decades, they were able to conduct business from the very capital of the Ottoman Empire's former archenemy.

In the course of my research, I also came across cases of Muslim merchants in several other Habsburg towns, most notably Trieste,[34] which remain to be explored. Thus, while the evidence presented here may not prove Lewis and other scholars wrong in declaring that non-Muslims predominated in trade between the Ottoman Empire and other countries, especially in later periods, it does seem to show that Muslims from unlikely places could occasionally work as merchants in equally unlikely places. Perhaps more importantly, it appears to refute the idea that the spheres of military/government, the religious establishment and profit-making professions were separate and unbridgeable. The case of the aforementioned Mustafa from Sarajevo is perhaps the best example of this. Not only was he a former religious functionary associated with military institutions; he also made a fortune in trade with the infidel.

33 Bašeskija 1968, 127. Koller (2008) has used the same source in his portrait of a entrepreneurial Muslim family in eighteenth-century Sarajevo.

34 In AT-OeStA/FHKA NHK Kommerz Lit[torale] Akten 1048 and 1049 can be found evidence for the activity of men with names like Abdullah Ağa, Osman Ağa, Molla Salih, and Mehmed Beşe doing business in Trieste in the 1760s and 70s. Even so, Marco Dogo (1997. 'Merchants Between Two Empires: The Ottoman Colonies of Trieste in the XVIII Century'. Études balkaniques. 3–4, 93) reported only of a 'sporadic presence of Turkish Muslims in Trieste.'

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EINZELBEITRAG / INDIVIDUAL PAPER

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Making Borders from Behind the Scenes: Turkish Opposition Efforts over Mosul during the Lausanne Conference (1922–1923)

Abstract

The current Paper is focused on the Turkish-Iraqi border, specifically on Mosul, which was under Ottoman administration until just before the end of World War I (11th November 1918) and is now within the borders of Iraq. The so-called 'Mosul Question' has long attracted the attention of researchers, who have in particular studied the role played by the international actors – Turkey, Britain, and the latter's allies in the war. Their studies have followed the events and developments of the subject, particularly during the Lausanne Conference, and even afterwards, when the Mosul issue was referred to the League of Nations, resulting in Mosul being placed under British mandate in 1926. The 'main actors' negotiated the fate of this region amidst intense competition that had far-reaching effects on the process of drawing the borders between the newly established Turkish state and Iraq, which was under British mandate at the time. Jordi Tejel's study represents a significant contribution to these studies, as he goes beyond an analytical examination of the roles of the 'main actors' and undertakes an analytical examination at a different level: the local actor, in this context, the Kurds, especially the inhabitants of the border regions. This paper follows in Tejel's footsteps and seeks to deepen research on the micro-historical level. It seeks to trace a 'behind-the-scenes actor,' namely the Turkish opposition, and study its role and impact on the Mosul issue and the process of shaping the 'southern Turkish borders' (*Cenup hudutları*) during the Lausanne negotiations.

Keywords: Mosul, borders, Lausanne Conference, Turkish opposition

1. Introduction

Border and Borderland Studies have gained significant momentum in recent years. In this context, Turkey's various territorial borders – whether in the northwest with Greece and Bulgaria (in the region of Thrace); in the northeast with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan; in the east with Iran; or in the south with Syria and Iraq – represent a fertile field that these studies have recently discovered, leading to the production of several important works.[1] Also, studies on the maritime border began to gain dynamic, in a context where Turkish nationalist discourse is theorizing the concept of the 'Blue Homeland' (*Mavi Vatan*).[2]

1 The most important of these studies are: Boyar and Fleet 2023; Öztan and Yenen 2023; Tejel 2023, and also a specific edition of the journal *Diyâr* (4.2, 2023), with an important introduction by the publishers, Balistreri and Pekşen, entitled 'Borders.'

2 Balistreri and Pekşen 2023, 201.

This current study is focused on the Turkish-Iraqi border, specifically on Mosul, which was under Ottoman administration until just before the end of World War I (11th November 1918) and is now within the borders of Iraq. The so-called 'Mosul Question' has long attracted the attention of researchers, who have followed the events and developments of the subject, particularly during the Lausanne Conference,[3] and even afterwards, when the Mosul issue was referred to the League of Nations, resulting in Mosul being placed under British mandate in 1926.[4] They in particular studied the role played by the international actors – Turkey, Britain, and the latter's allies in the war in negotiating the fate of this region.

Jordi Tejel's study represents a significant contribution to these studies, as he goes beyond an analytical examination of the roles of the 'main actors' and undertakes an analytical examination at a different level: the local actor, in this context, the Kurds, especially the inhabitants of the border regions. He shows how, and to what extent, this actor participated in the process of shaping the Turkish-Iraqi border in the interwar period.[5]

The current study follows in Tejel's footsteps and seeks to deepen research on the micro-historical level, while being aware of the dynamic interaction between that and the macro-historical level. It seeks to trace a 'behind-the-scenes actor,' namely the Turkish opposition, and study its role in the negotiations regarding the attribution of Mosul during the Lausanne Conference.[6]

In the spring of 1921, opposition voices within the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM*) grew increasingly vocal, particularly in response to the growing concentration of power in the hands of the President, Mustafa Kemal. These critics strongly opposed the transfer of extraordinary powers to the '*Başkomutan*' (Commander-in-Chief), which they viewed as a potential precursor to the establishment of a dictatorship.

Already in May 1921, Mustafa Kemal had formed a group of loyal supporters within the Assembly to secure a reliable majority in upcoming votes. This faction came to be known as the 'First Group' (*Birinci Grup*). In response, dissident deputies began to coor-

3 The first session was from 20th November 1922 to 4th February 1923, and the second was from 24th April 1923 to 24th July 1923. Between the two, there was a period during which the conference was suspended, from 5th February to 23rd April 1923.

4 The most important of these studies are: Armaoğlu et al. 1998; Aydın 1995; Coşar and Demirci 2006; Demirci 2010; Keleş 2002; Öke 1991; Özcan 1991; Pursley 2015; Shields 2009; Şimşir 2005; Tejel 2018. Fāḍil Ḥusayn's book is his doctoral thesis that he submitted to Indiana University. It was not published in English but was subsequently translated into Arabic and published as: Ḥusayn 1952.

5 Tejel 2018.

6 The position of the Turkish opposition on this issue has not received the attention it deserves. The Turkish researcher Armaoğlu, in his study 'Lozan Konferansı ve Musul Sorunu,' presented some of the opposition voices in the Grand National Assembly regarding Mosul. However, his presentation 'avoided' certain sensitive points, as we will show in various parts of this article.

dinate their efforts. Under the leadership of Hüseyin Avni Bey (Ulaş, 1877–1948)[7], the deputy from Erzurum, these efforts culminated by the summer of 1922, in the formation of a more structured and visible opposition group within the Assembly, known in Turkish historiography as the 'Second Group' (*İkinci Grup*). In his seminal work *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, Ahmet Demirel characterizes the Second Group as a heterogeneous and ideologically diverse political movement that firmly opposed the authoritarian tendencies of the First Group led by Mustafa Kemal. The Second Group represented a coherent political force with clearly articulated goals and an organized structure. Its members acted as an active parliamentary opposition and sought to influence the political trajectory of the nascent Turkish Republic.[8]

During the Lausanne Conference, the Second Group expressed pointed criticism of the government. In particular, it accused the delegation of making territorial concessions during the negotiations that, in the group's view, contradicted the National Pact (*Misak-ı Millî*). The conflict between the Turkish opposition and the Government in Ankara reached its peak when the Lausanne Conference was suspended and the Turkish negotiating delegation returned to Ankara without having achieved the desired conditions and hopes. What were the positions of the Turkish opposition in Ankara regarding the Mosul issue? What arguments did they use in their discourse? And what impact did the opposition's stance have on the Mosul issue and the process of shaping the 'southern Turkish borders' (*Cenup hudutları*) during the Lausanne negotiations?

2. The Mosul Question in the Period Before the Lausanne Conference

The Turkish-British dispute over the province of Mosul[9] arose in the early 20th century in the context of World War I, which broke out on 28th July 1914. The Ottoman Empire entered the war alongside the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria), who all lost the war against the Allies (Britain, France, Russia, with Italy, Japan the United States and others, joining later). As the war neared its end, the Allies forced the

7 He was one of the most important opposition leaders in the National Assembly, who publicly and harshly criticized the Government and Mustafa Kemal Pasha from the platform of the National Assembly. For more information, see the conclusion of this article and the online Atatürk Encyclopaedia. URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/huseyin-avni-ulas-1877-1948/?pdf=3599.

8 For further details, see the detailed reference work on the history of the opposition during this early period of modern Turkish history: Demirel 1994, 511–31 as well as the article: Finefrock 1979, 3–4, which, despite its age, is notable due to its reliance on numerous important sources.

9 The Ottomans annexed Mosul to their empire in 1517. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Mosul Governorate (*vilayet*) consisted of four districts (*livâ*): the Mosul district, the Erbil district, the Kirkuk district, and the Sulaymaniyah district. Its inhabitants were a mix of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Jews, and Armenians. See: Ḥusayn 1967, 3–5; Shields 2009, 218; Tejel 2018, 4–5. Regarding the Ottoman history of Mosul, see: Bayāt 2007, 376–92.

Ottoman Empire to sign the Armistice of Mudros on 30th October 1918, and imposed their terms, which included the surrender of all Ottoman garrisons in the Hejaz, Asir, Yemen, Syria, and Mesopotamia to the nearest Allied military unit. At the time of signing the armistice, the British were the de facto controllers of Iraq and were close to Mosul. British General Sir William Raine Marshall (1865–1939) therefore demanded that the Ottoman garrison withdraw and surrender Mosul in accordance with the Armistice of Mudros. However, Turkish General Ali İhsan Pasha (Sâbis) (1882–1957) refused to withdraw, arguing that Mosul was under Turkish control when the armistice was signed.[10] However, after consulting his Government in Istanbul, he received instructions to evacuate Mosul and hand it over to the British, while leaving the civil administration to continue functioning in the name of the Ottoman state until the two countries could reach a resolution.[11]

In the meanwhile, a Turkish resistance movement had formed in Anatolia (1919–1923) and established the 'National Pact' during the Erzurum Congress (27th July 1919) and Sivas Congress (13th September 1919). This stipulated complete independence and absolute sovereignty for Turkey over its territories. The first article of the National Pact stated the following:

> The fate of the parts of the Ottoman Empire inhabited by an Arab majority, which were under the occupation of enemy forces at the time of the signing of the Armistice on 30th October 1918 [i.e. the Armistice of Mudros], shall be determined in accordance with the opinions freely expressed by their inhabitants. As for those parts, whether inside the aforementioned armistice line, or outside but which are inhabited by a majority of Ottoman Muslims, who are united in religion, sentiment, and hope, who hold mutual respect for one another, are infused with a love of sac-

10 Historians agree that the British took control of Mosul several days after the signing of the armistice, but they differ on the exact date of the occupation. Fāḍil Ḥusayn mentions that a messenger from British General Marshall arrived in Mosul on 2nd November 1918, with a message requesting that the Turkish general meet his British counterpart south of Mosul. The meeting took place, and the British demanded that he hand over Mosul, but he refused. He mentions that the British entered Mosul and raised the British flag on 8th November. (Ḥusayn 1967, 1–3, 23). Al-Daiwahjī recounts the same events as Fāḍil Ḥusayn, adding that Ali İhsan Pasha left Mosul on 5th November 1918, heading to Nusaybin under the protection of several armoured vehicles, and entrusted the administration of Mosul to Nuri Bey, the deputy governor (al-Daiwahjī 1982, vol. 2, 103). Pursley mentions 3rd November (Pursley 2015, Part 2), while Şimşir claims the British occupied Mosul on 15th November (Şimşir 2005, 859–860). See also: Demirci 2010, 60; Shields 2009, 217. For more on the history of Mosul between the British and Turks before the Mudros Armistice, see Keleş 2002, 1104–7.

11 Fāḍil Ḥusayn substantiates this by referencing the text of a statement delivered by the Deputy Governor on 13th November 1918, shortly before he, too, left Mosul (Ḥusayn 1967, 2–3). Al-Daiwahjī mentions that the Deputy Governor Nuri Bey was also not willing to govern Mosul under the British flag, so he resigned and handed over the administration to Shakir Effendi (al-Daiwahjī 1982, vol. 2, 103). Ali İhsan Sâbis also mentions this in his memoirs (Sâbis 1991, vol. 4, 317–8). See also: Göyünç 1998, 48.

> rifice [for the common homeland], and fully observe the ethnic and social rights within their surroundings, they form, both in reality and politically, a totality that shall not be divided for whatever reason.[12]

Under this first article of the National Pact, the Turks acknowledged that regions with an Arab majority should determine their own fates according to the will of their people. However, the subsequent section of the same article excluded those areas 'inhabited by a majority of Ottoman Muslims, who are united in religion,' and affirmed their affiliation to Turkey. While the article did not specify these regions by name, various historical documents indicate that what was intended was the Mosul Vilayet.[13] Consequently, Mosul became a disputed area between the Turks and the British. The Turks considered the British seizure of Mosul to have occurred after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros on 30th October 1918 and thus viewed it as a violation of Turkish sovereignty. As for the British, they considered Mosul to be under their de facto control and did not accept the Turkish objections.[14]

After the World War I ended (11th November 1918), the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the Treaty of Sèvres (10th August 1920), which, amongst other things, required it to cede its Arab territories, including Iraq.[15] However, it is important to note that although Sultan Mehmed VI Vahîdeddîn (reigned 1918–1922) signed the Treaty of Sèvres, the newly formed alternative government in Ankara, which achieved historic victories over both the Greeks and the Allies, refused to ratify this treaty, forced negotiations and came up with a new treaty – that would be known as the Treaty of Lausanne –, resulting in momentous repercussions for the entire history of Turkey, including the issue of Mosul.[16]

3. The Mosul Question at the First Lausanne Conference

In November 1922, Turkish newspapers reported that the Turkish negotiating delegation had moved to the Swiss city of Lausanne.[17] On 20th November 1922, the victorious parties in World War I (at the head of which were Britain, France, Russia, and Italy), along with Greece, met with the Turks at the Montbenon Casino in Lausanne to

12 ATASE, Atatürk Collection, Box 23, Folder 50, Document 50–6,7 (Misak-ı Millî Beyannamesi, 28 Kanunusani 1336 (28/1/1920) §1). The translations from Ottoman, Turkish and Arabic are by the author.

13 One of these, for example, is a statement delivered by Mustafa Kemal before the National Assembly on 24th April 1920. In it he mentioned that the Mosul district, the Sulaymaniyah district, and the Kirkuk district fall within the borders of the National Pact. Refer to the text of his speech in: Göyünç 1998, 48; Sonyel 1986, vol. 2, 296.

14 Ḥusayn 1958, 39; Ḥusayn 1967, 25; al-Najjār 1953, vol. 1, 398; Shields 2009, 218–9.

15 Ḥusayn 1958, 39–40; Ḥusayn 1967, 10; al-Najjār 1953, vol. 1, 393–4 and 421–2.

16 Demirci 2010, 58; Ḥusayn 1967, 12.

17 *Hakimiyet-i Milliye Gazetesi* (Thereafter: HM), 3/11/1922; 6/11/192; 21/11/1922; 23/11/1922.

negotiate a peace treaty.[18] Leading the British delegation was Foreign Secretary George Curzon (1859–1925) and the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, Horace Rumbold (1869–1941). The Turkish delegation, consisting of over forty members, was headed by Foreign Minister İsmet Pasha (İnönü) (1884–1973) and Rıza Nur (1879–1942). They were in constant communication with the Government, the National Assembly, and Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) (1881–1938) himself, coordinating the negotiation process with them.[19]

The complexity of the Mosul issue became apparent from the outset of the conference. Curzon and İsmet Pasha agreed to discuss the matter in bilateral sessions and to resolve the core points between themselves before presenting them to the conference's delegations. This was intended to ease the negotiations and facilitate in bringing about a peace solution within just a few weeks.[20] However, the two sides disagreed from the start, even regarding the nature of the dispute over Mosul. The British envoy and Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon viewed the issue as a border dispute concerning the demarcation between the mandated Iraq and Turkey. However, the head of the Turkish delegation and then Foreign Minister İsmet Pasha, made it explicit that the matter was not a border issue but rather concerned the legal status of the Mosul Vilayet, since it was only occupied after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros on 30th October 1918, i.e. in violation of Turkish sovereignty and of the National Pact to which the Turks adhered.[21]

Both parties sought to convince each other of their rightful claim to Mosul based on ethnic, economic, political, and geographical arguments.[22] Oil also played an impor-

18 The Turkish researcher Demirci mentions that Russia was invited to attend the conference at the request of the Turks in order to garner Russian support against the Allies. (Demirci 2010, 58).

19 A picture of the members of the delegation along with their names are in the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper, dated 27/11/1922. Also in: Özel et al. 1993, 1.

20 The Turkish researcher Demirci suggests that this proposal came from Curzon, who was seeking to ensure British interests without engaging in open competition with the other Allies or causing a rift with them. See: Demirci 2010, 58.

21 Demirci 2010, 60; Ḥusayn 1967, 3 and 25; Shields 2009, 217.

22 *Gizli Celse Zabıtları* (Thereafter: GCZ), 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1946. Among other sources, this study relies on meticulously recorded minutes of closed sessions of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Gizli Celse Zabıtları)*. The Assembly held the first of these closed sessions during the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923), and this tradition has continued to this day. In these closed sessions, the Assembly discussed the most important political, military, security, economic, and financial issues in the history of the Turkish nation, including, for example, the organization and coordination of the War of Independence, the issue of the caliphate and sultanate, the National Pact (Misâk-i Millî), and many other issues. The issue of the southern borders, i.e. the 'Mosul Question,' occupies several hundred pages of these minutes. The content of these sessions and the statements of the members of the Turkish delegation sent to the Lausanne Conference remained secret and were not revealed at the time. However, they were preserved in the state's archives and were later compiled and published in a five-volume collection. In this study, I rely on the fol-

tant role in the negotiations, with both the Turkish and British sides trying to use it as leverage. But the attempts by both sides did not yield any results, and the negotiations became marked by tension and hostility, threatening to collapse the conference on multiple occasions.[23] It appeared that the signing of the Lausanne Treaty and the achievement of global peace were dependent upon the resolution of the Mosul issue.[24] As a result, the negotiating parties began to discuss alternative options, one of which was the idea of excluding Mosul from the Lausanne discussions and attempting to resolving it through direct negotiations between Britain and Turkey.[25] The British – supported by the Allies – also threatened to refer the issue to the League of Nations if the Turkish side did not cooperate,[26] and this is indeed what happened. When the Turkish side refused to respond to the repeated warnings and pressure,[27] Curzon took the decisive step and, on 25th January 1923, wrote to the League of Nations, requesting that the Mosul issue be transferred to its jurisdiction on the grounds that the matter was threatening global peace and affecting international relations.[28] Curzon's letter to the League of Nations came at a time when the British were monitoring suspicious preparations and movements by the Turks and feared that the Turks might launch an attack on the borders to resolve the issue by military means.[29] The other Allied countries supported Curzon's move and assured the Turks that they would face the combined Allied forces if they attempted to seize Mosul.[30]

The Allies subsequently presented a draft treaty to the Turks, the full text of which was later published by the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper in its issues dated 8th and 9th February 1923. Among the conditions imposed by the Allies regarding borders was the ceding of Karaağaç to the Greeks.[31] As for Iraq, the draft treaty referred the Mosul issue to the League of Nations.[32] Additionally, there were other stringent clauses concerning the judicial, financial, and economic systems.[33]

Under the serious pressure and threats to halt the negotiations, the Turkish position underwent a pivotal shift. Various archival documents confirm that a meeting took place on 4th February 1923, between the Turks and the Allies, just hours before

lowing publication: Büyük Millet Meclisi (ed.), *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları*. 5 vols. Ömer Ali Keskin wrote an introductory article on the circumstances surrounding the creation of these documents and the most important topics they cover: Keskin 2015.

