

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF HISTORICAL WRITING

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GENERAL EDITOR

*The Oxford History of  
Historical Writing*

VOLUME 4: 1800–1945

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OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# Chapter 27

## Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing<sup>1</sup>

*Cemal Kafadar and Hakan T. Karateke*

The Ottomans had a long tradition of composing biographical dictionaries, the scope of which ranged from poets to scholars and from statesmen to florists. A biographical dictionary for historians was compiled only in 1843, however. Mehmed Cemaleddin, an editor and proofreader at the Ottoman official gazette, *Taqvim-i veqayi* [Calendar of Events], who was commissioned with the task, admits that it proved unfeasible for him to examine all the unpublished works of history in the manuscript libraries and gather information on their lesser-known authors. Thus he decided simply to include those authors whose works were commonly in circulation and came up with some forty-six history-writers for his dictionary, which covers a broad period from the sixteenth century to the 1840s.<sup>2</sup> He makes only one obvious classification, treating the historians who occupied the imperial post of annals-writer as one group (*vaqanüvis*), and the rest of the historians as another (*müverrih*). If the historians in the biographer's first group collected wages from the imperial treasury, the individuals in the second group were also certainly no freelance historians. The *majority* of Ottoman history-writing up to the nineteenth century was either directly commissioned by the court, or submitted to the statesmen from within the court circles in the hope of monetary or professional recognition—or, alternatively, the authors were actually court affiliates or members of the central bureaucracy. Before the nineteenth century, there was little scope for an historian to write professionally and survive financially other than by writing under the patronage of a court member in Istanbul.

<sup>1</sup> 'Ottoman' historical writing necessarily includes any historical work, written in any language, ranging from Arabic to Armenian and Persian to Serbian, by any Ottoman subject. While a comparative survey of all history-writing in the Ottoman lands would be the desired treatment of this subject, this chapter aims, for practical reasons, to include only historians who wrote in Turkish.

<sup>2</sup> Mehmed Cemaleddin, *Osmanlı tarih ve müverrihleri: Âyine-i zurefa* (Istanbul, 1314/1896–97), 4; new edn by M. Arslan (Istanbul, 2003), 25.

This circumstance had two clear consequences. First, imperial ideology came to constitute the general framework for history-writing from the fifteenth century. The most prominent characteristic was the avoidance of an unfavourable stance towards the embraced pillars of the state, such as the Ottoman ruling doctrine of securing 'world order' (*nizam-ı alem*), or current or recent policies, which could possibly jeopardize the greater good of 'religion and state' (*din ü devlet*) in the common rhetoric, that is the contemporary government. There are a few known instances of a court historian submitting a work to the court and being advised to rewrite parts of it, especially those concerning events that had a direct bearing on contemporary politics.<sup>3</sup> However, critical remarks on the government's policies did find their way into many works, either originating from the critical mind of the historian (Naima, early eighteenth century), or stemming from frustration about unrealized prospects (Âli, late sixteenth century), or a personal conflict or discontent with members of the ruling apparatus (Kuşmani, early nineteenth century). Especially after the late sixteenth century, those with a critical viewpoint interpreted many developments as signs of disorder and decline compared with the age of the great sultans from Mehmed II to Süleyman I; this decline-and-reform discourse, which hovered between the analytical and the polemical, found great resonance. Even the imperial annalists could make critical remarks about former sultans in a direct or indirect manner, when the current political and intellectual climate rendered the policies of these rulers passé. This strategy was also employed by historians to obliquely criticize the current government. The second consequence of the fact that the majority of historians were writing at and for the court was that the works were invariably Istanbul-centred and written from the perspective of the imperial throne city. Istanbul was the centre of the world and all events in the provinces were mentioned only insofar as they had relevance to events in Istanbul.