23 HM, 28/1/1923; 29/1/1923.

24 HM, 5/1/1923.

25 Ḥusayn 1958, 15; Ḥusayn 1967, 38–9; GCZ, 6th March 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 203. For further details on the various proposals and attempts made during the negotiations, see: Armaoğlu 1998, 121–32.

26 HM, 29/11/1922.

27 HM, 1/1/1923, 2; 26/1/1923; GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1496.

28 Ḥusayn 1967, 33; HM, 28/1/1923, 28.

29 HM, 26/1/1923.

30 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 98; HM, 31/1/1923.

31 HM, 26/1/1923; 8/2/1923, 2; 9/2/1923, 2.

32 HM, 8/2/1923, 2.

33 HM, 31/1/1923.

Curzon's departure from Lausanne and that, on that day, the Turks were forced to make concessions.[34] However, the Turks did not actually sign the draft treaty presented by the Allies – details of the crucial day of 4th February and the shifts in the Turkish positions will be discussed further below.

The British delegation left Lausanne on the evening of the same day, 4th February 1923, followed by the remaining delegations, including the Turkish one. The *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper announced in its issue dated 6th February 1923, that the Lausanne Conference remained fruitless.[35]

4. The Mosul Question and the Role of the Opposition during the Suspension of the Lausanne Conference (5th February 1923–24th April 1923)[36]

Upon arriving in Ankara on the morning of 21st February 1923, İsmet Pasha immediately attended a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then went to the National Assembly, where a closed and extended session was held. During this session, İsmet Pasha presented a detailed report on the Lausanne Conference and then had a prolonged private meeting with Mustafa Kemal Pasha.[37] This was the first session of the National Assembly, which was followed by several more sessions. However, as was reported in the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper, the statements and clarifications made by İsmet Pasha and the rest of the Lausanne delegation to the Assembly were at the time surrounded by strict confidentiality and secrecy, and reporters were unable to obtain any information about them.[38]

34 Among these archival documents are the minutes of the secret session of the National Assembly, especially İsmet Pasha's statement to the Assembly after his return to Ankara on 21st February 1923. GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1510.

35 HM, 6 Şubat 1923 (6/2/1923). Some have debated whether the Lausanne Conference ended or was merely suspended. In reality, there was no official notification that the conference had stopped, so from a theoretical, legal perspective, the conference did not come to an end but rather was suspended. Banken 2014, 422, fn. 29. In fact, all the Allied delegations, as well as the Turkish delegation, left their secretaries in Lausanne. GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1502.

36 I should point out here that the discussions in the National Assembly were extensive and complex, covering many other points of great importance and sensitivity. This study examining the Assembly's reports, spanning thousands of pages, in search of those pertaining specifically to Mosul, and it aims to show solely what is related to this issue. In fact, it limits itself to only the most significant sessions and opinions on this matter. However, it should not be understood that the Mosul issue was the only topic discussed by the Assembly, even though it occupied a considerable portion of the discussions.

37 HM, 20/2/1923; 21/2/1923; 22/2/1923; GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1493–506.

38 HM, 23/2/1923.

4.1. Facing the Opposition: The Closed Session of 21st February 1923

In his extended statement before the Assembly on 21st February 1923, İsmet Pasha gave details of the negotiations of the Lausanne Conference and confirmed that, despite the Allies' pressures, the Turkish delegation had refused to sign the draft treaty presented by the Allies and had not committed to any of its terms.[39] İsmet Pasha then explained that upon returning to Ankara, the Lausanne delegation had met with the Government, and together they had analysed the text of the proposed treaty thoroughly and developed a strategy to follow, should the conference resume. He emphasized that both the delegation and the Government were in agreement that the proposed treaty was unacceptable in terms of economic, financial, and territorial matters, and thus they rejected the draft treaty as a whole. However, at the same time, they both acknowledged that rejecting the treaty in its entirety would result in the conference being terminated permanently, thereby ending the peace process and leading to war breaking out again. Therefore, the proposed strategy involved identifying issues where it was difficult to find agreement with the Allies and seeking to exclude these from the negotiations, while focusing on achieving more important matters. He clarified that both the delegation and the Government had decided to pursue this approach, aiming for maximum alignment between the Allies' interests and the National Pact, particularly concerning border issue, while at the same time seeking to secure the greatest possible benefits in other areas, such as finance, the economy, and administration. He added that he personally believed that no matter how extensive the national territory and borders were, this alone would not ensure security and a good quality of life for the Turkish people. Therefore, the core issue was for the Turkish nation to live, as every other free nation does, in an independent Turkish homeland.[40]

During İsmet Pasha's explanations, there were questions in the Assembly about the true state of the Mosul issue. İsmet Pasha responded that the Mosul issue would be suspended, with attempts being made to settle it through bilateral negotiations with Britain within a year. If no agreement was reached, the delegation wanted to move closer the Allies' viewpoint and by some means find a resolution, such as by referring the matter to the League of Nations.[41] İsmet Pasha then added that the delegation awaited the Assembly's opinion on this strategy. If the Assembly approved it, the delegation would exclude the border issues and focus on other vital matters. He drew the Assembly's attention to the fact that the delegation did not recommend halting negotiations and calling for war. Instead, he advocated for discussing border and other critical issues according to the outlined plan and working sincerely to ensure the country's internal and external security. The delegation believed that following this plan would fulfil all the Turkish demands related to finance, economy, and administration.[42]

39 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1497.
40 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1509–10.
41 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1510.
42 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1510.

Following this, many opposition voices rose in the Assembly, the first being that of Hüseyin Avni, the deputy for Erzurum, who organised and became one of the key leaders of the opposition group. He objected to the proceedings, deeming them a 'belittling of the Assembly,' and stated that while the delegation had the right to think, it was obligated to present matters to the Assembly and not make decisions without consulting it. He also demanded that all members of the negotiation delegation be present and take turns in presenting their statements, and that the Assembly hear from the Minister of Finance, as the proposals brought by the delegation would utterly destroy the state's finances, leaving the Turkish state unable to develop thereafter. Amidst loud chanting and applause in the Assembly, Hüseyin Avni added that dividing the issues under negotiation into primary issues related to finance, the economy, and administration, and secondary ones related to borders, was a European negotiating trick; for the Turks there were no financial issues and border issues etc; rather, the issue was one of independence as a whole, and the Assembly would not discuss independence based on these classifications.[43]

After this, İhsan Bey (Eryavuz, 1877–1947), the deputy for Cebelibereket – a city in Turkey still known by this name – intervened and emphasized the consequence of this decision on Mosul, since losing Mosul would allow the British to create a Kurdish issue there and incite unrest in the region however they wished. He therefore saw two possible solutions: either make peace with the condition that Mosul remains Turkish or go to war over it.[44]

Hüseyin Sırrı (Bellioğlu, 1876–1958), the deputy from İzmit,[45] focused on the importance and significance of the National Pact to the Turkish people, stating that the principles of the pact were engraved on the heart of every Turk; the Turks would not accept the draft proposed by the Foreign Minister, İsmet Pasha, as it ceded Mosul and thus violated the National Pact. He demanded that the delegation members resign from their positions or else the Assembly would dismiss them forcibly.[46]

Faced with the rising voices of opposition, Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay, 1881–1964),[47] – the Chairman of the National Assembly and Prime Minister at the time – intervened. He explained that the commission had analysed the financial, economic, and military issues in the draft treaty, as well as the matters related to the straits and borders, weigh-

43 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1511–2.

44 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1525.

45 He was particularly opposed to state control over economic institutions and advocated privatization. He was excluded from the elections for the second term of the National Assembly, but he continued his opposition and was arrested in 1940 while distributing opposition leaflets. He was given a 9-year prison sentence for incitement against the Government, being released in 1949. He passed away on 28th September 1958 in Istanbul. Akkurt et al. 2013, 152–3.

46 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1514–5.

47 Hüseyin Rauf Bey was the Prime Minister (12/7/1922–4/8/1923) and the Chairman of the National Assembly (*İcra Vekilleri Heyeti Reisi*) during the period of the War of Independence. For more information about him, see the conclusion of this article and the online Atatürk Encyclopaedia, URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/huseyin-rauf-orbay-1880-1964/.

ing the resulting losses and benefits. As a result, it had then prepared a plan of action. Hüseyin Rauf warned that this plan was based on important considerations: despite all the efforts of the Lausanne delegation, the Allies still refused to grant the Turks economic independence, and in addition, the Turks faced significant resistance on the issue of borders. He added that the commission knew it was impossible to achieve a peace settlement that met all Turkish hopes, and stated that, to avoid the negotiations being fruitless, the commission saw the need to make some concessions to the Allies, in particular in relation to Karaağaç,[48] which was primarily an economic issue. As for Mosul, this would be deferred for a year and would be resolved by gaining the support of the inhabitants (Arabs, Kurds, and Turks) and distancing them from the British. Hüseyin Rauf further mentioned that the Government had also considered the possibility of declaring war and that the army was ready, but the question remained open about the duration of the war and whether it would yield any result. He noted that after considering all these points, the commission had agreed on a plan of action based on these concessions. In return, such a settlement would mean the withdrawal of Allied forces from Istanbul and the achievement of national independence for the Turks, including financial independence, judicial independence, and economic independence.[49]

The discussion became heated, turning into mutual accusations, so Mustafa Kemal Pasha asked the Assembly for permission to explain his viewpoint. He emphasized that the delegation had, in no way, accepted the draft treaty proposed by the Allies. They had merely come to discuss the matter with the Government, and both the delegation and the Government had agreed on this plan of action and on finding a conciliatory basis to ask the Allies for peace. He continued that the only reason the delegation was standing in front of the Assembly today was because of the issue of borders. The delegation and the Government had decided to accept certain border issues with modifications, to exclude others entirely from the text, to sign the treaty with these changes, and to enter into a peace process. The intended amendments were: firstly, to concede Karaağaç, and secondly, to leave the Mosul issue to be settled between the British and the Turks within one year. A decision had to be made on those two fundamental issues. In return, all financial and even economic issues that were unacceptable will be removed from the proposed treaty. Mustafa Kemal made clear that, in reality, he saw no harm in this approach; rather, he saw it as being beneficial, because everyone knew that refusing this option and insisting on Mosul meant going to war. Hence, the question to consider was whether there was any benefit in postponing the Mosul issue for a year to be negotiated with the British bilaterally, while entering into a peace treaty and avoiding war. Mustafa Kemal added that what the Government and the delegation needed today was a single decision: to resolve the Mosul issue by either accepting or rejecting it, as the national interest required this decision.[50]

48 This is the Edirne/Adrianople train station, located today on the border where the three countries, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece, meet.
49 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1517–9.
50 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1522–3.

Mustafa Kemal also opposed those who had accused the delegation and the Government of abandoning the National Pact. He clarified that the issue of borders and territories was addressed by the National Pact in Article 1, but that the National Pact did not, in any way, mark out the borders in this way or that. Rather, the delineation of the borders should only happen according to the benefit of the nation and the Government's sound perspective. Therefore, there was no conflict with, or infringement of the National Pact; on the contrary, all the Pact's provisions had been respected.[51]

Several deputies then objected to Mustafa Kemal's statement. Ahmet Nebil Effendi (Yurter, 1876–1943), the representative of Karahisar, recalled that at the last session of the Lausanne Conference the Turkish delegation had already announced that the settlement of Mosul would be postponed for a year, and the newspapers had confirmed this. Mustafa Kemal replied that the newspapers could write what they wanted, but what he was now hearing came from the Lausanne delegation itself. Hüseyin Sırrı Bey objected to Mustafa Kemal's criticism of those who talked about the incompatibility of the proposals regarding Mosul with the National Pact, saying that he was sure of what he was saying and that he himself was one of those who helped to write the Pact, to which Mustafa Kemal replied: 'I wish you hadn't written. You have caused us a lot of trouble. Today you have done nothing but say something that is contrary to certainty.'[52]

Zeynel Abidin (Atak, 1879–1939) the deputy for Lazistan, commented with some degree of derision that it seemed that the Pasha and the negotiating delegation had disregarded the mandate given to them by the Assembly and believed they could redraw the map of the homeland as they pleased. He added that if the delegation had neglected their consciences and their minds were sleeping, they would not have achieved any less than the peace proposal they had presented. He further stated that Mosul was a part of the homeland and must be reclaimed by the sword and not left under occupation.[53]

The session continued with rising opposition voices and ended with the signing of formal demands calling for the provision of sufficient information to the deputies of the Assembly, as well as the printing and distribution to the members of the draft treaty presented by the Allies.[54]

51 Here, Mustafa Kemal was going against his earlier statements on the matter made to the National Assembly on 24th April 1920. He then mentioned that Mosul, Sulaymaniyah, and Kirkuk were within the borders of the National Pact. See the text of his speech in: Göyünç 1998, 48; Sonyel 1986, vol. 2, 296. Compare this with the citation provided by Armaoğlu, which only presents a brief portion of Mustafa Kemal's words. Armaoğlu does not include what Mustafa Kemal said about the National Pact not defining specific borders nor that the demarcation of borders should happen according to the nation's interests. Nor does he include Mustafa Kemal's statements about exchanging Mosul for financial and economic matters. Instead, Armaoğlu notes in the conclusion of his study, that the Government and Mustafa Kemal focused on achieving full independence in political, economic, financial, administrative, and judicial matters. This is not shown in relation to the issue of suspending the Mosul question. Armaoğlu 1998, 139, 152.

52 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1524.

53 *Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1526–7.

54 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1528–32.

4.2. Facing the Opposition: The Closed Session of 4th March 1923

Following this first session, there were further closed sessions of the Assembly, with İsmet Pasha and the other members of the Turkish delegation to Lausanne presenting their statements and discussing with the Assembly all the military, economic, border, and other issues from the Lausanne negotiations.[55] On 4th March 1923, the topic of Mosul was again raised, sparking debate in the Assembly. İsmet Pasha mentioned that the Lausanne Conference had started on 20th November, a week later than the initially planned 13th November.[56] He said that during this period, the British had worked to unify the Allies' position before the negotiations began and had sought to settle the issue of the islands, the Syrian borders, and the Mosul issue by way of consensus among themselves. He noted that they were keen not to provoke any rivalry among themselves. As a result, the Turks were not facing only the British on the Mosul issue; rather, the other Allies also considered themselves closely involved with the Mosul issue.[57]

İsmet Pasha's dramatic portrayal of the delegation's struggles, did not stop opposition voices again rising, so Hüseyin Rauf took the floor and tried to convince the Assembly of the validity of the decision to suspend the Mosul issue. He emphasized that Mosul belonged to the Turks, but the purpose of suspending the matter now was to follow a course of action that would allow for negotiations to resume in order to bring about changes in vital issues for the Turkish homeland and to lead to a peace settlement without war.[58]

Hüseyin Rauf also pointed out another crucial point: as long as the negotiations remained suspended, the Armistice of Mudanya (11th October 1922) would remain in effect with all its provisions, including foreign troops remaining in Istanbul and the surrounding area. However, if a peace treaty was concluded, this would mean that the Armistice of Mudanya would be cancelled and foreign troops would withdraw from Istanbul, the Greek army would be disbanded, and the Turkish position would be much stronger than today. Then the Government and the Assembly would be in a better position to reclaim Mosul. Therefore, the best option was to temporarily remove the Mosul issue from the peace negotiations and address it with the British within a year. Hüseyin Rauf added that extending the suspension of the conference was not in the

55 HM, 4/3/1923.

56 The Allies had agreed to delay the conference for a week, but İsmet Pasha was not informed of this postponement. As a result, he and his delegation found themselves standing before closed doors in Lausanne. Later, on 23rd November the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper published İsmet Pasha's protest, in which he stated that he had left his army and come to Lausanne for the peace conference, only to find no one there! The matter did not stop at this, as the same newspaper confirmed that the conference had actually begun on 20th November, but until that moment, the Turkish Government had not received any official or unofficial information regarding the start of the conference. HM, 22/11/1922; 23/11/1923.

57 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 93–95.

58 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 104–6.

Turks' interest at all, as at any moment there could be an incident in Istanbul or on the borders, and the state's security and the nation's safety would compel the Government to respond with military action. This posed a very serious danger with unforeseeable consequences. Thus, the Government did not support prolonging this suspended situation and proposed returning to the negotiating table to try to achieve success through the conference. If these efforts failed, then the Government and the Assembly could discuss going to war.[59]

Despite his lengthy arguments, Hüseyin Rauf could not convince the opposition voices, and once again, Hüseyin Avni's voice was the loudest. He was astonished that the delegation and the Turkish army, at the peak of its capabilities and victories, should settle for 'half a peace,' and he urged the delegation to avoid this trap and not deceive itself with the hope that Mosul could be reclaimed after a year. He questioned disparagingly what would make the British give up Mosul tomorrow when they are clinging to it today. He added that if the Turks could not recover Mosul, it would be a disgrace to give it away for free. He warned that the Turks were unwittingly giving the British time to gather their forces and attempt to establish a Kurdish state on those lands, fragmenting the land of the Turks. He warned that the danger would become greater and would threaten all of Anatolia, especially if the British worked towards establishing an Armenian state, reviving the Armenians' dreams of their great state. Hüseyin Avni then declared his categorical rejection of what he called the 'false peace,' which he saw as 'a humiliation for the nation.' He directly addressed İsmet Pasha, demanding that he lead his army, raise his spear, and march with his banner to protect Turkey's borders. Following this, the Assembly erupted in cheers and voices of support, calling on İsmet Pasha to go to Lausanne and take his army and cannons with him.[60]

4.3. Facing the Opposition: The Closed Session of 5th March 1923

Discussions in the Assembly continued the following day – 5th March 1923 – with the members of the Assembly offering their opinions on the Mosul issue. Hüseyin Sırrı Bey, the deputy for İzmit, raised his voice in opposition to the Government's plan. He then gave a detailed account of Mosul's history and presented various arguments to confirm the affiliation of Mosul, part of which was inhabited by Turks and a larger part by Kurds. As such, it fell outside the area occupied by an Arab majority. Thus, the Turkish claim was legitimate, and Mosul and its surrounding areas were an indivisible part of the Turkish homeland. Acting otherwise, even by just delaying the issue for a year, would mean failing to adhere to the National Pact, and anyone daring to do so should be punished. Hüseyin Sırrı Bey concluded by endorsing Hüseyin Avni's views expressed on the previous day and warning of the danger of British control over Mosul, as they would then work to establish a puppet government that they could direct as they wished, thereby creating a source of conflict and unrest throughout the region.

59 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 106–7.
60 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 112–4.

Simply by forming this fake government in Mosul, they would encourage the Kurds in Iran to join that artificial state, and the same would happen with the Kurds of Turkey. This is despite the fact that they worked alongside the Turks and sacrificed their lives and their children alongside them.[61]

In fact, the Kurds of Mosul represented a card that various parties sought to exploit. The British, in particular, used them as a means of pressure on both Iraq and Turkey, repeatedly reminding each side during negotiations that the question of the region's final status had not yet been definitively resolved. For their part, the Turks conducted an active propaganda campaign linking the Turks and the Kurds – both of whom were Sunnis – under the banner of Pan-Islam. Their aim was to prevent the spread of Kurdish nationalism, which was being supported by Britain. The Turks also had a party in Mosul that was loyal to them, and they would send secret messages to their supporters, offering rewards for distributing pamphlets, organising protests, and raising Turkish flags.[62] Several Turkish military officers were active in the area, among them an Ottoman officer of Circassian origin named Ali Şefik Bey, better known as Özdemir Bey (1885–1934). Then, from October 1922, the Turks amassed their forces on Iraq's northern border. Several military divisions even reached Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar in January 1923, launching attacks on the British camps there, thereby forcing them to evacuate most of southern Kurdistan and make major changes to their policy in the region.[63]

Ali Şükrü Bey (1884–1923)[64] then delivered an extended address on the Mosul question, adding another strong voice to the opposition in the Assembly. He unequivocally rejected the notion that the British would wage war over Mosul. He argued that if the British were able to do so, they would have gone to war when they had the Greeks on Turkish soil, with a force of two to three hundred thousand soldiers who had not yet been defeated. However, Britain would not withdraw troops from Australia or

61 GCZ, 5 Mart 1339 (5/3/1923), vol. IV, 131–3.
See how the Kurds were instrumentalized as a bargaining chip by both the British and the Turkish sides – including both the government and the opposition – to gain leverage in the Lausanne negotiations, in: Ali 1997, 521–34; Ali 2001, 31–48; Kieser 2023a, 180–4.

62 On this, see: al-Wardī 1979, vol. 6, 211–2, and also what the governor of Mosul recorded: al-Qaṣṣāb 2007, 292, in addition to appendices with secret letters that came into his possession, 293–6.

63 Ali 2017, 970–2; Ḥusayn 1967, 231.

64 He was a Turkish military officer, journalist, and politician. He founded and served as the editor-in-chief of the *Tan* newspaper in Ankara, which became a powerful voice of opposition during this period of Turkey's history. He participated in the War of Independence through various activities, including translation, mobilising public opinion, and transporting supplies. He subsequently moved to Ankara and was elected as a member of the National Assembly. He was one of the most vehement opposition voices, delivering 183 speeches in the Assembly, 37 of which were during closed sessions. He was the strongest voice against the Lausanne Treaty proposal, advocating the continuation of the war, if necessary. For more information about his assassination, see the conclusion of this study. URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/ali-sukru-bey-1884-1923 (last accessed 13 August 2025).

elsewhere to open a new front in Mosul. Furthermore, the British Government faced strong domestic opposition that insisted that they withdraw from Mosul and suffice with the lands up to Basra. He noted that the issue of withdrawing from Mosul was debated in the British House of Commons and put to a vote, with the margin of votes not being significant. Ali Şükrü Bey believed that the only reason that those calling for withdrawal failed to win was the hesitation of the Turks, which gave the British hope of annexing Mosul.

Ali Şükrü Bey added that he had heard many questions about whether the National Pact delineates clear and specific borders or not. He clarified that the Government needs a lesson on this matter, as the National Pact did indeed define these borders; every place that was under Turkish control before the signing of the Armistice was within the boundaries specified by the National Pact, amongst them Mosul. He mentioned that the British had demanded the surrender of Mosul.[65] But these demands were not heeded by the Turks, so the British occupied Mosul by force. However, they were forced to withdraw thanks to the efforts of the Turkish garrison. Unfortunately, the Government of Damad Mehmed Adil Ferid Pasha (1853–1923) issued an order to withdraw, and the British reoccupied Mosul. Nevertheless, in reality, Mosul fell within the borders defined by the National Pact, just like Ankara or Sivas, because the Turkish army was present there and had not withdrawn when the Armistice was signed.[66]

The discussion about Mosul in this session became highly tense and was interspersed with shouts such as 'They are selling Mosul' and 'They must renounce this.' The Assembly became completely divided, with the opposition members exchanging insults with the government representatives and the members of the negotiating committee. Words like 'vile,' 'despicable,' 'immoral,' and 'scoundrel' were heard.[67] This prompted the session's chairman, Ali Fuat Pasha (Cebesoy, 1882–1968),[68] to temporarily adjourn the meeting until later that afternoon. At that time, having regained his composure, Hüseyin Rauf Bey attempted to make a decisive statement. He urged the Assembly to look carefully at the option proposed by the Government and the delegation regarding

65 Ali Şükrü Bey does not mention the name of the armistice, but it is clear that he is referring to the Armistice of Mudros. However, the dates he mentions in this context seem inaccurate; the Armistice of Mudros was signed on 30th October 1918, and not on 21st October, like he mentions. Nevertheless, what he states about the demands made on 7th and 8th November aligns with what Fāḍil Ḥusayn mentions about a demand being made on 8th November, after which the British entered Mosul and raised the British flag there. See Ḥusayn 1958, 39; Ḥusayn 1967, 2–5.

66 Armaoğlu does not present Şükrü Bey's statements regarding the inclusion of Mosul within the National Pact, as they directly contradict Mustafa Kemal's statements on the matter. C.f. Armaoğlu 1998, 144–5.

67 GCZ, 5 Mart 1339 (5/3/1923), vol. IV, 131–3.

68 We have seen above that Hüseyin Rauf Bey was the chairman of the previous sessions of the National Assembly, but this session and the final one on 6th March were chaired by Ali Fuat Pasha. He was a childhood friend of Mustafa Kemal and his comrade during the war. For more information about him, see the online Atatürk Encyclopaedia, URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/ali-fuat-cebesoy-1882-1968/ (last accessed 13 August 2025).

Mosul. He then reminded them that the Assembly could not completely disregard the proposed treaty, as rejecting it would mean maintaining the Armistice of Mudanya, with all the associated risks.[69]

4.4. Facing the Opposition: The Closed Session of 6th March 1923

The final closed session of the Assembly, on 6th March 1923, surpassed all previous sessions in terms of the level of its hostility, with the dispute reaching its peak and the opposition voices not settling on the Mosul issue. Mustafa Durak Bey (1876–1942), the deputy from Erzurum,[70] returned and emphasized the danger of a Kurdish state established by the British.[71] Yusuf Ziya Bey (Koçoğlu, 1882–1925), the deputy from Bitlis,[72] who was a Kurd, emphasised that he knew the Kurdish spirit, belief, and faith. In an emotionally charged speech, he pleaded for the Turkish Government to take his words seriously and not allow Mosul to be lost. He argued that, given its geography, ethnic composition, and political and social structure, Mosul should not remain in British hands. He stressed that if Turks and Kurds could not live together in brotherhood, there would be no future for either of them.[73]

Mustafa Kemal, who had previously limited himself to just a few interventions and brief remarks, requested to speak. He noted that the Assembly was in fact unanimously agreed that the treaty proposal presented by the Allies should be categorically rejected, as it completely undermined Turkish independence. If the Allies insisted on enforcing acceptance of the proposal as it stood, the Government, Assembly, and the entire nation were agreed that war would become necessary. However, war should be the last option. Before resorting to war, efforts should be made to achieve peace. Mustafa Kemal clarified that he believed that the Assembly should provide the delegation with a new approach for looking at the peace proposal, and that they should avoid discussing the issue of postponing Mosul, despite its importance, and focus the discussion on administrative, political, financial, and economic issues, and that they should provide appropriate guidance to the members of the delegation so that they could try to achieve the withdrawal of foreign troops and the complete independence of the Turkish nation.

Mustafa Kemal affirmed his complete conviction that the delegation had fulfilled its duty excellently in the negotiations. He urged the Assembly to give instructions to the

69 GCZ, 5 Mart 1339 (5/3/1923), vol. IV, 139–44.

70 Since the opposition did not participate in the second assembly elections in 1923, he left politics and moved into business. For more information, see the online Atatürk Encyclopaedia, URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/mustafa-durak-bey-sakarya-1876-1942/ (last accessed 13 August 2025).

71 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 179–80.

72 He joined the opposition in the assembly and was among those demanding that Mosul remain part of Turkey. He was later accused of participating in Kurdish uprisings, brought to trial, and executed by firing squad. See URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/yusuf-ziya-bey-kocoglu-1882-1925/ (last accessed 13 August 2025).

73 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 189–90.

delegation as soon as possible. If the outcome was to be peace, that would be ideal, but if it was war, there was no room for delay, and the necessary military measures must be taken immediately. Mustafa Kemal then referred to a petition signed by some members of the Assembly, explaining that in essence it aligned with his stated observations. He strongly warned against continuing unproductive discussions, and urged the members to accept his proposal and close the debate.[74]

However, Mustafa Kemal himself could not even quell the criticisms. Ali Şükrü Bey strongly challenged him, accusing him of providing false information. He asserted that the Lausanne delegation had accepted the draft treaty presented by the Allies before consulting the Assembly on the disputed points, and that this draft included suspending the Mosul issue and ceding Karaağaç, although the Turkish delegation had not yet signed it. Thus, the issues of Mosul and Karaağaç had already been settled and the only remaining points the Assembly could object to were judicial, financial, and economic matters. He added that he would reveal another important secret, which was that one of the delegation members, whose name he knew, acting on his own behalf, had informed Lord Curzon, shortly before he left Lausanne, that the Turks also accepted the judicial terms. Ali Şükrü Bey reiterated that the Assembly faced a fait accompli and that the delegation only needed its formal approval, as it could not return to the negotiating table and sign without it. He added that the delegation had in fact accepted the proposal even before consulting with the Assembly and had thus deviated from the Government's instructions and the Assembly's procedures.[75]

Mustafa Kemal responded sharply to these accusations, stating that they were the figment of Ali Şükrü Bey's imagination. He gave an evasive response to what had been said,[76] and then addressed Ali Şükrü Bey directly, warning him sharply that it was not for him to say whether the Assembly's instructions had been bypassed and that only the Assembly had the authority to review whether the delegation had acted against instructions. He added that, although he was not personally present, he knew that the head of the Government had appeared before the Assembly and discussed the matter with it, and that the Assembly had made the only reasonable and correct decision, which was to recall the delegation from Lausanne, believing that they should continue the war. He added that by the time the council had discussed the matter and issued its decision, several days had passed, during which many things had changed. In light of

74 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 200–2.

75 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 203. See the words of İsmet Pasha in his address to the council, as mentioned earlier in this article, where he portrays the suspension of the Mosul issue and the ceding of Karaağaç as a plan of action developed jointly by the delegation and the government, and that he came to present it to the council for consultation.

76 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 203. Armaoğlu cites numerous interventions by the opposition, but he does not present the direct clashes and disputes with Mustafa Kemal. For example, see his presentation of Şükrü Bey's statements, which omit the quarrels with Mustafa Kemal: Armaoğlu 1998, 144–5.

these changes, the head of the delegation requested new instructions. However, there was no time to send that request to the Assembly and await its directives.[77]

A letter from İsmet Pasha to the heads of the British, French, and Italian delegations, dated 4th February 1923, found by Fāḍil Ḥusayn[78] in the British archives, confirms Ali Şükrü Bey's statements. The letter contains the following paragraph concerning Mosul:

> Regarding Mosul, we find it appropriate – and our sole aim is to confirm that this issue will not be an obstacle to concluding a peace treaty – to exclude it from the agenda of the conference so that it can be resolved through an agreement between Great Britain and Turkey within one year.[79]

Fāḍil Ḥusayn states that the attempt of Lord Curzon and İsmet Pasha to reach a mutual solution, occurred on the last day of the first Lausanne Conference. Fāḍil Ḥusayn writes:

> A final attempt to reach an agreement was made by holding an informal meeting in Lord Curzon's room at the Beau Rivage Hotel in Lausanne on Sunday, 4th February 1923, at 5:40 pm. Representatives from Britain, France, Italy, and Turkey attended the meeting. Curzon, driven by a spirit of friendship and reconciliation, declared that he was prepared to postpone the outcome of his appeal to the League of Nations for one year, so that the British and Turkish governments had sufficient time to study the matter in direct and friendly negotiations. He added that he could do this under two conditions: 1) If the two governments failed to reach a direct understanding, the intervention of the League of Nations would be requested; and 2) The current situation in that region must be maintained during the year of negotiations. Curzon

77 This indicates that Mustafa Kemal and the delegation were unable to refer back to the Assembly and most likely acted without consulting it. It seems evident that the Assembly had issued orders for military movements (HM, 1/1923, 26). However, it appears that Mustafa Kemal bypassed the Assembly in this instance, as many things had changed and the delegation had requested swift instructions, making it impossible to refer back to the council. Yet, we do not know the content of the instructions issued without the Assembly's input. Was an order given to halt military movements? It seems that the act of bypassing the Assembly intensified further during the second Lausanne Conference, where Mustafa Kemal directly controlled the decisions through secret telegrams exchanged with İsmet Pasha. For examples of these telegrams, see: No. 643, 18/7/1923; No. 644, 19/7/1923; No. 647, 20/7/1923 in: Şimşir 1994, vol. II, 582–4; 586.

78 Fāḍil Ḥusayn Kāẓim Ḥusayn Al-Anṣārī was an Iraqi historian (1914–1989). He studied at the American University of Beirut where he obtained a bachelor's degree in history in 1943. He later travelled to the United States, where he studied at Indiana University and earned a PhD in 1952 for a dissertation on the Mosul Governorate. Fāḍil Ḥusayn then returned to Iraq, where he held several positions, most notably serving as the President of Al-Hikma University in Baghdad in 1968. Among his most important works, in addition to his two aforementioned books on the Lausanne Conference and the Mosul issue, are *Suqūṭ al-Niẓām al-Malakī fī al-ʿIrāq* (1974) and *Mushkilat Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab* (1975).

79 The text of the letter is from: Ḥusayn 1967, 35.

also said that he had prepared the following draft statement, which he had given to İsmet, and declared his readiness to sign it:

> Regarding the second paragraph of Article 3 of the peace treaty, His Majesty's Government announces its intention not to invite the League of Nations to commence in determining the boundaries between Iraq and Turkey until the end of a twelve-month period from the date of the signing of this treaty. This decision has been made in the hope of a possible resolution of the problem during the aforementioned period through an agreement between the British and Turkish governments, on condition that it is understood by both parties that during this period there will be no change in the current situation in the territories under discussion, whether through military movements or otherwise.

İsmet Pasha announced his acceptance of Lord Curzon's proposal regarding Mosul.[80]

The British diplomat and writer Harold Nicolson (1886–1968), who accompanied the British delegation and was present in Lord Curzon's room during the meeting between the Allies and İsmet Pasha on 4th February 1923, confirms what Fāḍil Ḥusayn has written. Nicolson mentions in his memoirs that İsmet Pasha 'accepts practically all the British claims, but holds out over economics and capitulations.'[81] He also stated that Lord Curzon overlooked the request to refer the issue to the League of Nations, which he had sent.[82]

The 4th February 1923, was a particularly pivotal day vis-à-vis the Turkish stance on the Mosul issue. At the beginning of the Lausanne Conference, the Turks insisted that Mosul belonged to the Turkish nation, and they emphasised, on a number of occasions, that the province and its oil belonged to the Turks and that they would not accept any alternatives.[83] They even rejected Curzon's offers to concede a share of the oil to them in exchange for Mosul.[84] However, in the final days of the conference, under intense pressure from the Allies and the threat of the conference failing, the Turks focused their efforts on accepting less and on the goal of achieving some form of gain. Hence, on this notable day – 4th February 1923 – they ended up offering to cede Mosul to the British in exchange for a share of the oil, as confirmed by İsmet Pasha himself in his statement before the National Assembly. However, in the words of İsmet Pasha, they

80 Ḥusayn 1967, 35–6. See also the following bibliographic data regarding the letter: Foreign Office, *Turkey No. 1 (1923) Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs 1922–1923, Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, *Cmd. 1814* (London, 1923).

81 Nicolson, Harald G., *Curson: The Last Phase, 1919–1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy*. London: Constable, 1934. Quoted in: Kieser 2023a, 196–7. See also further details from Nicolson's memoirs of the difficult meeting on the 4th of February in Kieser 2023b, 212–13.

82 'The Marquess [Curzon] throws in…the appeal to the League over Mosul', Nicolson, Harald G., *Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919–1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy*. London: Constable, 1934. Quoted in: Kieser 2023a, 197.