Poetry had always been a more prestigious genre than prose in Ottoman literature. In line with the extensive Middle Eastern tradition, it was seen as a fertile ground for original imagery (*bikr-i mana*) and, indeed, creativity was one of the primary prerequisites of an accomplished poet. That is also why only poets among the literati were deemed worthy of having separate biographical dictionaries devoted to them, not on account of some professional identity but solely by virtue of the genre they were writing in. Thus the fact that a separate biographical dictionary for historians was compiled only in the nineteenth century does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in historical writing *per se*. Nevertheless, Ottoman poetry declined as a medium for historical narrative from the seventeenth century, and lost out by the nineteenth century to the more 'rational' writing style of prose.

Ottoman historical writing was governed by clear expectations. Empiricism, be it accurate coverage of narrative sources or interviews with witnesses of events,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bekir Kütükoğlu, 'Vekâyinüvis', *İslam ansiklopedisi*, 13 (1982), 282.

and especially the use of archival resources, was vital. However, the systematic use of hard evidence, such as dedicatory inscriptions or coinage, was not a familiar method. Many works, and especially those by imperial annalists, transcribed significant documents *in extenso*, clearly as a claim to excellence. A critical evaluation of official state documents, however, was not a common practice. Whereas poetry had protective mechanisms against plagiarism of imagery, historians freely transcribed long passages without any reference to their source. However, there was obviously some awareness of the issue, as several historians were careful to identify their sources. An author's style, analytical skills, and organization of the work, not to mention wittiness, were the decisive determinants of quality, and hardly anyone was concerned with originality. Since events could not possibly be a product of a creative imagination, but were either witnessed or recorded, it was assumed that once they were recorded, such accounts were common property.

### IMPERIAL ANNALS

The Ottoman court had regularly employed an imperial annalist since the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the coverage of the annals begins in the seventeenth century, with a gap of a few years caused by unrest in the city, and apart from the records from most of the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), which have yet to turn up.<sup>4</sup> The established practice was that, once appointed to his post, an annalist would continue to cover events from the time when his predecessor left off. This might require him to treat events before his time—ideally with the documentation he received from his predecessor and through access to the state archives. He was also expected to keep a record of current events, which he might find opportunity to work into a coherent narrative and submit to the court, or else leave as source material for his successor.

The annalists were often chosen from the central bureaucracy, more specifically from the prestigious group of court scribes, the *hacegân*, or else they were members of the *ulema* class (from either a juridical or professorial background). They would be scholars with a sound education in philology, and religious and other sciences, but not necessarily in history. In fact, the annalists' philological and epistolary skills were often the primary qualification for their appointment. An additional pattern can be discerned in the nineteenth century: although still

<sup>4</sup> For example, the years 1142/1729–30 and 1201–2/1787–9 are missing. Cf. Mehmed Ârif, 'Silsile-i vukuat-ı Devlet-i aliyyeden zabt edilmeyen 1142 senesi hadisati', *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni mecmuası*, 1 (1328/1910), 53–64; Christoph K. Neumann, *Das indirekte Argument: ein Plädoyer für die Tanzîmât vermittelt der Historie: die geschichtliche Bedeutung von Ahmed Cevdet Paşas Ta'vîh* (Münster, 1994), 32; and cf. Küttükoğlu, 'Vekâyinüvis', 271–87.

**Table 27.1.** The nineteenth-century imperial annalists and the periods covered by their works

| Annalist                        | Dates in office   | Period covered                              |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Ahmed Vasif (4th time; d. 1806) | 1799–1806         | 1800–4                                      |
| Mehmed Perrev (d. 1807)         | 1807 (5 months)   | Left scattered notes                        |
| Ömer Âmir (d. 1815)             | 1807–8 (3 months) | Left scattered notes                        |
| Ahmed Asım (d. 1819)            | 1808–19           | 1805–July 1808                              |
| Şanizade (d. 1826)              | 1819–25           | July 1808–August 1821                       |
| Mehmed Esad (d. 1848)           | 1825–48           | September 1821–July 1825                    |
| Recai Mehmed (d. 1874)          | 1848–53           | No known work                               |
| Nail Mehmed (d. 1855)           | 1853–5            | No known work                               |
| Ahmed Cevdet (d. 1895)          | 1855–66           | [1774–1826]*                                |
| Ahmed Lutfi (d. 1907)           | 1866–1907         | August 1825–May 1876<br>[1876–1908 missing] |
| Abdurrahman Şeref (d. 1925)     | 1909–19           | July 1908–August 1909**                     |

\* Not a sequel to the foregoing imperial annals.

\*\* Further work by this historian is likely to surface.

being selected for their philological skills, the imperial annalists were now chosen from among the writers and editors of the official gazette, the *Taqqim-i veqayi* (first issue 1831). All the imperial annalists of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Ahmed Cevdet, held a position at the gazette. (See Table 27.1 for a list of nineteenth-century imperial annalists.)

The common designation for an annalist in the nineteenth century was a *vaqanüvis*, which literally meant an ‘event-writer’. Certain kinds of incidents typically qualified as an event, such as courtly, diplomatic, and military affairs, appointments, and the biographies of deceased persons of note. Some historians clearly knew how to enliven the narrative with additional details. Ahmed Cevdet’s biographical excursions, masterfully interwoven with more serious accounts of political events, possess entertaining qualities. It was not unusual to discuss the philosophy and methodology of historical writing in the introduction. Events were recounted chronologically in a linear, one-dimensional fashion, and were organized into months and years, although flashbacks were not uncommon features in the narrative. Occasionally, the narrative of a record would be interrupted when the events stretched over to the following year, and would be resumed under the heading for the next year.

The influence of the majority of the annalists has been restricted. Their works still remain unedited, and the essential qualities of their historical writing have not attracted sustained scholarly attention. One remarkable exception is Ahmed Cevdet, who wrote a twelve-volume history covering the years 1774–1826, which, because of its early publication and the author’s fluid style, had an enormous effect



on later scholarship on this era.<sup>5</sup> However, Cevdet was unusual in that he did not write his history as a sequel to the foregoing imperial annals. He was initially commissioned by the Academy of Sciences (*Encümen-i danış*) to undertake a re-evaluation of this age of reforms, and only later appointed annalist. Furthermore, he probably owes his fame more to his witty and gossipy journals (*Tezâkir*), which he kept during his tenure as imperial annalist, than to his history-writing.

Although Ahmed Lutfi, imperial annalist for more than forty years (1866–1907), was harshly criticized for having used the *Taqvim-i veqayi* as his main source,<sup>6</sup> given the nature of this official gazette the criticism is not totally justified. *Taqvim* emerged more or less as a ‘blog’ of events, not so different from the *ceride-i yevmiyyes* (daily journals), which the annalists were accustomed to keep in order to pass on to their successors as source material. As we have seen, several of the writers and editors of the gazette were imperial annalists. Hence there is reason to believe that the *Taqvim* was regarded almost as a contemporaneous chronicle. It was inevitably viewed as a new medium of historical writing, with its tacitly accepted role of expressing the state’s position on events. The publishers mentioned in the first issue that it sometimes took twenty to thirty years until people had access to history books written about recent events, and that one of the purposes of the gazette would be to provide immediate access to historiography. What qualified as ‘news’ in the gazette was not very different from what would be included in an Ottoman annal.

Ahmed Lutfi had his own complaints. Apparently, he did not receive an abundance of source material for the period with which he was charged, and ready access to the archives was not provided to him. The main reason for his dissatisfaction, however, seems to be the waning importance and prestige of the office of imperial annalist. A critical approach to the conventions of annal-writing had emerged by the mid-nineteenth century. A revealing petition submitted to the grand vizier by Recai Mehmed just after his appointment to the post of imperial annalist in 1848 indicates that even he found the tradition problematic at this point.<sup>7</sup> In his petition to the grand vizier requesting assistants, Recai Mehmed suggested that the traditional practices had inevitably produced a one-sided historiography. The use of primary sources written from the perspective of the political entities with which the Ottoman state was in conflict would bring about a more balanced view. Recai Mehmed thus considered the unilateral nature of the sources to be the main shortcoming of the annals written by his predecessors.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Devlet-i aliyye*, 12 vols. (Istanbul, 1854–84).