83 HM, 29/11/1922.

84 HM, 21/12/1922; 26/1/1923.

were compelled to agree to suspend the Mosul issue.[85] A report by Zülfü Bey (Tiğrel, 1877–1940), the deputy from Diyarbakır and one of the advisors in the Lausanne delegation, presented to the National Assembly on 5th March 1923, after the delegation's return to Ankara, confirmed that the Turks were willing to accept a share of the oil, but, the British preferred to suspend the issue, hoping to keep thus both Mosul and its oil.[86]

The meeting on 4th February between the two parties, mediated by the Allies, ended with Curzon withdrawing his letter to the League of Nations and agreement that attempts would be made to resolve the Mosul issue between Turkey and Britain within a year. If it was not resolved during this period, it would be referred to the League of Nations.[87] However, the Turks did not sign this proposal, as Zülfü Pasha later stated in the Assembly, and as Ali Şükrü Bey also confirmed in his aforementioned statement. Nicolson's account also confirms that the signing did not take place.[88]

The dispute between Mustafa Kemal and Ali Şükrü Bey in the Assembly intensified. Ziya Hurşit (1890–1926), the deputy of Lazistan (now Rize), gave support to Ali Şükrü Bey, as did many other voices, and there was so much chaos in the Assembly that some called for intervention to ensure the security.[89] The Chairman of the session, Ali Fuat Pasha then moved on to reading the petitions submitted to the Assembly. Some were signed by individuals, while others were signed by groups of varying sizes. The petition by Kara Vâsıf Bey (1880–1931), the deputy for Sivas, which opposed the resumption

85 This is as İsmet Pasha later recounted before the National Assembly. He stated: 'We could not resolve the issue between us [i.e. in his private bilateral sessions with Curzon]. So they said, 'Let's present the issue to the committee again'. So we agreed and stood before the delegation once more. We said to ourselves, 'Let's reach an agreement with them regarding Mosul and find some solution.' Of course, we could reclaim Mosul by military means, but we said to ourselves, 'If they have certain interests, such as economic development [of the province] or the exploitation of its oil resources, or if they fear that we might incite certain elements against them, let's reassure them and find some solution.' They, too, were seeking a solution so that they could keep the city of Mosul in their hands. 'And since we don't want to hand it over to them for economic benefits or its oil, let them [at least] give us a share [of its oil], as they give to others.' The issue stalled at this point during the discussions of the general session [in Lausanne]. In the end, the Allies stood united against us and firmly and definitively threatened us that they would halt the conference. They forced us to agree on the Mosul issue [i.e. agree to postpone the issue].' GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1496. Regarding the Turks being forced to accept postponing the Mosul issue, see also: GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1501.

86 GCZ, 4 Mart 1339 (4/3/1923), vol. IV, 108.

87 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 203.

88 Regarding this, see also what the Swiss historian Hans-Lukas Kieser reported about the memoirs of Harold Nicolson. Nicolson depicted İsmet Pasha's difficult position, mentioning that Pasha refused to sign the proposed treaty draft and left the hotel. The Allies expected him to return with a positive response, so much so that they delayed their train's departure. However, this was in vain, and the British delegation left Lausanne without İsmet Pasha's agreeing to sign. See: Kieser 2023a, 200.

89 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 204, 208–9.

of negotiations, was signed by sixty deputies and the second in order.[90] As for the petition mentioned by Mustafa Kemal, this was presented by Reşat Bey, the deputy for Saruhan (the old name for Manisa). This was the first in order, having more than 130 signatures.[91]

The votes were then counted and Ali Fuat Pasha stated that 65 percent of the votes were in favour of resuming peace negotiations. He further announced that the Mosul issue would be postponed for one year and would be settled with the British. Then, if no agreement was reached, the proposal previously made by the British would be implemented and the matter would be referred to the League of Nations for settlement. Ali Fuat Pasha then called for the petition to be approved, and announced that 170 out of 190 had approved it, to which Ziya Hurşit remarked, 'Conversely, there were 130 people who abstained from voting.'[92]

5. Conclusion

The minutes of the closed sessions of the National Assembly reveal that a strong opposition had emerged, voicing criticism on various aspects of the Lausanne negotiations – most notably the suspension of the Mosul issue. The opposition included prominent figures such as Hüseyin Avni Bey, Ali Şükrü Bey, and Ziya Hurşit.[93] Yet, despite its strong presence and firm stance on Mosul, the Turkish opposition ultimately failed to assert its position regarding the 'southern Turkish borders' and the incorporation of Mosul into the nascent Turkish state. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the opposition was entirely unsuccessful.

Through sustained political pressure, the opposition managed to restrain the Ankara Government and its delegation in Lausanne from yielding easily to Allied demands and prevented the swift concession of Mosul. It can even be argued that the pressure exerted by the opposition rivalled, if not exceeded, that of the British and their Allies, compelling the Government to seek an alternative to unconditional surrender. The Ankara Government came to believe that deferring the Mosul issue was a strategic solution – one that could persuade both the opposition and the broader public that Mosul had not been abandoned. Mustafa Kemal himself sought to convey this notion, declar-

90 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 211–2.

91 For the text of the petition with all the signatures, see: GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 209–11.

92 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 218–21; HM, 7/3/1923. The second Lausanne Conference began thereafter on 24th April 1923, and the peace treaty was signed on 24th July 1923. The British and the Turks were unable to resolve the Mosul issue through mutual agreement, so it was referred to the League of Nations, resulting in it being ultimately placed under the British mandate. For details on all of this, see: Ḥusayn 1967, 40 to the end of the book. GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1524.

93 These are primarily the individuals associated with the Mosul issue. But there were other opposition figures, some of whom were assassinated. See on the assassination of Mehmet Cavit Pasha: Kieser 2023b, 247–52.

ing: 'Postponing the Mosul issue for a year and avoiding war does not mean neglecting it. Perhaps we can wait until we are stronger to achieve this goal. So let us sign a peace treaty today, and in a month or two, we can resume efforts to resolve the Mosul issue.'[94] The scene described in Nicolson's memoirs vividly illustrates the pressure experienced by the Turkish side: 'İsmet dabs his handkerchief against his lips... 'I can't,' he mumbles wretchedly, 'I can't.' Nicolson remarked, 'It is very painful.'[95]

The Government's response to this mounting internal pressure was strategic and far-reaching. Confronted by growing criticism, particularly over İsmet İnönü's willingness to postpone the Mosul issue in coordination with Britain, the Ankara Government began portraying dissent as a threat to national unity. To counter both domestic opposition and British diplomatic leverage, the Turkish delegation adopted a rigid nationalist discourse, incorporating Kurds into what it termed the 'Turanian race,' in an attempt to construct a unified ethnic identity that would justify Turkey's claim to Mosul. While this framing lacked historical and scholarly credibility, it served as a deliberate political strategy to delay resolution of the Mosul issue and strengthen Turkey's position in negotiations.[96]

As negotiations grew increasingly tense and threatened to collapse altogether – with Britain warning of the failure of the Lausanne Conference and the possible resumption of war – Ankara gradually began to retreat from its initial claim. In a bid to placate internal opposition, the government sought to reframe the issue by asserting that Mosul did not, in fact, fall within the boundaries of the 'Turkish homeland,' and that it had never been explicitly included in the National Pact. Mustafa Kemal emphasized that borders should be drawn solely according to the interests of the nation and the sound judgment of the government. This argument, however, stood in stark contrast to earlier official narratives that had invoked the National Pact to justify territorial claims, thereby exposing a degree of inconsistency in Ankara's position.

Facing a deadlock and with no viable diplomatic or political escape, İsmet Pasha and Mustafa Kemal ultimately bypassed the Assembly altogether. As the Lausanne talks progressed, they increasingly sidelined the legislative body, which prompted further accusations from the opposition of authoritarian conduct. İsmet, often unable – or perhaps unwilling – to obtain instructions from the Assembly, turned directly to Mustafa Kemal for guidance. This centralization of decision-making was exemplified not only in the Karaağaç negotiations with Greece – where İsmet agreed, in consultation with Mustafa Kemal, to accept territorial compensation in lieu of reparations – but also in the informal agreement with Lord Curzon to suspend the Mosul question, reached just hours before the British delegation departed Lausanne on 4th February 1923.

During the Suspension of the Lausanne Conference, the government endeavoured to silence the opposition and succeeded in sidelining it from the 1923 parliamentary

94 GCZ, 21 Şubat 1338 (21/2/1923), vol. III, 1524.
95 Nicolson 1934. Quoted in: Kieser 2023a, 198.
96 Kieser 2023a, 179–84.

elections. This ensured minimal resistance to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne following the conclusion of the second round of negotiations on 24th July 1923.[97]

The fierce conflict between the opposition and the Government within the Turkish National Assembly cast a long shadow over the country's political landscape, generating deep tensions and internal divisions. Over time, these tensions escalated into outright repression, including the prosecution and even execution of political opponents. One prominent case was that of Ziya Hurşit, who was later accused of orchestrating a failed assassination attempt against Mustafa Kemal on 15th June 1926 in İzmir. He was sentenced to death but managed to escape.[98] Hüseyin Avni Bey was likewise arrested and tried before the Independence Tribunal for alleged involvement in the same plot but was unexpectedly acquitted.

As for Hüseyin Rauf Bey, who had resigned as Prime Minister just days after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty and had since aligned himself with the opposition,[99] he was also implicated in the assassination attempt despite being abroad – on a convalescent trip to Austria and Britain – at the time it took place. The court nevertheless convicted him in absentia, sentencing him to ten years in prison, stripping him of his civil rights, and confiscating his property.[100]

An especially dramatic episode was the public confrontation between Mustafa Kemal and Ali Şükrü Bey – an unprecedented event in the history of the National Assembly. The session became so charged that even the Assembly's chairman was unable to restore order and had to suspend the meeting temporarily.[101] Ali Fuat Pasha, who presided over the final session of the Assembly, later recounted in his memoirs that some of Ali Şükrü Bey's remarks were so provocative and sensitive that they were omitted from the official minutes.[102] Ali Şükrü Bey's fate was tragic: after attending the Assembly on 24th March 1923, he disappeared without a trace. His colleague, Hüseyin Avni Pasha, submitted a report to the Government, suspecting political foul play and thereby drawing suspicion toward the authorities.

Following multiple requests by Assembly members and mounting pressure from opposition newspapers, Hüseyin Rauf Bey presented a detailed report in a session on 2nd April 1923, revealing that Ali Şükrü Bey had been murdered by Topal Osman, the commander of Mustafa Kemal's personal protection unit. The Government ordered Osman's arrest, and Mustafa Kemal personally oversaw the operation. Topal Osman was killed in the ensuing clashes, and his entire unit was swiftly disbanded.[103]

97 Kieser 2023b, 245–6.

98 Kreiser 2008, 174, 212–3; URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/ataturke-duzenlenen-suikastler/.

99 *ibid*., 128, 176. Regarding a sharp conflict between Hüseyin Rauf Bey and İsmet Pasha, see: Mango 1999, 357; Uğurlu 2005.

100 URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/huseyin-rauf-orbay-1880-1964/.

101 GCZ, 6 Mart 1339 (6/3/1923), vol. IV, 204, 208–9.

102 See the online Atatürk Encyclopaedia, URL: https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/ali-sukru-bey-1884-1923/.

103 Akyol 2014, 255–6, 272–4; Demirci 2010, 172, Kreiser 2008, 192; Mango 1999, 379–87.

Despite criticisms that the Government had attempted to obscure the full details of the assassination and lacked transparency, the case was closed. Nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding Ali Şükrü Bey's murder remain unclear to this day. His assassination is regarded as a pivotal event in modern Turkish political history. In the aftermath, the weakening of the opposition enabled the emergence of a single-party regime that would come to define the next era of the Turkish Republic.[104]

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104 See: Demirel 1994, especially 598–606; Kieser characterizes this development as laying the foundation for a 'model dictatorship.' Kieser 2023a, 222–3.

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Lawmaking in an Ottoman Frontier Province at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century: The Mufti of Akkirman, His Fatwas and Authority

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Scholarly interest in the role of fatwas in the formation of Ottoman legal norms is on the rise. However, to date, Ottoman historians have largely limited their examination of these sources to the fatwas of chief muftis (*şeyhülislam*) and the muftis of the Arab provinces. No study to date has examined the role of provincial muftis (*kenar müftüsü*) in Anatolia or the Balkans with an eye to both their local context and the larger imperial context of the Ottoman Empire. Existing research tends to accord provincial muftis a minimal role in Ottoman lawmaking, one limited to issuing 'non-binding legal opinions' in the form of fatwas – of interest only for the light they shed on abstract jurisprudential debates. What role did these provincial muftis play in the formation of legal norms in the provinces of the empire? What authority did they have, how did they achieve it, and how did they engage with the central government and local officers? What functions did their fatwas perform? And were the normative pronouncements they offered merely abstractions that circulated among scholars, or did they have a wider bearing on society?

Prior to the Ottomans, muftiship and the issuing of fatwas was a private activity that any qualified scholar could carry out. It thus differed from judgeship, which required an appointment by a state authority. Under the Ottomans, however, by the sixteenth century, muftiship also came to be defined as a position reserved for appointed scholar-bureaucrats, just like judgeship and professorship. By the mid-sixteenth century, the fatwas of the chief mufti were backed by sultanic authority, turning them into binding opinions followed by qadis. Apart from its practical implications, this shift marked a symbolic turn for the Ottoman fatwa. Through the inclusion of muftis in an official hierarchy with the chief mufti at the top, the Ottoman fatwa was no longer the 'non-binding' opinion it had traditionally been in the Islamic jurisprudential tradition. Instead, the fatwa became institutionalized.

This thesis proposes to take these provincial muftis seriously as agents who interpreted and adapted both the learned sharia law and imperial law to augment their own juristic, imperial, and socio-political authority, and in doing so positioned themselves as key players between the centralizing aims of the government, the realities of provincial administration, and the needs of the local populace. Focusing on Ali Akkirmani (d. 1618), the mufti of Akkirman, it explores how the realities of life in an Ottoman frontier province, the ideals of the central government in Istanbul, and the jurisprudential reasoning of muftis like Akkirmani came together to shape the interpretation of law and the formation of legal norms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 432–434, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-432

Relying on a wide range of primary sources, including manuscript copies of Akkirmani's collected fatwas, archival documents, law codes, and historical chronicles, the thesis begins by tracing Akkirmani's life and career as an Ottoman scholar-bureaucrat. Born in the frontier city of Akkirman (near Odesa, in modern Ukraine) in the mid-sixteenth century, he later traveled to the imperial capital of Istanbul, where he studied at Valide Sultan Madrasa, before returning to his hometown to take up a post as professor and mufti which he occupied until his death in 1618. When Ali Akkirmani returned to Akkirman in 1592, he did so as part of what was by that point a highly bureaucratized scholarly hierarchy. As mufti, he issued fatwas on various questions posed by common people, notables, judges, and others; these were collected posthumously in 1630 under the title *Fetâvâ-yı Akkirmani*.

Situated at the mouth of the Dniester River, Akkirman experienced a significant rise in commercial activity in its markets after the mid-sixteenth century. The town's population tripled during this period, with the number of Muslims eventually surpassing the town's considerable non-Muslim population. While the city increasingly became a trade center during this period, its military significance regained prominence after the mid-sixteenth century due to the escalating Cossack threat, which imperiled the Black Sea shores and even the Bosporus. Additionally, frequent reciprocal raids along the frontier shaped the city's daily life and legal issues. The city Akkirmani returned to was home to semi-nomadic Tatars, a familiar presence from his youth, and he was no stranger to the threat of enemy raids. Yet upon his return, he must have felt the impact of these raids had grown more severe and pervasive. As he stepped through the gates of Akkirman's castle, some people may have recognized him as the boy who had left the city two decades earlier. Now in his thirties or forties, Akkirmani had returned as a scholar-bureaucrat bearing imperial and juristic authority as the province's mufti. Akkirmani's background, education, and local roots made him a uniquely distinguished figure in Akkirman's administrative and scholarly landscape (chapter 2).

In this volatile context, he assumed a dual role, both representing the imperial legal framework and, through the socio-political authority he enjoyed through his organic familiarity with the city and its inhabitants, providing an alternative legal platform for the city's residents. The notable abundance of fatwas he issued related to legal procedures, compared to those issued by other provincial muftis, offers an initial indication of Akkirmani's significant involvement in judicial affairs (chapter 3). Several cases derived from fatwas and archival sources demonstrate that he also challenged two governors, helping establish changes to the provincial administration in response to local residents' demands. As a mufti, Akkirmani also served as a legal supervisor or counterweight to the qadi, reminding him of his limits and guiding the proper course of adjudication. This is exemplified in a number of cases, most notably one in which he intervened to check the authority of the local qadi over where holiday prayers were to be held and who could lead them. Beyond his supervisory role, Akkirmani acted as a source of reliable information on religious and legal affairs for ordinary people and as a legal advisor for scholars and qadis (chapter 5). Life on the frontier posed many challenges, but even when he aligned himself with the central government, as in his insistence on collecting the one-fifth (*pençik*) tax levied on captured prisoners and other

booty from cross-border raids, he utilized the frameworks and concepts of Islamic jurisprudence in conjunction with existing sultanic decrees to ease the burden on locals and help maintain the flourishing trade networks that were his home city's lifeblood (chapter 6).

This integration of sharia and sultanic law is something that Akkirmani would have become familiar with during his education in the capital in the 1570s and 1580s, and he used this newly developing legal framework in a number of novel ways (chapter 4), sometimes to highlight his own imperial authority in the face of local challengers, sometimes to respond to local demands, and other times to expand or adapt the legal tradition to new circumstances. He established a legal basis for certain sultanic decrees within Islamic jurisprudence, such as an imperial regulation on marriage. He also took advantage of the absence of sultanic decrees on certain matters, such as the permissibility of establishing extraordinary endowments, to challenge existing practice.

Akkirmani's influence extended far beyond Akkirman during his lifetime, as evidenced by fatwas addressing questioners from Bender, Moldavia, and even Polish lands. This regional scope testifies to his broad jurisdiction and relevance in legal matters across the frontier. After his death, his collected fatwas circulated widely, reaching areas as distant as Bosnia and Egypt. His long cannabis fatwa, in which he revisited a century-long debate to create a uniform Hanafi position on the prohibition of cannabis, bolstered his reputation throughout the empire (chapter 7). This wide dissemination highlights how big an impact a provincial mufti could have on the empire's broader normative and legal framework.

In summary, this study underscores the role of muftis in the Ottoman provinces in both local politics and lawmaking. In a broader sense, it sheds light on imperial lawmaking practices in a period when sultanic law and sharia intertwined. Lawmaking was neither a top-down process imposed by a central authority, nor an abstract interpretation detached from its context. Instead, it resulted from the local interpretation of the law as shaped by the participation of various actors, muftis like Akkirmani chief among them.

A Matter of Morals: Writing about Yemen in the Late Ottoman Empire (1908–1912)

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Submitted to the University of Oxford in 2024, this master's thesis situates three publications on the province of Yemen, penned in the early years of the Second Constitutional Period, in the context of moral discourses in the late Ottoman Empire. Based on an analysis of the accounts of military official Rüşdi, civil administrator Abdülgani Seni, and military doctor Hasan Kadri on their respective service and experiences in Yemen, the study suggests that the provincial periphery formed part of public discussions taking place in the imperial centre about the characteristics, attitudes, and emotions that should characterize the moral Ottoman subject. Bridging existing scholarly accounts on governance in the Ottoman provinces, which predominantly consist of place-based analyses, and the historiography of intellectual developments emanating from the imperial capital, the thesis lays out how these phenomena intersected. It concludes that the increasing representation of the provinces in works published in Istanbul by individual state officials from the late nineteenth century complemented, but also demonstrates the inherent conflicts of, the administrative and ideological project of forging an overarching territorial and identity-based cohesion advanced as part of the empire's extensive reform and centralization project.