<sup>6</sup> For example A. Şeref in his introduction to vol. 8 of Ahmed Lutfi’s *Tarih* (Istanbul, 1906), 3; Mükrimin Halil Yinanç, ‘Tanzimattan Meşrutiyete kadar bizde tarihçilik’, in *Tanzimat I* (Istanbul, 1940), 575; and Ercüment Kuran, ‘Ottoman Historiography of the Tanzimat Period’, in Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 423.

<sup>7</sup> Recorded in Mehmed Cemaleddin, *Osmanlı tarih ve müverrihleri*, 105–11; Arslan edn, 99–103.

<sup>8</sup> Criticisms along the same line were also expressed in Hayrullah Efendi’s *Veqayi-i Devlet-i aliyye Osmaniyye* (Istanbul, 1856–75).

A similarly disapproving approach towards earlier historiography became almost a standard thread in later discussions on historical writing, and it became increasingly harsh and dismissive in tone. The annalists were again the target of reproach, but the main points of criticism were different. The primary critiques were that the annalists recorded events in chronological order without seeking to elucidate any causal relationship between them; and that they were writing to justify the actions of the powerful statesmen. In the 1910s, when Mehmed Murad, a Daghestani émigré, accused the popular historian Ahmed Refik of, among other things, unduly justifying a former grand vizier's political actions, he declared that Refik's attitude resembled that of an 'old annalist's'. In his response, Refik dissociated himself from any tradition of annalistic historical writing. In comparing his two sources for the event under discussion, Refik was clearly dismissive of the eighteenth-century annalist Raşid and praised the German historian Wilhelm Bigge.<sup>9</sup>

As historical writing evolved into a scholarly and investigative discipline, many historians of the new generation lamented that the earlier Ottoman historians and annalists had not written analytical monographs. The controversy surrounding the value of the annals has left its mark on Turkish historical scholarship. Modern historiography has a contradictory relationship with these accounts. On the one hand, it regrets that little information other than on battles, official appointments, or sultans' activities can be found in the annals. On the other hand, probably due to their almost uninterrupted coverage and easy accessibility, it makes extensive use of some of the annals, so that they continue to shape the modern historiography on the Ottoman Empire.

## INDEPENDENT HISTORIES

Until the nineteenth century, the model historical narrative was a well-disseminated, lengthy, and prestigious history produced by the court or for some courtly person. Even then, it could be further disseminated through copies and extracts. One can even speak of a certain kind of uniformity in narrative techniques and historical methodology. Thereafter, and especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a rapid growth in the number of histories, the variety of subjects they covered, and the methodologies they utilized. With the democratization of historical writing, the court and the central bureaucracy ceased to be the sole centres of production of historical works and the time-honoured histories became less attractive as paradigm-setters. There were several reasons for this development.

<sup>9</sup> For details of this debate see Christoph Herzog, *Geschichte und Ideologie: Mehmed Murad und Celal Nuri über die historischen Ursachen des osmanischen Niedergangs* (Berlin, 1996), 83–7.

As a result of the educational policies of the nineteenth century, the percentage of educated people—in addition to those who received training at the palace, as an official scribe, or in the medreses—rose considerably. The new school system produced a new generation of history-writers, and increased the readership. With this shift in the educational background of the historians, fewer historians from the *ulema* composed historical works in the traditional format of Persian and Arabic historical writing. There was also an influx of émigrés of Turkic origin from the Russian Empire. Several of the prominent historians of the late Ottoman and early republican period were educated under the tsarist system. Finally, while the spread of newspapers towards the mid-nineteenth century provided new opportunities for political discussion, Sultan Abdülhamid II's (r. 1876–1909) ruled with an iron hand and censorship drove many public intellectuals to resort to historical writing as a safe haven for political commentary.<sup>10</sup> The theoretical foundations of the major political ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely Ottomanism and Turkish nationalism, were established primarily through the medium of historical writing.

An accomplished Ottoman author was ordinarily expected to use at least three classical Islamic languages, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian (*elsine-i selase*). Moreover, some had access to works written in Greek and Latin, others to works in German, and an increasing number to works in French. There was a growing desire to appropriate contemporary Western European methods of reasoning and scholarship, which in turn shaped historical writing along with other literary and scientific output. An even greater impetus for this appropriation was the gradual break from the Persian and Arabic historical traditions.

The translation of European historical works into Turkish, or their use as untranslated source materials, was one of the ways in which new historical methods were introduced. Turkish historical writing in this period made no original contribution to non-Ottoman historical writing: all works on non-Ottoman history were either direct translations of European works or else compilations. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's colossal *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* [History of the Ottoman Empire] (10 vols., 1827–35) was one of the major works that exerted a wide influence. Hammer's history was embraced without any hesitation, unlike Johann Zinkeisen's similarly impressive seven-volume history of the Ottoman State (1840–63), which used solely European sources and found little or no reception.<sup>11</sup> Hammer's command of the Turkish language and his extensive use of Ottoman sources (some even before they began to be appreciated by Turkish historical writers) must have played a role in this. Hayrullah's *Veqayi-i Devlet-i aliyye Osmaniyye* [History of the Ottoman State] (1856–75), quite an

<sup>10</sup> Neumann, *Das indirekte Argument*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches in Europa*, 7 vols. (Hamburg, 1840–63).

admired work during the years it was in print, was apparently also influenced by the French translation of Hammer's oeuvre. Other renowned historians, both serious and popular, such as Namık Kemal, Kamil Paşa, and Abdurrahman Şeref, were also influenced by Hammer's history, appropriating ideas and paraphrasing passages from his work.<sup>12</sup>

Ottoman historical writing had traditionally seen itself, and its main subject the Ottoman dynasty, as a chapter within Islamic history. No groundbreaking Islamic history based on unusual sources seems to have been composed in the nineteenth century. *Qisas-ı enbiya ve tevarih-i hulefa* [The Tales of Prophets and Histories of Caliphs] (1874–86), by Ahmed Cevdet, achieved great popularity, mostly due to its articulate and uncomplicated language. The narratives of many pre-nineteenth-century 'universal' histories, some beginning with the creation of the world, traditionally flowed into the rise of Islam and developed into a considerably more detailed story of Ottoman history. History was considered to be advancing (although not necessarily 'progressing') towards its inevitable destination, the end of the world or the Judgment Day, and the eternal Ottoman State (*devlet-i ebed-müddet*), as it was called, was considered the last major phase in Islamic history. Separate treatments of Western and Eastern calendar systems, titlature of sovereigns or imperial genealogies do exist, but non-Islamic history did not feature in any Ottoman universal history, or figured only modestly. Yet, the nineteenth century witnessed the advent of a totally new notion of universalism. The earlier tradition was now dismissed by a new generation of historians, who switched to the dominant Western European-centred historical writing. In the hope of earning a place for Turks among historical nations with a 'true' history, nationalistic historians such as Mustafa Celaleddin attempted to prove that the Turks were members of the white Aryan race. Even before the rise of outright nationalistic discourse, Ahmed Cevdet's *History* treated Ottoman history as part and parcel of a world history which had Europe as its centre. Hayrullah, too, took a similar approach in his *History of the Ottoman State*, which began publication in 1856. In the introduction to his *Mufasssal tarih-i qurun-ı cedide* [Complete History of the Modern Ages] (1886) Ahmed Midhat, a prolific journalist and popular historian, forthrightly criticized earlier Ottoman historians because of their failure to deal with civilizations other than Islamic ones. Earlier, Midhat had undertaken the initiative of first printing in his newspaper, and then publishing in more than a dozen volumes, a historical series titled 'The Universe'. The first part (Europe) included histories of modern European nations, whereas only one volume of the second part (Asia) was produced and it was devoted to the Ottoman Empire. Midhat's volumes did not perhaps set for themselves the ambition of being fine pieces of historical writing, since they were in effect translations from French, but they initiated the rise of a new concept of universalism.