I suggest that Yemen held a distinct place in Late Ottoman public and official discourses as a frontier region fraught with emotional meaning. This was not only the result of the administrative and military difficulties the empire faced in the province which cost the lives of thousands of military recruits, drained the imperial treasury, and exhausted state officials. Militarily reconquered as a province in the early 1870s, Yemen was also a fairly recent territorial addition after the region had had little to no exposure to Ottoman rule during the preceding two and a half centuries. The reincorporation of the province is therefore indicative of the Ottoman state's ambitious partaking in the competition over territory in the context of late nineteenth century imperialism and, as such, was important for imagining the late Ottoman state not as a 'sick man' but a capable political actor on the global stage. At the same time, the province was unique in presenting the state with several administrative challenges at once: A religiously diverse local population, successive armed uprisings, as well as its peripheral location, proximity to French, Italian, and British colonial territories, and its status as a buffer zone to the holy cities in the Hijaz all increased Ottoman stakes in the region. In public discourses, especially after the events of 1908 had sparked new optimism among the empire's intelligentsia, the region figured as a proving ground for the vitality of the constitutional state and previous administrative failures as a vignette for the alleged stolid and corrupt nature of Hamidian 'despotism' which had to be overcome, both structurally and morally, in order for the empire to maintain its sovereignty.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 435–437, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-435

Employing a microhistorical approach based on subjective, narrative, and, most importantly, published sources, rather than administrative documents, I analyse the public representation of the Ottoman Empire's Arab periphery in the imperial centre. Perceptions of peripheral populations were influenced by the publications of imperial administrators who, as a social class shaped by similar experiences in the state system and united by its association with said system, understood and represented themselves as morally different from local populations. The officials' perception of this moral difference was further encouraged by the emergence of a deontological understanding of Ottoman citizenship formulated in the context of nineteenth century reforms and the sense of anxiety accompanying the Ottoman state's quest for survival in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prompted by the Ottoman reform project, whose edicts tied subjecthood to moral expectations which were spread among the public in the context of the ensuing expansion of state-sponsored education, moral discourses revolved around the importance of a patriotic commitment to the Ottoman state which should find expression in individual productivity, obedience, manners like hygiene and moderation, and, crucially, emotions, such as compassion and love for fatherland, family, and fellow Ottomans. The reinstatement of the constitution in 1908 gave further impulse to the debate on morality. On the one hand, the (re)introduction of participatory politics corresponded and contributed to the focus on the individual ingrained in the deontological notion of citizenship. On the other hand, new freedoms of expression in the press and political associations unleashed discourses about morality and enabled a growing author- and readership to partake in debates about the future of the constitutional state.

Deontological discourses about Ottoman citizenship were embedded in and synchronic to public discussions addressing moral degeneration among administrators and the Ottoman public. These debates measured individual subjects' usefulness to the state's quest for sovereignty in terms of their commitment to patriotism and productivity and sought to overcome the moral decadence that had supposedly characterized the Hamidian regime. The expression and embodiment of certain emotions, which feature in the analysed sources as compassion with officials deemed inefficient and uneducated peripheral populations, sadness in the face of mistreated military recruits or territorial losses, as well as love for family and fatherland, were perceived by concerned state officials and intellectuals as an integral part of displaying one's commitment to and identification with the state and its struggle for survival. The administrators' resulting intimate understanding of their relation to the state, which I highlight in this thesis, tends to be overlooked by scholarship on the Ottoman provinces which seeks to reconstruct local realities in detail while neglecting to equally qualify and pay attention to individual governing officials.

Peripheral populations were one among several societal groups made the object of moral criticism and argued to be in need of moral correction because they fell short of the moral and emotional commitment to the empire which was so central to the self-perception of state officials. Despite their different professional backgrounds, Rüşdi, Abdülgani Seni, and Hasan Kadri concurred in their assessment of Yemen's population as lacking the willingness to productively contribute to the prosperity of the Ottoman

state and its society as well as its quest to ward off European encroachment. Rather than understanding the moral difference outlined in the analysed publications as merely serving to exclude the periphery, they similarly contributed to drawing Yemen's population into the moral and emotional imaginary of the Ottoman reading public, and thus closer to the imperial centre, by presenting the province as a locale in which moral expectations surrounding Ottoman citizenship were challenged and thus had to be negotiated. As such, according to the three state officials, Yemenis' moral difference was not irredeemable but could be corrected by a constitutional state apparatus staffed with zealous individuals committed to the empire's survival and dedicated to violently enforcing local populations' moral correction and re-education.

Was There an Ottoman Science? Circulation of Knowledge and the Making of the Agronomic, Forestry, and Veterinary Disciplines (1840–1940)

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This thesis examines the circulation of scientific knowledge between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the long nineteenth century, focusing on three emerging disciplines – agronomy, forestry, and veterinary medicine. I analyse these fields together to avoid imposing anachronistic disciplinary boundaries, since contemporary practitioners regarded them as an 'indissociable whole.' By tracing the movements of Ottoman students sent to Europe and European experts dispatched to the empire on scientific missions, I reconstruct how cross-border knowledge flows shaped these disciplines in their formative decades. While human mobility forms a central thread, the study also follows the movement of technoscientific instruments, exploring their adaptation to local contexts and the challenges of maintenance and repair.

By foregrounding marginalised professions in the historiography and examining the often-overlooked routine scientific exchanges between Western and non-colonial spaces, this research contributes to decentring the history of science and technology.

Genesis of the Topic

The project began with a serendipitous archival find: a 1909 letter announcing the imminent departure of thirteen Ottoman scholarship-holders for Marseille aboard a Paquet Company steamship. Funded by the imperial government, they were bound for France to study agronomy, forestry, and veterinary medicine. Strikingly, these thirteen students accounted for 54% of all Ottomans sent to France that year – an imbalance that raised important questions: why did the state invest so heavily in these fields, and why was foreign training deemed necessary in disciplines so rooted in local environmental realities, seemingly ill-suited to transfer? These questions became the starting point for a long-term investigation spanning nearly a century, from the founding of the first Ottoman schools in these fields to their full institutionalisation.

Research Questions and Structure

My thesis provides empirical answers to two fundamental questions, the first being *why* and *how* knowledge moves across borders. While the secondary literature in the field often identifies the *who, when,* and *where* of knowledge transfers, it rarely examines the *modus operandi*. To take an example: earlier studies readily note that French forestry

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 438–443, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-438

engineer Louis Tassy undertook a scientific mission in the Ottoman Empire, offer some biographical details, and list his main works. What they do not address are the deeper questions: why the Ottoman government was investing in forestry at that moment; why Tassy, rather than another engineer, was selected; why he agreed to go; why and how he was seconded from public service in France; how the terms of his contract were negotiated; how he built and sustained a professional and personal life in a foreign setting (including how he communicated with local counterparts); and how he reintegrated into French institutions upon his return.

The first four chapters address this issue. The introductory chapter explores why these circulations took place, looking at the political and economic motivations behind the scenes. The next three chapters focus on how, examining the concrete modalities of circulation depending on the categories of actors involved. Chapter II follows Ottoman students in France, looking at administrative procedures, material conditions, academic experiences, and everyday life. Chapter III turns to French scientific experts in the Ottoman Empire: their recruitment, contracts, relations with local actors, and social integration. Chapter IV focuses on the circulation of instruments – microscopes, dental devices, agricultural machinery – highlighting financial, logistical, and epistemic issues.

The second central question my thesis asks is: what happens to knowledge in motion? Given that flora, fauna, climate, and diseases vary by region, foreign knowledge could rarely be applied wholesale; it required adaptation to local environmental realities. Chapter V examines how Ottoman scientists not only appropriated foreign knowledge but also generated original contributions, some of which circulated back to Europe – revealing a bidirectional exchange, even if marked by asymmetry. Chapter VI focuses on naming foreign knowledge, examining the terms used to designate new scientific realities, the efforts at terminological standardisation, and the tensions created by the gap between the rapid evolution of science and the slow pace of lexicographical production. Chapter VII concentrates on wider social responses to the introduction of these disciplines born out of scientific exchange with Europe, showing how Ottoman agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians fought to assert authority in the face of scepticism from farmers, farriers and townsfolk, even when the state recognised their expertise.

Sources

My research employs a cross-archival approach, giving equal weight to Ottoman and French materials. Archival, library, and museum work in Turkey was complemented by extensive research in France, producing an unusually diverse body of sources. In addition to amassing the books and journals produced by the scientists at the centre of my research, I sought to extend my inquiry beyond conventional state archives – examining, for example, laboratory equipment once belonging to Ottoman veterinarians in museums – and to locate and draw from numerous personal collections. Notable among these are photographic albums by Asaf Cemal, one of the first Ottomans trained at the *École des eaux et forêts* in Nancy, now held in a museum in Bursa; the private papers of Samuel Abravanel Aysoy, an Ottoman veterinarian trained at the

École nationale vétérinaire d'Alfort; and rich documentation at the *Institut Pasteur* on bacteriologists sent to the Ottoman Empire. Unexpected finds such as hotel bills, tennis club membership cards, and expense notebooks offered glimpses into everyday lives, underscoring the ordinariness of these scholarly trajectories. Together, these sources allowed me to reconstruct not only institutional histories but also the lived experiences of those moving between these worlds.

Contributions to Historiography

From Civilisational Narratives to Pragmatic Imperatives

One of the thesis's key contributions is to unsettle the entrenched framing of late Ottoman knowledge imports as driven primarily by abstract aims of 'Westernisation' or its more politically correct sibling 'modernisation.' Such frameworks impose a civilisation-based paradigm where none is necessary. Consider, for example, Kevork Torkomyan, trained in Montpellier, who adopted Louis Pasteur's *grainage cellulaire* method to combat *pébrine* (*karataban* in Turkish), a silkworm disease affecting the Mediterranean, and applied it at the institute he directed in Bursa. Should his efforts be read as a sign of Westernisation, or a transfer of modernity? Could this transfer not simply be a straightforward response to an urgent economic problem? For the Ottomans, what mattered was that the method worked, not its provenance, and that the silk industry was strategically vital: silk tithe constituted one of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration's chief sources of revenue, alongside salt, tobacco, spirits, stamps, and fishing.

In fact, such categories often produce a circular logic: knowledge is deemed to have been imported because the late Ottomans wished to Westernise or modernise; once imported, it becomes proof that they were doing precisely that. Yet, I found no evidence of 'Westernisation' or 'modernisation' rhetoric in the writings of Ottoman scientists or officials. What emerges instead is a pragmatic calculus.

These abstractions obscure the concrete political economy of knowledge transfer. In practice, the Ottoman state's investment into scientific exchanges (with, at one point, 16.4% of the Ministry of Agriculture's annual budget earmarked for foreign scholarships) was part of a deliberate strategy to address fiscal crisis. In the aftermath of the Crimean War and under the burden of mounting foreign debt, the government prioritised sciences described as 'useful,' 'beneficial,' or 'necessary' (*ʿulûm-ı nâfiʿa*; *fünûn-ı lâzıme*). Convinced that the empire was a perfect 'agrarian country' (*zirâʿat memleketi*) blessed with fertile soils, vast woodlands, and abundant livestock, Ottoman officials saw agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry as the basis of the empire's comparative advantage in the international division of labour. This logic explains why agronomic, silvicultural, and veterinary knowledge was deemed 'useful' and attracted substantial public funding: agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians were expected to increase the productivity of the empire's natural resources (*ṭabîʿî servetler*), transforming natural capital into economic capital.

From State Agendas to Personal Desires

Why did France agree to give up some of the very limited places at its universities to Ottoman students, and send its scientific experts to the Ottoman Empire, when this meant losing highly qualified personnel? The Ottoman emphasis on primary production aligned neatly with European interests: It ensured a steady supply of raw materials from the empire while safeguarding markets for European manufactured goods against Ottoman competition. Science also functioned as a geopolitical tool. Determined to maintain influence in Ottoman scientific life in rivalry with Germany, France launched initiatives such as the ONUEF to attract foreign students and pursued strategies to secure overseas appointments for French nationals – efforts that intensified after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. For instance, when Maurice Nicolle was appointed director of the Imperial Bacteriology Institute (*Bâḳterîyôlôjîḫâne-i şâhâne*) in 1893, Émile Roux, Pasteur's close collaborator, commented approvingly: 'He will bring the good word to Constantinople, and without a German accent – that's what matters.'

My microhistorical approach, however, reveals that individual careerism was equally important in setting knowledge in motion. French scientists did not take up Ottoman posts out of patriotic duty (though they could present them as such to their superiors) but because these appointments offered higher salaries, more prestigious positions than they could obtain at home (often leveraged for promotion upon return), and the opportunity to publish research on a different geo-climatic zone, thereby enhancing their scientific authority. Nicolle was merely a laboratory assistant (*préparateur*) at the Pasteur Institute before being appointed director of the Imperial Bacteriology Institute in Istanbul and saw his annual salary more than tripled. Forestry engineers recruited in 1866 saw their pay multiplied by 4.7, returning to France with promotions to the rank of *conservateur*.

The personal allure of travel to the 'Orient' further heightened the appeal. For most scholars, such journeys remained prohibitively expensive – a short tour of Athens, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Cairo was priced at 2,400–3,000 francs in contemporary travel guides. Ottoman missions thus combined professional advancement with the fulfilment of a romanticised adventure. Reports from these experts often blended scientific observation with ethnographic description, architectural admiration, and elements of travel writing.

Restoring Ottoman Agency

It is tempting to assume that the reverse question – why Ottoman students agreed to go to France – has an obvious answer. Yet for them, as for the French experts on mission, studying or working abroad required leaving behind families and hometowns, and involved its own careerist calculus. A European diploma conferred legitimacy, eased entry into elite positions in the capital, and offered protection from undesirable provincial postings.

At home, the authority of those trained within the empire could be fragile. Agronomist Süleyman Fehmi [Kalaycıoğlu] recalled being mocked for wearing the uniform of the Halkalı Agricultural School – the empire's only domestic agronomy degree. Villagers jeered: 'Look at him, he couldn't find a real school, so he went to a manure school!' and pelted him with questions about 'types of dung' until he was reduced to tears. In this light, the circulation of students was not only beneficial to the Ottoman state, which sought to boost productivity through new expertise, but also to the individual scientists themselves. Connections with European scientific institutions and learned societies signalled membership in global networks of expertise, enhancing prestige in a fraught context where farmers mocked agronomists and veterinarians were often dismissed as glorified farriers.

Against this backdrop, my thesis restores the agency of Ottoman scientists by following them beyond their studies in France, examining what they produced after returning home. They were not passive conduits of Western science but active co-producers. This is not my interpretation but an emic one: rather than invoking the need to emulate Western science, Ottoman scientists stressed the importance of *localising* it – a concern reflected in their terminology, such as *memleketleştirme*. Agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians argued that their disciplines could not always generate universally valid knowledge, unlike mathematics. Instead, validity was contingent on context – or, as agronomist Hayzagun Bekyan put it, on the 'local touch' (*maẓrûb-ı maḥallî*).

These experts made deliberate choices about what to borrow and what to discard. Their translations of foreign manuals often omitted entire sections irrelevant to local conditions, and university curricula prioritised endemic plants and diseases. The research they published in European journals further demonstrates that Ottoman scientists also exported knowledge they had produced locally. Veterinary bacteriologists, for example, contributed numerous articles to the *Annales de l'Institut Pasteur* (17 between 1896 and 1907). One of the most significant discoveries was perhaps Adil Mustafa's 1902 co-discovery of the infectious agent responsible for rinderpest: with Nicolle, they identified it as a filterable virus, earning international recognition even as the disease continued to devastate herds worldwide, including in southern Africa, where 80% of cattle were killed by it at the turn of the century.

A New Material Reading of Science on the Move

This thesis establishes that the driving force of knowledge circulation was mutual convenience. Exchanges took place because they served the interests of actors on both sides, whether states seeking revenue, institutions seeking prestige, or individuals pursuing career advancement. This was a win–win arrangement operating at multiple levels. By reframing East-West knowledge exchanges as transactional, I move away from exoticised narratives. I treat France and the Ottoman Empire as points A and B, not as opposites yearning to impose upon or imitate one another, but as historically situated, yet analytically neutral, nodes within a wider network of circulation.

By grounding the analysis in budgets, salaries, recruitment practices and working conditions, the thesis strips away the rhetoric of 'cultural clash' to reveal pragmatic realities. When French bacteriologist Paul Ambroise Remlinger accused his Ottoman colleagues of conspiring to have him dismissed, the underlying cause was less xenophobia than resentment over salary disparities: as a foreign expert, he earned far more than Ottoman counterparts bound by civil service pay scales. Likewise, the failure of imported agricultural machinery stemmed not from conservatism or technophobia, but from the lack of training for peasants who would use the machines, the absence of repairmen and spare parts, high fuel costs, and the failure to assess whether imports from Europe and the United States suited local terrain and crops.

These insights were possible only by widening the archival lens beyond the familiar focus on intellectual debates between '(hyper-)Westernists,' 'partial-Westernists,' and conservatives. Rather than confining myself to the writings of contemporary commentators who theorised about exchanges with the West, my aim was to recover the voices of those directly involved in the circulation of scientific knowledge. By attending to the everyday lives of these vectors of knowledge, I was able to normalise knowledge flows – revealing them as ordinary and grounded primarily in material considerations rather than in ideals such as the universality of science or the aspiration to become part of Western civilisation. In short, this thesis calls for leaving the realm of the abstract and entering the realm of the concrete, in order to uncover the mechanics – the nuts and bolts – of how science travels, a question far more illuminating than where it originates or to whom it belongs.

Akkoyunlu, Karabekir. 2024. *Guardianship and Democracy in Iran and Turkey: Tutelary Consolidation, Popular Contestation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 312 pages. ISBN: 9781474493134.

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In *Guardianship and Democracy in Iran and Turkey*, Karabekir Akkoyunlu offers a theoretically rich and empirically grounded comparative analysis of two ideologically distinct yet structurally comparable political systems. Anchored in the framework of tutelary democracy, the book interrogates the role of unelected 'guardian' institutions – namely, the military in Turkey and the clerical establishment in Iran – in shaping, constraining, and at times directly subverting democratic processes. Drawing upon an impressive range of empirical data and employing a multidisciplinary methodology, Akkoyunlu crafts a nuanced narrative of institutional persistence and erosion under varying domestic and international pressures.