<sup>12</sup> Yinanç, 'Tanzimattan Meşrutiyete kadar bizde tarihçilik', 577.

Through translated works, a periodization of history that was unfamiliar to the Ottomans came to the fore. Ahmed Hilmi, an assistant clerk in the Translation Office, referred to a discrepancy in historical periodization in the preface to his adapted translation of William Chambers's work (the first translated 'universal history' in Ottoman Turkish, published 1866–78).<sup>13</sup> The first volume, which contains numerous illustrations of the remains of ancient cultures, starts with the ancient Egyptians and continues with the Phoenicians, Assyrians, and other civilizations. Ahmed Hilmi mentions that one variant of periodization (conceivably the Ottoman one) divides the three eras of history as follows: the Ancient Ages (*ezmine-i müteqaddime*) from the creation of Adam to the departure of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina (that is, the Hejira); the Middle Ages (*ezmine-i mütevassıta*), from the Hejira to the conquest of Constantinople; and the Modern Ages (*ezmine-i müteahhire*), from the conquest of the city to the translator's lifetime. However, as the translator indicated, Chambers's work used somewhat different events to mark the same divisions: from the creation of Adam to the fall of the Roman Empire; from then to the discovery of the New World; and from the discovery of the New World to the author's lifetime. Ahmed Hilmi did not discuss this difference in detail, and the alternative periodization continued even into the twentieth century, when the Eurocentric view of world history came to dominate Turkish historiography.

Many smaller tracts, some written in the provinces, the majority of which would otherwise probably have vanished as manuscripts, were disseminated by means of the printing process. An even easier way to get published was to bring out a work in instalments in a newspaper or a journal: a representative example is by a certain Atif Mehmed of Crete, whose *Üssü'l-esas hükümü'l-hukûme* [The Origin of Principles], insignificant as an historical work, appeared in the local newspaper *İntibah* [The Awakening].<sup>14</sup> There were many pamphlets and monographs on remarkable events or military expeditions. Due to their being written near in time to the actual events, modern scholarship would probably regard these writings as investigative reporting (often written with considerable partiality). The Ottoman mind classified such works under the rubric of history. In addition there were eyewitness accounts of civil disturbances, some of which were composed in the provinces either by locals or officials on duty, for example the *Mora ihtilali tarihçesi* [History of the Morean Revolt] (1769) written by Süleyman Penah, a chief accountant of the Morea, or the *Tarih-i vaqa-i hayretnüma[-yî] Belgrad ve Sırbistan* [History of the Astounding Incident of

<sup>13</sup> *Tarih-i Umumi*, 6 vols. (Istanbul, 1866–78). The Scottish publisher William Chambers and his brother Robert produced a number of popular reference works, including *Chambers's Encyclopedia* (1859–68). Our attempt to identify which of their publications was used was unsuccessful, but the introduction to the translation indicates that Chambers was the source.

<sup>14</sup> We could not locate a complete collection of the newspaper *İntibah*. The information above is based on Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, 3 (1925), 110.

Belgrade and Serbia] (1874) by another local bureaucrat, Raşid. Other works considered to be historical writing included those justifying a political position, glorifying campaigns, or eulogizing statesmen. Among notable examples are the tracts written after the deposition and murder of Sultan Selim III in 1808; works dealing with the Crimean War (1853–6); and the annihilation of the Janissary corps in 1826. One of the several eulogistic monographs composed for the latter incident by the imperial annalist Mehmed Esad, the *Üss-i zafer* [Essence of Victory], was published at the imperial printing house within the same year as the corps' destruction.