The book is organized into four main parts, each contributing to a layered analytical structure. Part I revisits the foundational ideological legacies of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, highlighting how both leaders constructed powerful revolutionary narratives that legitimized the formation of tutelary institutions. Part II delves into the institutional configurations of each regime, emphasizing Iran's dual sovereignty model and Turkey's historical military centrality. Parts III and IV trace the trajectories of mass contestation and elite adaptation, culminating in the dismantling of military tutelage in Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the enduring strength of clerical oversight in Iran, despite episodic reformist efforts.

One of the most valuable contributions of the book lies in its comparative methodological orientation. While comparative history has been a recognized analytical tool since the early twentieth century, Akkoyunlu reaffirms its relevance by extending it beyond national historiography. As Christos Hadziiosif has argued, '[h]istorians have always practiced comparison as a mode of reasoning – reasoning by analogy – in the framework of nation-state history, and there is no methodological difficulty in extending this practice to cross-border research.'[1] By situating his inquiry within this broader methodological tradition, Akkoyunlu aligns with Theda Skocpol's assertion that '[t]he purpose of comparison is not merely to point out similarities and differences, but to explain them.'[2] In doing so, the author elucidates the divergent trajectories of regime consolidation and democratic erosion in Iran and Turkey.

1 Hadziiossif, Christos. 2010. 'Common Past, Comparative History and Regional Universalism in Greek and Ottoman Historiography'. In Baruh, Lorans Tanatar and Kechriotis, Vangelis (eds.). *Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean*. Athens: Alpha Bank, 530.

2 *Skocpol*, *Theda*. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* Top of FormBottom of Form, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 36.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 444–446, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-444

While Iran and Turkey are often juxtaposed in terms of their ideological orientations – Islamist versus secular, Shi'a versus Sunni, theocratic versus republican – Akkoyunlu challenges this dichotomous framing through detailed process tracing. He convincingly demonstrates that both states function as hybrid regimes, in which democratic institutions coexist with entrenched unelected authorities. Drawing on the scholarship of Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni, he categorizes both countries as *tutelary hybrid regimes* – a form of political system in which nominally democratic institutions such as elections, parliaments, and constitutions operate under the shadow of unelected actors who wield veto power over key decisions, constrain democratic participation, and claim to act as protectors of the state or its founding ideology.[3]

A further conceptual strength of the work lies in its nuanced articulation of 'guardianship.' Akkoyunlu expands upon Carl Schmitt's – although not explicitly stated – notion of the 'guardian of the constitution,'[4] applying it to real-world institutions whose self-legitimizing narratives frequently override principles of popular sovereignty. His exploration of how guardianship evolves from a protective function into a ruling authority is both original and unsettling, particularly in light of contemporary debates on authoritarian resilience.

Nevertheless, the book is not without its limitations. Although Akkoyunlu takes care to contextualize each case historically and institutionally, the asymmetry between Iran and Turkey in terms of political pluralism and the intensity of repression occasionally renders direct comparison analytically uneven. While the analysis of Turkey's autocratization under Erdoğan is thorough, the Iranian case – especially post-2009 – could benefit from more granular attention to state violence and institutional closure. Additionally, although the book offers a robust macro-level framework, it pays comparatively less attention to grassroots mobilizations and civil society actors – a perspective that could have enriched the analysis of popular contestation, particularly within the Iranian context.

From a methodological standpoint, the book draws on a vast array of sources, both primary and secondary, resulting in a richly textured empirical base. Akkoyunlu's linguistic proficiency and access to insider sources further enhance the credibility of his fieldwork. However, although the study lacks formal quantitative data, something that might be seen as a limitation by some readers – particularly within political science disciplines – *Guardianship and Democracy in Iran and Turkey* offers as invaluable work and indeed, advances the comparative political field and urges us to understand deeper the two countries.

In conclusion, *Guardianship and Democracy in Iran and Turkey* makes a significant contribution to the study of hybrid regimes, authoritarian resilience, and civil-military/clergy relations. It will be of considerable interest to scholars in Middle Eastern studies, comparative politics, and democratic theory. By illuminating the underlying tutelary

3 See, for example, Levitsky, Steven and Way, Lucan A. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4 Vinx, Lars. 2015. *The Guardian of the Constitution: Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt on the Limits of Constitutional Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

logic that structures political authority in both Iran and Turkey, Akkoyunlu offers an important analytical lens through which to understand broader trends in democratic backsliding in the 21st century.

Köse, Yavuz, Kučera, Petr and Völker, Tobias (eds). 2024. *Becoming Ottoman: Converts, Renegades and Competing Loyalties in the Early Modern and Modern Ages*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 272 pages. ISBN: 9780755641017 (e-Book).

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'He was a Pole by origin, fluent in many languages; he looked like a Muslim, but what his actual religion was, only God knows.' (p. 95) With these words, François Mesgnien Meninski (1623–1698), a prominent 17th-century French-Polish orientalist, diplomat, and linguist, refers to Polish convert Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki Bey). Meninski's observation captures the layered identity of many Europeans who entered Ottoman service, and whose lives crossed confessional, linguistic, and cultural boundaries.

What did it mean to be an Ottoman who originated from 'Christian Europe' and converted to Islam? Did being an Ottoman necessarily entail becoming Muslim and breaking away from one's inherited ethno-religious, cultural and linguistic identity? The book explores the complex experiences of individuals of 'Christian European' origin who lived in or migrated to the Ottoman Empire between the 16th and 19th centuries and underwent varying degrees of 'Ottomanization.' Through a series of case studies, it examines how individuals – from diplomats and merchants to scholars, soldiers, and their families – converted to Islam, adopted Ottoman elite cultural norms, or affirmed their loyalty to the Ottoman state. The volume also demonstrates how such transformations were perceived by the individuals' contemporaries in Europe and how these cases were documented and interpreted in a variety of sources, including memoirs, diplomatic reports, and personal writings. By tracing these narratives, it sheds light on the shifting meanings of cultural adaptation, religious conversion, and political allegiance within the broader context of Ottoman–European encounters.

The volume moves beyond the narrow regional and temporal boundaries and highlights the broader social, cultural, and political dimensions of 'becoming Ottoman.' It argues that while religious conversion is an important marker of identity transformation, it is only one facet of a broader and more complex process of cultural adaptation, which the authors refer to as 'acculturation.' The volume explores how these individuals navigated a multidimensional reorientation of values, behaviours, and social affiliations. Most micro histories in this volume demonstrate that 'acculturation' was not about complete assimilation, but rather 'integration' – a selective and dynamic engagement with Ottoman culture that reconfigures original identities instead of abandoning them. In addition to conversion, successful 'Ottomanization' often involved adopting elite cultural symbols (such as dress or etiquette), mastering the Ottoman Turkish language and literary forms, and achieving status through professional rank or familial ties (p. 3).

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 447–452, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-447

One of the strengths of this volume lies in its nuanced approach to identity and integration. Rather than treating 'Ottomanization' as a total rupture with one's past, the authors acknowledge that identity formation is a complex, layered, and ongoing process. The case studies demonstrate that individuals often preserved ties to their homelands and built networks with others who shared similar cultural backgrounds. The volume approaches to identity as something shaped by acts of identification - both how people see themselves and how others label them. As such, 'Ottomanization' is defined broadly as the process by which individuals, rooted in their original language, religion, and culture, gradually made the Ottoman Empire their home and were either recognised as Ottomans or came to see themselves as such. This flexible definition allows the book to explore a wide spectrum of personal experiences and to challenge rigid boundaries between self and empire.

The volume is organized chronologically, dividing history into two clearly defined periods: the early modern period (16th–18th centuries) and the modern period (from the late 18th century onwards). Through this chronological division, the authors effectively trace how key concepts such as identity, allegiance, subjecthood, and citizenship changed in response to changing imperial strategies and geopolitical dynamics.

The first part of volume demonstrates how by the late 15th and 16th centuries the older ethnic notion of 'Turkic' was replaced by a more inclusive and status-oriented concept of *Osmanlı* (Ottoman) while the Ottoman Empire expanded into non-Turkic and non-Muslim territories. This new identity was layered, shaped by multiple civilisational influences: Byzantine (Roman), Turkic, Persian, and Islamic. In this context, being Ottoman was not limited to being ethnically Turkic or being born into a Muslim family. Instead, it referred to a socio-cultural and political identity, particularly associated with the ruling elite (*askeri* class). This identity transcended ethnic, linguistic, and even religious boundary. For newcomers, becoming Ottoman meant adopting Sunni Islam, Ottoman Turkish language, and elite cultural norms (*Edeb-i Osmani*) (p. 6).

The volume opens with an essay by Robyn Dora Radway. Drawing on Hungarian and German sources, the author investigates the motivations for individuals in the empire's Hungarian borderlands to adopt an Ottoman identity. She emphasises that these choices were often influenced more by practical considerations, such as economic opportunity and social mobility, than by ideological betrayal. By examining the individual experiences of converts, Radway demonstrates that conversion to Islam, whether among women or men, often occurred as a strategic decision aimed at achieving social advancement and integration into the Ottoman ruling elite, which far surpassed the opportunities available in their countries of origin (p. 33).

Through the lens of patronage networks and kinship rhetoric, she illustrates that political loyalty often transcended confessional and geographic boundaries, highlighting the significance of cultural familiarity and regional ties in shaping individuals' affiliations with the empire.

János Szabados presents a comparative study of German renegades from the 16th to the 18th century, focusing on their conversions and careers in the Ottoman Empire. He highlights how the type of conversion, career paths, and identity influenced their integration.

The essay underscores the paradoxical hierarchy of access to power. It argues that voluntary converts, despite their aspirations for upward mobility, were often excluded from elite positions. In contrast, individuals who entered through slavery, particularly via institutionalised channels such as *devşirme*, could attain high ranks. Moreover, the essay emphasises that career advancement was not solely determined by one's origin or former social status but often depended on the roles renegades could perform (such as interpreters, involvement in espionage) and their access to patronage networks. János Szabados concludes that the identities of renegades were highly fluid. Some retained unconscious markers of their former lives, while others strategically manipulated their identity for political advantage.

Vanessa R. de Obaldia presents a compelling case study in her analysis of a 1667 court document detailing the conversion of Dominican friar Urbano Pinginella to Islam. Rather than questioning the motivation of his decision, de Obaldia portrays the story as a deeply human episode that enriches the broader narrative of conversion in the Ottoman Empire. She illustrates that while the jurisprudential norms for becoming Muslim were straightforward, requiring neither instruction nor an investigation into intent, Islamic legal opinion (*fatwā*) permitted flexibility, accommodating various social and political contexts. This chapter emphasises that although conversion was legally uncomplicated, it was influenced by broader structural factors, and individuals like Pinginella might have navigated these complexities for both spiritual and material reasons.

Continuing the volume's exploration of individual trajectories of Ottomanization, Agnieszka Aysen Kaim's contribution focuses on the multifaceted identity of seventeenth-century Polish convert Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki Bey). Her analysis highlights his fluid movement across religious, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, portraying him as a transcultural figure whose life and works embody a complex, hybrid identity.

Building upon the insights presented by previous contributors to this volume, this essay further explores how, in the early modern Ottoman context, the transition to an Ottoman identity often involved conversion to Islam along with the adoption of a new language, name, dress, and ritual behaviour. Thus, conversion itself becomes a form of social transgression, marking a break from the converts' past identity while opening access to new roles. Rather than presenting his identity transformation as a complete replacement of his former self, the study argues that Bobowski's acculturation followed a layered model, where new identities were added without erasing older ones, resulting in a composite, multidimensional identity.

Unlike the earlier instances of Ottomanization through forced or voluntary conversions, Alptuğ Güney's essay explores the complex identity of Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir. While remaining Orthodox, Cantemir became deeply integrated into the Ottoman cultural elite during his time in Istanbul from 1687 to 1710.

The essay demonstrates that within an imperial context, identity can be shaped by imperial, cultural, and political affiliations rather than rigid ethno-religious ties. Dimitrie Cantemir's life and career illustrate how one could engage deeply in Ottoman cultural and intellectual life, mastering the language, music, and social networks with-

out entirely renouncing former allegiances. Cantemir embodied both Moldavian and Ottoman identities, reflecting the hybrid and dynamic nature of identity within the Ottoman imperial system, particularly among the elites of vassal states. This case highlights that Ottoman identity was not solely defined by ethnicity or religion but could also be formed through cultural participation, political service, and imperial patronage.

Petr Kučera analyses the writings of Václav Budovec of Budov, a Protestant envoy to the Ottoman court in the late 16th century. Through his treatise *Antialkoran* and various letters, Kučera uncovers Budovec's role as a 'religious broker,' revealing both his resistance to conversion and his engagement in theological dialogue with Muslims and Christian converts in Istanbul. While some converts may have sought spiritual truth, Budovec noted a troubling trend of pragmatic conversions, where individuals renounced their faith not out of conviction, but for political or material gain. This contribution adds an important dimension to the volume by highlighting how the presence of a powerful religious 'Other' could unsettle not only political boundaries but also theological certainties.

The second part of the book highlights how perceptions of Ottoman identity changed in the 19th century in response to shifts in the international balance of power. It identifies three key areas of transformation.

The first area is the evolving meaning and ideological framing of religious conversion, which began to take on new political and cultural contexts. The volume argues that, during the age of rising ethnic nationalism, conversion acquired new significance as religious and national identities increasingly intertwined. Conversion was no longer viewed merely as a spiritual or legal shift. Instead, it began to represent a form of 'de-nationalization.' The book demonstrates that, in the 19th century, conversion became a deeply contested act that symbolised broader tensions between personal agency, communal loyalty, and state authority. Secondly, conversion became entangled not only in internal social debates but also in international diplomacy.

Finally, the book examines the changing legal definitions and discourses surrounding Ottoman subjecthood. The state aimed to reconsider its relationship with its increasingly diverse population. It shows how the state employed legal reforms to reassert sovereignty and reshape imperial identity. This analysis provides insight into how legal codification intersected with questions of identity, loyalty, and governance in the late Ottoman context. The essays in the second part of the volume demonstrate that within this framework, the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) promoted Ottomanism as a unifying identity capable of bridging ethno-religious divides and reinforcing loyalty to the state. However, the book emphasises that, as in the pre-modern period, Ottomanism in the modern period also was not a fixed or monolithic ideology. Rather, it was interpreted and utilised by various intellectual and social groups in ways that reflected their own experiences and goals. In many cases, public expressions of support for Ottomanism served as a strategic display of loyalty to imperial modernisation - even when local, religious, or cultural identities remained unchanged.

The second section of the volume opens with Heléna Tóth's nuanced study, which focuses on the reinterpretation of the figure of the renegade in nineteenth-century Hungary, in the contexts of political exile, romantic nationalism, and shifting historical

narratives. The essay explores how the long-standing, complex relationship between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire evolved from enmity to a pragmatic alliance, particularly during and after the failed Hungarian War of Independence in 1849.

Tóth argues that the archetype of the renegade underwent significant transformation during the 19th century. Once regarded as the ultimate traitor to Christendom and national unity, the renegade was reimagined as a liminal character whose conversion could signify either shameful betrayal or noble perseverance. The author underscores how historiography shifts its approach to apostasy, seeing conversion not as a betrayal but as a contribution to Ottoman modernisation, thus integrating converts into national history as agents of Westernisation rather than as religious or political traitors. The essay effectively demonstrates how this ambiguity reflects Hungary's own attempts to navigate its dual historical legacy of resistance and collaboration with the Ottoman Empire.

Furthering the discussion on the Ottomanization of Hungarian and Polish refugees in Constantinople, Aleksandar Zlatanov examines the dramatic journey of Michał Czajkowski (Mehmed Sadık Pasha) through his political and religious transformations. He interprets Czajkowski's Ottomanization and subsequent de-Ottomanization as closely linked to pragmatic choices, shifting ideological loyalties, and the broader geopolitical context of the 19th century. The essays delve into how, in specific historical circumstances, becoming a subject of the sultan could provide political and social opportunities. This illustrates the complex dynamics of identity formation at the intersection of imperial realpolitik, national ideology, and personal ambitions.

Yavuz Köse sheds light on the lesser-known experiences of lower-middle-class German migrants, particularly women, who converted to Islam and became Ottoman subjects between 1844 and 1862. Drawing on Prussian diplomatic correspondence, newspapers, and Ottoman archival records, Köse reveals how these personal transformations provoked intense emotional responses among German officials and contributed to ongoing debates about subjecthood and identity in the years leading up to the Ottoman Nationality Law of 1869. The author argues that, in the case of foreign women, Ottomanization began with conversion to Islam, driven by the desire for protection and improved social status. However, the author concludes that 'even becoming Ottoman was not enough to secure one's future' (p. 197).

In his essay, Tobias Volker examines the case of Andreas David Mordtmann, a former European diplomat who became fully integrated into the Ottoman civil bureaucracy and intellectual circles without conversion to Islam. Volker's analysis focuses on the legal, professional, and intellectual dimensions of Mordtmann's service, particularly his role within Istanbul's emerging scientific community. Through this case study, the essay illustrates that joining the Ottoman imperial elite was a complex process of cultural and political adaptation, shaped by both personal networks and institutional transformations. Volker concludes that Ottomanization should be understood as a multilayered dynamic and ongoing process.

In the final essay that concludes the monograph, Gülfem Alici explores the rarely studied process of de-Ottomanization through the case of Mullah Muhammad Shukri Efendi (Johannes Avetaranian), a Protestant convert from Erzurum. Drawing on Aveta-

ranian's autobiography, the essay traces the stages of his personal and religious transformation, shedding light on what it meant to renounce Ottoman identity. Alici's analysis also provides important insights into the responses of the Muslim community and Ottoman authorities, providing important insights into the boundaries of imperial belonging and the political and social consequences of apostasy in the late Ottoman context.

A reviewer can hardly find a major point to criticize in the *Becoming Ottoman*. One of limitation of volume can be narrow regional scope in the selection of case studies. While the inclusion of Hungarian, Polish, and German individuals provides valuable insight into the interactions between Central Europe and the Ottoman world, other regions, such as the Balkans, and the Caucasus, receive less attention, despite their central role in Ottoman imperial governance and diversity. A more balanced regional representation could have strengthened the volume's comparative dimension.

Nevertheless, this collection stands out for its careful scholarship, multilingual scope, and methodological diversity. It offers a nuanced, comparative, and human-centred interpretation of imperial integration. The volume will be of strong interest to scholars across multiple fields. Historians of the Ottoman Empire and modern Europe, specialists in migration and exile studies, political theorists concerned with subjecthood and citizenship, as well as researchers of religious and cultural transformation, will all find valuable insights in this volume.

Özoğlu, Hakan. 2021. *The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Rise of the Turkish Republic: Observations of an American Diplomat, 1919–1927*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 225 pages. ISBN: 9781474480376.

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One day after the expulsion of the last Ottoman sultan, Said Nursî ascended the fortress overlooking the city of Van. From this vantage point, he confronted a scene of devastation - everything familiar to him had become part of the past. As he gazed at the ruins, the trees appeared to smile at him, as if to say: 'Look at us too – do not focus solely on the rubble.'[1] The Ottoman Empire had been consigned to history, and upon its ruins, the Turkish Republic was emerging. The collapse of the empire was a gradual process, punctuated by numerous conflicts, and culminating in the First World War. A substantial body of scholarship has examined the decline of the 'State of Osman' and the emergence of Mustafa Kemal's Turkey. It is unsurprising that this transitional period from empire to nation-state continues to fascinate researchers, and Özoğlu presents a particularly insightful interpretation in his book.

The author focuses on the final years of the last Islamic empire in the Middle East and the formative years of the Turkish Republic, as seen through the eyes of American Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol. A naval officer and diplomat, Bristol was a political realist whose perspectives on critical issues during turbulent times were markedly different. This, I believe, is the book's greatest strength: offering a fresh lens on events that, until now, have been understood differently in international historiography. To provide this alternative perspective, the author draws extensively on a wide range of primary sources. American and Ottoman archival materials are skilfully interwoven to construct a compelling picture of how Bristol – and other Americans stationed in Anatolia – perceived the unfolding events. These sources are embedded seamlessly into the narrative, lending it vividness and maintaining the reader's engagement throughout.

The book is structured into six chapters. The Introduction clearly outlines the author's objectives and prepares the reader by providing background on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the United States up to the First World War, while also evaluating the sources used. Bristol's reports are significant not only because they offer an alternative view of the declining empire, but also because they reflect the perspective of a representative of an emerging global power. His writings address not only political issues, such as the establishment of an Armenian state or the landing of Greek troops in Smyrna, but also social concerns, including the living conditions of the population in Constantinople.

1 Howard, Douglas. 2017. *A History of the Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 327.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 453–456, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-453

Chapter Two offers a thorough examination of the central figure of the book. Admiral Bristol and the trajectory of his life are brought to the forefront, as the author elucidates how Bristol rose through the military and political ranks. The decision to appoint Bristol to Constantinople was not made overnight – an issue the author investigates in considerable depth. The second chapter can be divided into two main sections. The first concerns how others – both supporters and opponents – perceived Bristol. The second focuses on his actions once stationed in Constantinople. It was necessary for him to act through intermediaries and beyond the confines of the Ottoman capital, a challenge that required the creation of appropriate mechanisms – something he undertook only after settling in the city. Even prior to his arrival, Bristol was aware of prevailing American public opinion regarding the Turks. His opposition to the view that the Turks were solely responsible for all the suffering within the Ottoman Empire led many to label him a 'pro-Turk.' This point is of particular importance to the book, as the author conducts a highly detailed evaluation of primary sources. The combination of Bristol's reports with other American and Ottoman documents lends a satisfactory degree of credibility to the admiral's writings, providing readers with an additional reason to continue engaging with the narrative.

Chapter Three continues to focus on Bristol, placing him within the rapidly shifting political landscape of Anatolia. More specifically, from 1919 onward, the Ottoman Empire was experiencing the final years of its existence, while a new Turkish state was gradually emerging in Anatolia. Bristol was required to maintain diplomatic relations with the Sublime Porte, while also establishing ties with Mustafa Kemal. Kemal soon emerged victorious, founding a new state with its core rooted in Anatolia – although Constantinople remained within the broader political frame. The Treaty of Lausanne confirmed the borders of Mustafa Kemal's Turkey, a development that did not go unnoticed by the American admiral. Nevertheless, both the personality of Turkey's first president and the nature of the new regime did not escape critical scrutiny. Bristol recorded his views on the Kemalist regime, thus bringing the chapter to a close.

In the following chapter, the central 'figures' are the Armenians and the Greeks – or, to be more precise, issues concerning the Armenian and Greek communities are examined from Bristol's perspective. Before addressing these matters, the author informs us of what Bristol knew regarding the image of the 'Turk' in American public opinion. In fact, the admiral believed that this image had been shaped by propaganda, and that, viewed from a different angle, it could be deconstructed. Regarding the Armenians, two major issues emerge. The first concerns the massacres of the Armenian population in Anatolia, spanning from the late 19th century until 1922 – with particular focus on the events of 1915, which are of special interest both to readers and to Bristol himself. The second issue – arguably the most compelling part of the book – is the attempted establishment of an Armenian state following the defeat of the Ottomans. The United States, and more specifically its president, continues to play a significant role in this effort to this day. Indeed, Bristol acknowledges this, although he was opposed to the idea of founding an Armenian state. The same applies to the Greeks, who pursued the annexation of certain territories to Anatolia, beginning with the landing of the Greek army in Smyrna in May 1919. The second key issue concerns the violence between

Greeks and Turks from 1919 to 1922. Was the Greek army a 'benevolent' occupying force in Ionia? This question continues to preoccupy many scholars, and Bristol offers an intriguing response. Finally, the author does not overlook another contentious topic in international historiography: the burning of Smyrna in September 1922. The 'pearl' of the Aegean met a tragic fate at the end of the Greco-Turkish War, as violence swept through the city and surrounding villages. It is important to note that while Bristol acknowledges that large-scale acts of violence were committed by the Ottomans against both Armenians and Greeks, his principal argument is that atrocities occurred on all sides. Among the ruins of Van – viewed from the city's fortress by Said Nursî – lay the stories of people of all ethnicities and religions of the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter Five is of particular interest, as it deals not only with strictly political issues but also with matters affecting the daily lives of the population in Ottoman cities. How did the inhabitants of the Ottoman capital live at the end of the First World War and in the immediate aftermath of the Empire's capitulation? The data presented by the author – drawn from Bristol's reports on daily life in Constantinople and the cost of living – are revealing of the conditions that prevailed at the time. However, thanks to his system of informants, Bristol was also able to form a picture of the non-Muslim populations in other Ottoman coastal cities, both during and after the War of Independence. He believed that these non-Muslim communities should be integrated into the new state with full rights – an outcome that ultimately did not materialize, as events took a different turn. This chapter also addresses Bristol's perspective on the dissolution of the Ottoman dynasty and the abolition of the caliphate – a new reality that he felt needed to be documented. Particularly noteworthy is the section on the financial underpinnings of the War of Independence, which stands out as a valuable area for further investigation. Every war depends on available economic resources, and in the case of the Turkish War of Independence – a conflict fought on multiple fronts – it is essential to learn more, especially given the precarious postwar financial state of the Ottoman Empire. The new regime, as is well known, was built around the figure of Mustafa Kemal. Bristol provides insights into both his private life and his political views, contributing further depth to the chapter.

The book is certainly not a biography of Bristol – rather, it is much more than that. It offers a fresh perspective on pivotal events that led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, as seen through the writings of an active and perceptive diplomat. Bristol remained closely attuned to reality and consistently sought to uncover the less visible dimensions of events. As such, the benefits of the work are manifold. On one hand, it allows us to understand how an American official assessed the sweeping political transformations taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean. As an emerging global power, the United States had a vested interest in acquiring detailed knowledge about sensitive regions, and through Bristol, it was able to gather crucial information and develop relationships with the new regime. On the other hand, the book engages with issues that are central to both Greek and Turkish historiography, offering what I believe to be a new perspective on historical events. The integration of primary sources is essential for addressing a range of key questions, and this work contributes meaningfully to this direction. It enables researchers to access

numerous primary documents – many of which are presented in their original form – while maintaining a clear and coherent structure throughout. Özoğlu's book constitutes a valuable contribution not only to Ottoman and Turkish history but also to the broader fields of international political and diplomatic historiography.

Polatel, Mehmet. 2025. *Armenians and Land Disputes in the Ottoman Empire, 1850–1914*. Edinburgh University Press. 312 pages. ISBN: 9781399528603 (hardback).

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On a hot summer day in 1915, a young Armenian man named Manaseh rode through a valley full of human corpses, accompanied by a Muslim *bey* and his son. Manaseh, now renamed Ali and made a servant of the *bey*, was going to help him locate land that had once belonged to a people whose unburied corpses were now decaying, and which had now become the *bey's* property (p. 256). This harrowing image opens the conclusion of *Armenians and Land Disputes in the Ottoman Empire, 1850–1914* by Mehmet Polatel, vividly capturing how the Armenian Genocide was not only a campaign of mass killing but also a violent reordering of land ownership that had begun long before the genocide itself. The book situates dispossession at the heart of the mass violence against Armenians, arguing that the erasure of Armenian life was inseparable from the seizure and redistribution of their property. Through haunting narratives like Manaseh's, the author makes a compelling case that the land question was not merely a tangential issue intertwined with the violence that culminated in genocide. It was, in fact, a foundational element. The work challenges readers to reconsider familiar narratives of 1915, placing material and territorial stakes at the center of its analytical frame and connecting them to the broader questions of territoriality and nationalism.

Chronologically tracing the transformation of land disputes into the so-called Armenian Land Question, the book shows how the relationship between state, land, and people in the Ottoman Empire was increasingly shaped by violent processes. Beginning with the territorial turn of the mid-nineteenth century, Polatel demonstrates how land conflicts, initially local and economic, became deeply politicized and embedded in nationalist projects. By the 1910s, these disputes were no longer just about landownership but about sovereignty, identity, and control over territory. Violence, particularly that of the 1890s massacres, fundamentally altered the scale and nature of these disputes, making land both the means and the object of ethno-national conflict. In this framing, the book reveals how competition over land and resources contributed not only to the outbreak of intercommunal violence but also to the emergence of nationalist ideologies and claims to sovereignty.

The structure of Mehmet Polatel's *Armenians and Land Disputes in the Ottoman Empire* is methodically organized to trace the transformation of land disputes into a deeply political and ultimately violent issue.

The first chapter sets the stage by examining the mid-nineteenth-century roots of the Armenian land question against the backdrop of the transformation of the Ottoman land regime and the commodification of land. Polatel outlines several key reasons for these transformations. First, they stemmed from the rise of a centralized administrative

state, as the government sought to 'curb local powerholders' (p. 21). Second, demographic shifts played a role, particularly the settlement of nomads and large waves of Muslim immigrants. Third, the 'acceleration of the Ottoman economy's integration into the world economy and the commercialization of agriculture' (p. 23) contributed significantly. Finally, the 'rise of territorial concerns on the part of the state and various religious and nationalist groups' (p. 24) added another layer of complexity. In exploring the emergence of legal, economic, and administrative frameworks that shaped land tenure and laid the groundwork for future conflicts, the author highlights the multilayered nature of the issue, marked by tensions not only between the state and its subjects, but also among local communities. Ultimately, the chapter shows how land disputes began to take on political dimensions, developing into a broader social and political crisis among Turks, Kurds, and Armenians.

The second chapter turns to the earliest land conflicts, focusing on the emergence of what the author terms the Armenian land question. It emphasizes how local disputes over land gradually evolved into broader political struggles, as the Armenian Patriarchate, newly formed institutions such as the National Assembly, and Armenian intellectuals increasingly interpreted their grievances as systemic. By examining the approaches of Armenian institutions and intellectuals on one hand, and the Ottoman government and local powerholders – such as *beys, aghas, sheikhs, muftis,* and local officials - on the other, the chapter highlights the 'pressure for reform, the territorialization of Armenian nationalism, and the rise of new demographic concerns at the Sublime Porte' (p. 51). A central argument of the chapter is that, during the 1870s, those whose lands were appropriated were almost exclusively Armenian peasants from the eastern vilayets of Diyarbekir, Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis, with a few cases in Ankara and Trabzon (p. 53). Meanwhile, the Muslims who seized these lands were all powerholders. Thus, while also tracing the territorialization of Armenian nationalism and the internationalization of the land question, Polatel convincingly argues that during the early 1870s and before that, 'class rather than ethnic or religious differences was the main factor' shaping land disputes (p. 74).

The escalation from social and economic contestation to overt violence is the focus of the third chapter. With the rise of Sultan Abdülhamid II and the shock of the 1877–1978 Russo-Ottoman War, fears over demographic shifts intensified. The Hamidian massacres (1894–1897) are examined as a turning point, when dispossession became entangled with state-sanctioned violence, profoundly reshaping the Armenian land issue. Here, Polatel highlights a key difference from the period discussed in the previous chapter: not only Armenian peasants, but also large landowners were affected, as their properties were seized as well. Thus, 'the basis of land disputes concerning Armenians shifted from class to ethno-religious differences' (p. 83). Moreover, the violence and dispossession extended beyond the eastern vilayets to include Armenians across the empire, including in Cilicia. The seizures occurred through various means: local Kurdish and Turkish actors, along with immigrant usurpers such as Karapapakhs and Circassians, appropriated land independently, while in other cases, the state directly confiscated property (sometimes even farms and factories) and transferred it to Muslim settlers. Polatel carefully maps this process both geographically and chronologically,

showing that the patterns of land seizure varied across regions. He argues that the mass violence and Hamidian massacres ultimately transformed the land question, as thousands of Armenians were killed or fled, leaving their land vulnerable to seizure by both local actors and the state. Furthermore, while locals at various levels felt emboldened to appropriate Armenian land, the state enacted laws that allowed it to legally confiscate the property of those who had fled massacres instigated by that very state.

While orchestrating mass violence and land seizures, the Ottoman state was equally determined to control their outcomes. This is the focus of the fourth chapter, which investigates the state's active role in managing and exploiting land disputes. Drawing on correspondence among various state agencies, as well as orders, laws (such as the ban on Armenians selling land to other Armenians), and agreements issued by the Sublime Porte, the chapter explores the policies designed to shape the aftermath of Armenian dispossession. These include the settlement of Muslim immigrants on Armenian lands, and efforts to prevent Armenian refugees from returning. Polatel argues that 'instead of merely reacting to events, the central government actively shaped the outcomes of mass violence and the processes of property transfer' (p. 117). For instance, the state blocked the return of Armenians from Russia to their homes, and as Polatel notes, the concern at Yıldız Palace was not rebellion but rather their Armenian-ness itself and the potential increase of the Armenian population in the region (p. 124). Instead, the government engaged in demographic engineering by settling Muslim immigrants in formerly Armenian-inhabited provinces (p. 132).

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 brought new hopes to oppressed Armenians, promising equality, legal protection, and a renewed debate over land ownership, an issue explored in the fifth chapter. This chapter analyzes the policy negotiations between Armenian political actors and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), as well as the local resistance reform efforts encountered in the provinces. It vividly illustrates the interplay between central policies and local dynamics, showing how local *beys* and *aghas* became servants of the new regime. As the CUP relied on their support, the return of lands previously seized by these powerholders became a contentious issue. Many of them appealed directly to the Sublime Porte, portraying themselves as victims of unjust local officials. Even in cases where land was formally returned to Armenians, Kurdish tribes often used violence to prevent them from cultivating it. This complicated position of the government began to shift around 1910, when the CUP changed its approach to land ownership and 'began to see land as a means of ethno-religious domination' (p. 155). From that point onward, laws were implemented to restrict Armenians from reclaiming their lands and to facilitate the settlement of Muslim immigrants in formerly Armenian-inhabited regions, i.e. patterns resembling the Hamidian era. This shift was solidified by the rapprochement between Kurdish tribal leaders and the central government (p. 158). While the Armenian Patriarchate and other institutions attempted to resolve the issue through the legal channels created by the CUP such as submitting memoranda that were formally discussed by the government, the state showed little interest in resolving the underlying injustices. It was more concerned with settling immigrants and securing the loyalty of Kurdish chiefs than with addressing Armenian complains.

This shifting approach of the Young Turk government deepened with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, during which the Ottoman Empire lost significant territories, a development explored in the sixth chapter of the book. Among the consequences of the wars, the influx of new waves of Muslim refugees and the growing strategic importance of Anatolia were directly tied to the land issue. Taking into account the role of the Great Powers, their rivalries, and the nationalization of the empire's economy, this chapter examines Armenian efforts to resolve the land question by internationalizing the reform debates. This stood in contrast to the state's approach, which aimed to domesticate these very reforms in order to reduce foreign interference (pp. 196–204). Although international pressure compelled the government to draft reform plans, tensions escalated in the provinces. As Polatel demonstrates, the attempted resolution of land disputes only deepened local distrust.

The seventh and final chapter examines the state of land disputes on the eve of the First World War, highlighting the perspectives and actions of both Armenian and Kurdish political and religious elites. By this point, the land issue was no longer merely a question of property for either side. As Polatel writes, 'at the end of this period, it was clear to all parties that what was at stake in these disputes was not only economic resources and a very critical means of production but also the key to establishing or maintaining political sovereignty and ethno-national dominance' (p. 221). The land question and related reforms had deep ethno-national significance for Armenians. Intellectuals described the emigration of Armenians from their homeland, shaped by decades of land seizure and violence, as a 'great disaster' (*medz aghed*) (pp. 223–224). Thus, the reforms were the only hope remaining. On the Kurdish side, political and religious leaders had their own reasons to resist reforms, viewing them as a potential path toward Christian dominance and as pressure to return seized lands. Within this context, rising Kurdish nationalism began to incorporate territorial claims (p. 226). The tensions were further intensified by Russian interference. As Polatel shows, while Russia supported Armenian demands for reform, it also provided backing to Kurdish powerholders and political elites who opposed those same reforms (p. 225). By this time, mistrust had reached such a level that even sincere reform efforts often failed or provoked hostility. In 1914, the land issue was closely tied to the competing territorial claims of Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish nationalisms. This chapter concludes the book by reinforcing one of its central arguments: unresolved land disputes and failed reforms played a key role in creating the conditions that led to the genocidal violence that followed.

Although the book presents a thoroughly researched and compelling narrative, certain methodological choices and contextual gaps warrant further elaboration to enhance the clarity and scope of the study. The first issue is methodological. Ostensibly, to support his argument, Mehmet Polatel draws on an impressively rich and diverse body of primary sources. The book is grounded in extensive archival research, particularly from the T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı (Ottoman State Archive) in Istanbul, the National Archives of the United Kingdom in London, the AGBU Nubar Library in Paris, and the USC Shoah Foundation. However, while the author makes impressive use of a wide range of primary sources, enriching the narra-

tive with detail and depth, the criteria for selecting these sources remain unclear. For instance, out of the many Armenian periodicals available at the time, the author draws only on *Azadamart* and *Harach*, while other contemporary publications are not considered. This raises the question of how the author chose which periodicals to include. The same concern applies to other categories of primary sources as well.