Some nineteenth-century works, especially those on Ottoman Arab lands, came close to ethnography. The authors' approach at times represented an extension of European Orientalism, particularly since their main purpose was to put an end to the unrest in these regions and discredit those causing the disturbance. Eyyub Sabri, who spent several years in the Hejaz as a high-ranking military officer, wrote a history of the Wahhabi movement containing several sections alluding to the 'strange customs' of the native people who later came to belong to this sect.<sup>15</sup> Yemen also figured as an exotic far frontier in several historical accounts, which, at times, leaned heavily towards a colonial perspective. Ahmed Raşid, another military officer, composed an informative *Tarih-i Yemen ve Sana* [History of Yemen and San'a] (1874), at the end of which he describes, rather earnestly, some customs of the indigenous people as resulting from ignorance and a lack of education, while another 'illustrated' treatise, by Mustafa Hami, also an officer, remains unpublished. The text as well as the illustrations in the latter work concern local curiosities in addition to military matters.

The history of institutions was always fashionable as a genre, even though it tended to be primarily in the form of compilations of rules and regulations. However, the nineteenth century witnessed a different approach to this subject. With the familiarity of an insider who was brought up in the Inner Palace, Mehmed Atâ composed a five-volume history, part biographical dictionary, part anthology, and part institutional and anecdotal history.<sup>16</sup> The focus of the whole work, however, is clearly the palace, and the sections on palace life and protocol are based on his own experiences. In addition, a number of histories of military institutions were composed during this period. Using a variety of narratives and archival documents, the first volume of Ahmed Cevad's *Tarih-i askeri-i Osmani* [Ottoman Military History] (1882) skilfully deals with the institution, organization, and history of the Janissary corps. Two more of the ten proposed volumes remain as manuscripts in the Istanbul University Library.

Local urban histories are surprisingly rare in Ottoman historiography. Some earlier descriptions of Istanbul, for instance, told with a certain historical

<sup>15</sup> Eyyub Sabri, *Tarih-i Vehhabiyyan* (Istanbul, 1878).

<sup>16</sup> Tayyarzade Ataullah, *Tarih-i Ata*, 5 vols. (Istanbul, 1876).

perspective (Evliya Çelebi, Kömürcüyan),<sup>17</sup> or those in the form of a compilation of legends such as *Tarih-i Qonstantiniyye ve Ayasofya* [History of Constantinople and Hagia Sophia], do not constitute urban history proper. A few works dealt with monumental buildings and inscriptions, notably Ayvansarayî's late eighteenth-century *Hadiqatü'l-cevami* [Garden of the Mosques], which compiled information mainly about mosques, but also about other buildings in the neighbourhoods around them. The work was expanded considerably and reorganized during the nineteenth century by Satı Bey. Mustafa Vazî's work *Belabilü'r-râsiye fi riyazi mesa'ili'l-Amasiyye* [Immovable Nightingales in the Garden of Affairs of Amasya], completed in 1824, on the provincial city of Amasya has still not been edited to date. While this is, in fact, in the form of a catechism rather than a history, the questions are relevant to life in Amasya, and the book provides miscellaneous information about the city, for example on the mineral springs, the city walls, the games played, and legends about the city. Other examples of local urban history come from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some thirty years before the flourishing of the genre after the turn of the century, notably in works such as Hüseyin Hüsameddin's *Amasya tarihi* [History of Amasya] (1914) and Halil Edhem's *Kayseri şehri* [The City of Kayseri] (1915). Şakir Şevket published his *Trabzon tarihi* [History of Trabzon] in 1877. The impetus to write a history of Trabzon, which is located in the historical Pontus region of the Black Sea coast, apparently came as a reaction to a history book that was written and published in 1870 by another native of the city, Savvas İoannidēs. The book, which was basically a plea for the rights of local Greeks to this contested region, came to be taught at schools for Ottoman citizens of Greek origin.<sup>18</sup> Although the information that the *Trabzon tarihi* contains on the city's pre-Ottoman past is mostly gathered from Greek and Armenian sources, the legends and hearsay included in the book make it worthy of note. This is probably also the first historiographical work to use Ottoman court registers as a source.