Second, although the book focuses on the Armenian land question, it also effectively highlights the role of other stakeholders, particularly Kurdish tribal leaders. This raises further questions: Who were these figures? How did the Kurdish tribal system shape land conflicts? And how did nomadic Kurds become instruments not only of the Ottoman state but also of external powers? While it is understandable that the book cannot offer a comprehensive account of Kurdish history or the development of Kurdish nationalism, a brief discussion of the structure of Kurdish tribal life and the key actors involved would help address questions likely to arise in the reader's mind.

Despite these minor shortcomings, the book stands as a significant contribution to the study of late Ottoman history. Taken together, its seven chapters construct a comprehensive and compelling narrative that weaves land, violence, and nationalism into a cohesive analytical framework. In doing so, the book addresses not only empirical developments but also engages with the complex theoretical questions surrounding the interplay between violence and nationalism.

Eser, Ümit. 2024. *Ethnic Cleansing in Western Anatolia, 1912–1923: Ottoman Officials and the Local Christian Population***.** Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 312 pages. ISBN Hardback: 9781399533249.

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As Aristotle asserted, humans are inherently political beings (*zoon politikon*). However, it is essential to acknowledge that Turkish historiography has never been that deeply politicized since Kemalist era. This politicization presents significant challenges in navigating and interpreting historical sources within a framework often dominated by nationalist discourses. With this book, the readers will see a good example of how the history is contested.

Ümit Eser's book represents a bold attempt to challenge the dominant narratives of Turkish nationalist historiography by offering an alternative perspective on the catastrophic events of 1912–1923. While the author aims for objectivity, the narrative's critical stance toward existing historical accounts is consistently apparent, positioning it as a counter-narrative rather than a purely detached analytical study. This raises critical questions about its methodological distinction from the often amateurish nationalist histories produced during the early Republican era. Beyond its stated goal of deconstructing the mainstream Turkish historical narrative and examining archives from an 'other' perspective, the book fails to establish a clear structural or theoretical advancement over the narratives it seeks to critique. One of its most significant shortcomings is the lack of a deterministic perspective in analyzing the events of this period. Out of many examples, the discussion of the Great Fire of Smyrna in 1922 and the destruction of Greek and Armenian neighborhoods remains incomplete without a comparative analysis of the 1917 Great Fire of Thessaloniki, which predominantly devastated Muslim and Jewish areas and facilitated the city's transformation into a Hellenic space. This omission suggests a missed opportunity to fully situate events within their regional and transnational contexts, which could have further enhanced the book's analytical depth.

Furthermore, the book inadequately addresses the sociological and economic dimensions of the mass migration of Muslim refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus to Western Anatolia following the Balkan Wars. While the trauma narratives carried by these refugees and their impact on local communities are briefly mentioned, they are not explored in sufficient detail. The recollections of the newcomers have never been mentioned in the book. The atrocities committed against Orthodox Christians are reductively attributed to the political agenda of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), without a deeper examination of the underlying socio-economic tensions rooted in mass-migration, loss of Ottoman territories. For instance, the class divisions between non-Muslim business owners and Muslim laborers, exacerbated by the influx of refugees and the resulting economic instability, are oversimplified as mere economic

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 2/2025, S. 462–465, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-2-462

resentment rather than being analyzed within a broader structural framework. These theoretical and contextual gaps limit the book's ability to provide a nuanced understanding of the period. While it represents a courageous effort to challenge official historiography, its lack of methodological rigor and deterministic analysis ultimately hinders its contribution to the field.

The book's failure to adopt a holistic approach to the region significantly limits its analytical depth. By excluding critical factors such as the tensions arising from the Cretan Revolt, the Balkan Wars, and the activities of non-Muslim brigands, the narrative reduces the complexities of the period to the political machinations of a few 'elites.' This oversimplification is reflected in the author's reliance on subjective terminology, such as 'agitator Unionists,' 'Unionist conspiracies,' and 'menace of nationalists,' which appears to be driven by a desire to challenge the master narrative of Turkish historiography. While the author incorporates certain memoirs and reports preserved in archival materials, they notably avoid accounts that might reveal the mobilization of local Muslims or the motivations behind atrocities against non-Muslim heritage. The selective use of sources, focusing predominantly on Turkish actions, limits the portrayal of retaliatory violence and aligns the narrative with a critique of Kemalist Turkey's nationalist discourse and myth-building policies. Including a broader range of perspectives could have provided a more comprehensive understanding.

On the other hand, the book does provide a structured and insightful analysis of the economic motives behind the Muslimization of capital, offering a valuable perspective on the economic roots of hostility toward non-Muslim communities in the late Ottoman Empire. However, this section focusing on economic dimension largely reiterates arguments already well-established in foundational works by scholars such as Feroz Ahmad and Erik Jan Zürcher, who have extensively documented the political motivations of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) following the Young Turk Revolution. While the book does offer some valuable insights into the local implementation of CUP policies, a more thorough exploration of these regional dynamics would have strengthened its contribution to the historiography of this period.

The book, at several points, exhibits terminological inaccuracies and inadvertently replicates some of the flaws found in official historiography, particularly in its treatment of local bandits and irregulars. The author, while emphasizing the role of bandits and army deserters, employs problematic terminology, such as referring to them as 'efes and their gunmen' (p. 216) or characterizing them merely as individuals seeking to profit from warfare (p. 7). These descriptions are both historically and terminologically imprecise. The term '*zeibeks*' (or '*zeybeks*') is the more historically accurate and widely used designation, rooted in a brigandry tradition that dates back to the 17th century in Western Anatolia. This term appears consistently in Ottoman archival records and oral histories, reflecting their established social and cultural significance. The book's assertion regarding the 'social banditry' aspect of these groups could benefit from a more thorough engagement with the extensive academic literature on the *zeibek* tradition and its socio-historical characteristics. Both archival evidence and oral recollections from rural communities in Western Anatolia contradict this claim, as they vividly preserve memories of specific bandits and their motivations. For instance, figures such as Küçük

Hüseyin Efe and Sökeli Cafer Efe are remembered not only for their actions but also for their alignment with war profiting (the first one) and nationalist sentiments (second one), illustrating the complex interplay between banditry and political mobilization. By overlooking these nuances, the author misses an opportunity to critically engage with the collective memory of these communities, which remains largely untapped in academic research.

Furthermore, the author's selective use of primary sources undermines the work's credibility. The heavy reliance on European narratives, which are often difficult to assess for objectivity, alongside occasional references to Muslim sources, creates an imbalanced portrayal of events. For example, the author cites political remarks by nationalist Unionists (p. 195) to support his arguments, while also presenting isolated cases, such as the signatures of a *mufti* and *evkaf* officials on a document expressing gratitude to Greek occupiers (p. 8), as evidence of broader Muslim sentiment. This approach is methodologically flawed, as it extrapolates from exceptional cases to make generalized claims. Such a methodology would be akin to citing Papa Eftim (Pavlos Karahisaridis) as representative of the Karamanlides' support for nationalist cadres between 1919 and 1922, which would be an oversimplification of a highly complex historical reality. By failing to critically evaluate the representativeness and context of these sources, the author weakens the analytical rigor of the work and limits its contribution to the historiography of this period

The book's treatment of demographic engineering during the Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey contains significant inaccuracies, particularly in its characterization of the Turkish state's settlement policies. The author erroneously claims that the state carefully ensured non-Turkish-speaking refugees did not exceed 20% of the population in villages, neighborhoods, or cities in Western Anatolia. Historical evidence, however, contradicts this assertion. Numerous settlements, including Marmara Island (inhabited by Cretan Greeks), Davutlar and Akköy in Aydın (also Cretan Greeks), Bağarası in Aydın (Pomaks and Tatars), Gözsüz in Tekirdağ (Aromanians), Tirilye in Bursa (Cretan Greeks), and Mursallı in Aydın (Albanians, Valaades, and Patriot Greeks), were predominantly or entirely populated by non-Turkish-speaking refugees, many of whom continue to speak their native languages today. This oversight suggests a less comprehensive engagement with the demographic realities of the period, which could impact the reader's perception of the book's accuracy on this issue.

Additionally, the book suffers from an opaque referencing methodology. In numerous instances, the author describes events in Western Anatolia without providing clear citations to archival sources, leaving readers unable to verify claims or explore the evidence further. This lack of transparency detracts from the work's academic rigor and limits its utility as a scholarly resource.

In summary, while the book is commendable for its bold attempt to challenge Turkish nationalist historiography – a goal that is indeed necessary – it falls short of delivering an objective, well-researched academic product. The book's focus on challenging established narratives sometimes appears to take precedence over a more detailed nuanced analysis that could have further emerged from the archival work. A more holistic approach, incorporating the 'post-memory' of subsequent generations and

allowing readers to draw their own conclusions, would have significantly strengthened the work. Such an approach would have been particularly valuable in the context of Turkish academia, where denialist narratives remain prevalent. Ultimately, the book could have further strengthened its contribution by offering an even more balanced and academically robust critique of nationalist historiography.

Fratantuono, Ella. 2024. *Governing Migration in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 288 pages. ISBN (e-Book): 9781399521864.

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In her influential book, Ella Fratantuono explores migration in the late Ottoman Empire, emphasizing how the regulation of mobility, related institutions, and prominent Ottoman officials contributed to the effort of establishing a rationalized, modern state. Fratantuono explicitly states throughout the book that she intends to move beyond the traditional dichotomy of *mülteci* (*voluntary* refugee(s)) and *muhacir* (*enforced* migrant(s)) found in the literature, or distinctions among the concepts that appeared in the Ottoman manuscripts such as *koloni*, *mülteci*, *muhacir*, or *firar*i, usually in flux. She argues that to fully comprehend the Ottoman migration regime, one must focus on the *outcomes* rather than the *motivations* or concepts behind migration. For this very reason, Fratantuono mainly employs the concept of *muhacir.*

She begins with the issuance of the *Muhaccirin Nizamnamesi* in 1857 to that end, which aligned with the 1858 Land Code and the Tanzimat edict's egalitarian promises. The Ottoman Empire sought to become a destination for colonists in the *age of migration* and engaged with Western embassies to attract colonists, promising agricultural concessions in arable lands. According to Fratantuono, the first *ideal muhacirs* were colonists whom Ottoman officials welcomed to boost agricultural production amid economic turmoil and strengthen ties within the fragmented *millet system*. However, Fratantuono notes a gap between these regulations and the state's organizational capacity, as land availability for new settlers was still unknown. Thus, mapping the lands became necessary, as exemplified in Captain Tahsin Efendi's seeking to identify suitable lands in West Anatolia and Rumelia (p. 38). The lands envisioned and planned to be productive with colonization and concessions, however, served to unanticipated *muhacirs* who were deported from the Caucasus by the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, the purpose of the Ottoman governance, which precedes the *outcomes* rather than motivation, remained unaltered. As in the Mecidiye example, Ottoman officials viewed immigration as an opportunity for urban planning and economic development, and it created an unambiguous Ottoman identity, whether it be European colonists or Muslim *muhacirs*.

Fratantuono portrays how the Ottoman Empire governed mobility in the 1850s and 1860s by focusing on an Ottoman official, Nusret Pasha, who 'defined space, organized population and collected data' (p. 63). Emerged as a problem that needed to be solved and, at the same time, a potential solution to the economic and political crisis, the question of *muhacir* became a tool for constructing domestic and international politics. The very attempt to forge legible populations who could obligate as well as contribute to the economy could bring, in Nusret Pasha's words, *order and politics* (p. 74), elimi-

nating nomadism and ignorance. However, challenges such as infrastructure, diseases, and large-scale Tatar and Circassian migration from Russia disrupted the envisioned developmentist and civilizing state. *Muhacir* became *a problem* to solve regarding settlement, distribution of resources, and coping with diseases in Rumelia and Anatolia. Fratantuono explicitly argues that this failure was not an accident but an outcome of the developmentalist ethos of Tanzimat, with social engineering and control of migration becoming priorities for good governance. Nusret Pasha's proposition of a mapping system rather than merely registration to categorize *muhacirs* based on wealth and productivity for reducing budget deficits epitomizes Fratantuono's perspective that prominent Ottoman officials dynamically sought to find new institutional and governing strategies.

In chapter three, Fratantuono highlights the portrayal of *muhacir as victims* used by the Ottoman Empire to improve its centralization and modernization efforts through health management, press portrayals, and philanthropy. Circassian migration following the Crimean War across the sea to the port cities around the Black Sea, such as Trabzon and Samsun, happened in very harsh weather conditions and caused the spreading of diseases. The overwhelming subsequent migration from the Balkans following the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War deteriorated not only the conditions of *muhacirs* settled in the cities around the Black Sea but also the overland cities in the Rumelia and Anatolia. Fratantuono does not restate these environmental conditions or the spreading of epidemic diseases, but she uniquely draws attention to how officials approached these unfortunate events and how they influenced the institutional state-building project of the Ottoman Empire through two key concepts: Public health and philanthropy. Ottoman Quarantine Council (*Meclis-i Tahaffuz*) and Constantinople Superior Health Council influenced the attitude of the Ottoman Empire against plague and cultivated the image of a modern Muslim state. European physicians after the 1860s and 1870s often criticized Ottoman practices, pushing for an infectionist approach to combat disease. As a result, the confinement of *muhacirs* became a common public health measure aimed at reinforcing the Empire's civilized image. Simultaneously, the Ottoman Empire used philanthropic efforts, such as the *Turkish Compassionate Fund* and *İane Committee*, to manage the *muhacir* issue, framing it within the Eastern Question. This allowed officials to categorize and control the population, ultimately legitimizing decisions regarding their lives and assessing economic productivity by age and gender.

Fratantuono points out one more time in chapter four that *failure* should not be evaluated with the linear and basic perspective but with governing and social engineering. Instead, one should view this failure as inherent *to governmental projects*, a comprehensive hegemony through which not merely migrants but officials were disciplined. In the face of the displacement of Muslim people from the Balkan region following the war in 1877–1878, the land that would have been planned settlement for *muhacirin* in Rumelia fell short. Subsequently, a new idea emerged that the Anatolian cities could also be *productive* locations for migrants both economically and politically. However, the organised, regularised, and numbered spatial plans for the migrants encountered significant challenges as the relationship among the migrants, Turkish notables, and the local people was becoming chaotic. Thus, Fratantuono emphasizes mainly the

gap between the settlement plans the officials thought of and practices implemented throughout the Hamidian period. Again, novelly, by integrating actors such as official Muzaffer Pasha and commissioner Ahmed Pasha and structure, she seminally portrays that these failures and critiques caused the emergence of Anatolia as a new spatial, settlement location. Underlying the role of Muzaffer Pasha's and other commissioners' efforts in the process, Fratantuono shows how this failure led to the emergence of new alternatives and tools for making *muhacirin* productive.

In chapter five, Fratantuono discusses the Hamidian period, during which the migration regime was built into an ethos that the 'ideal *muhacir* was the Muslim *muhacir*' (p. 176). In the era of demographic change and nascent nationalism(s), the Ottoman Empire also sought new alternatives to govern to ensure its sovereignty and resist the European intervention following the Treaty of Berlin, in which predominantly Armenian and Macedonian Questions unfolded. Fratantuono accurately operates the concept of *Islamic Ottomanism* rather than *pan-Islamism* to highlight this centralizing and ethno-natinalist agenda. Migration politics likewise were influenced by the Empire's politico-ethical approach regarding mobility and its restriction. While Muslim immigrants were able to easily enter the empire, Armenians were not permitted to immigrate to the US due to suspicions that they might incite a rebellion upon their return. For that, Anatolia, especially Eastern Anatolia, gained importance as Armenian revolutionaries and Kurdish clans jeopardized the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Muslim migrants from the Balkans could contribute to the economic progress of the state and break the superior place of non-Muslims in the economy. As explicitly appeared in the reports of Ahmet and Suleyman and the new institutions, such as the Commission for Muslim Migrants (*Muhacirin-i İslamiye Komisyonu*) in 1897, the Muslim population was prioritized to be settled in the agricultural areas. The concept of *hijra*, a religious/spiritual concept in Islam recalling the migration of prophet Muhammad and his followers to *Medina*, was used to justify this attempt, providing Ottoman practices with a rational ground.

In the final chapter, Fratantuono delves into the concept of the *muhacir* as a possibility, exploring its potential implications during the Second Constitutional Era, commonly referred to as the 1908 Revolution. Fratantuono discusses that the question, 'Who is a muhacir?' remains tied to the sixty years debate about 'who constitutes the ideal Ottoman subject' during this era. As revealed in the journal published by the Society for Rumelian Muslim Migrants (*Rumeli Muhacirin-i Islamiye Cemiyeti*), *muhacir* became a subject who could imagine himself or herself contributing to Ottoman society. On the other hand, the debates on the term *hijra* and *muhacirness* mainly unfolded during the Hamidian era were ongoing. The general idea was that hijra undermined Islam, and people who still live in the Rumelia should be connected to the country they reside in to preserve their religion. Ultimately, the main idea that *muhacirs* in the borders of the empire had emotional and material duty through 'sacrifice and willingness to participate' (p. 209) was stronger. In the debates in parliament, Ottomanism was still placed in a line of inquiry. With the aim of disengaging from the politics and migration regime of Abdulhamid II, the politicians lifted the ban on the return of Armenian and Bulgarian Ottoman citizens, also remaking the unity (*anasır*) of subject

of the Empire. However, the fact that Armenian MPs questioned the aid provided to Muslim immigrants from the Balkan Wars shows that the decision on who would be excluded and included in Ottoman modernization has not yet been made. The precise point is that even though some personally experienced suffering and losing their homes, Ottoman officials handled the migration issue in a way that allowed the Empire to gain more productivity and subjectivity ties.

In her comprehensive book, Fratantuono explores six decades of migration narratives to the Ottoman territories, meticulously examining the intricate interplay of laws, institutional frameworks, and structural dynamics that shaped these movements. She highlights the roles of key actors involved in this complex process, drawing on an extensive array of large-scale and richly detailed sources to provide a profound understanding of the historical context and implications of migration during this period. First, Fratantuono claims that while the tactics and strategies employed varied across different cases and regions, three core components of Ottoman governance strategy remained constant, as seen above: governmentality, social engineering, and failure. Secondly, she, throughout the book, underscores the importance of ascertaining outcomes over understanding motivations in order to fully grasp the narrative of emigration to the Ottoman Empire. Lastly, Fratantuono places Ottoman immigration in the late Ottoman Empire into a global context, comparing it with other state practices on mobility control. Overall, this engaging book merits high praise for inviting readers to explore the intriguing connections between migration and state-making by moving beyond the vicious dichotomies.