The discourse of a modern Ottoman identity, as it emerged in the late nineteenth century, inevitably extended the fields of interest for historical thinking and also produced works that engaged with modern techniques of scholarship. *Usul-i Mimari-i Osmani* [Ottoman Architecture], a handsome volume with numerous high-quality illustrations authorized by an imperial order and prepared by an ethnically cosmopolitan committee for the 1873 World Exposition in Vienna, displayed not only Ottoman, but also Seljuk and Byzantine motifs in the framework of Ottoman architectural tradition. Also as a result of the evolving historical consciousness, a novel interest in archaeological remains developed.

<sup>17</sup> Eremya Çelebi Kömürcüyan, *İstanbul tarihi: XVII. asırda İstanbul*, trans. Hrand Andreasyan (Istanbul, 1952); and *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının transkripsiyonu, dizini*, 10 vols. (Istanbul, 1996–2007).

<sup>18</sup> Savvas İoannidēs, *Historia kai statistikē Trapezountos* (Constantinople, 1870); and cf. Şakir Şevket, *Trabzon tarihi*, ed. İsmail Hacifettahoğlu (Trabzon, 2001), 130.

Osman Hamdi Bey, painter, archaeologist, and savant from an elite family, founded the Imperial Museum in the gardens of the Topkapı Palace. The museum's collection consisted of artefacts not only from the Ottoman period but also from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. A noteworthy piece on display is the 'sarcophagus of Alexander the Great' discovered at the ancient site of Sidon (Lebanon) in 1887.

A remarkable example of family history, of which only a few have been discovered to date, was written in 1861 by Menemenciöğlü Ahmed. While the author acknowledges the benefits of historical writing in general, he does not deem the 'trivialities' happening in a province or concerning a local dynasty as worthy of being considered historical knowledge. Thus the work contains a justification of why such a narrative could nevertheless be beneficial, albeit only for the offspring of that family. Ahmed's first draft was apparently polished up into more ornate language by his son, who was an accomplished civil servant in the central bureaucracy. It covers three generations of the Menemenciöğlü family, established in the southern Anatolian region of Çukurova from the 1750s through the mid-nineteenth century, and becomes more detailed as it approaches the author's lifetime. The *Menemenciöğulları tarihi* [History of Menemenciöğulları] contains a narrative of, and perspective on, contemporary events that no other Ottoman source can provide. It recounts the relationship of government officials with the locals, details the implementation of Tanzimat regulations from a local perspective, and furthermore judges the eight-year rule of İbrahim Pasha of Egypt from 1832 to 1840 in the region favourably, since the family were obviously supporters of the Pasha's advance in Anatolia at the expense of the Ottomans. Not surprisingly, the manuscripts of the work did not find a wide circulation and it remained unpublished until recently.

At least two of the scholarly societies founded during the last seventy years of the Ottoman Empire were primarily concerned with the translation of historical works into Turkish and the composition of scholarly historical studies using novel approaches. The short-lived Academy of Sciences, founded in 1851, commissioned schoolbooks for history classes and new approaches to writing history, such as the histories of Ahmed Cevdet and Hayrullah. Among the writings of the members was a *Tarih-i Napoleon Bonapart'e, İmparator-u ahali-yi Fransa* [History of Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French People] (1855), compiled from French and English studies by Hovsep Vartanyan, also known as Vartan Paşa, and published in Turkish with Armenian script. There is evidence that some Turkish-speaking Muslim intellectuals, too, were following the Armeno-Turkish publications.

The Institute for Ottoman History (*Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni*) was founded in 1909, the year that the constitution was established on the initiative of Sultan Mehmed V, at a time when the government's strategy for holding back the empire from dissolution was still the integration of national elements through the concept of Ottomanism. The Institute announced its objective as publishing



documents, pamphlets, and accounts pertaining to Ottoman history and, most importantly, composing a comprehensive Ottoman history written with the goal of creating a consciousness of an Ottoman nation. The publication of the outline of the proposed history (*Osmanlı Tarihi Programı*) stirred up a heated discussion among historians outside the Institute (1913). The criticism was directed mainly towards the fact that the conceived work would chiefly be a political narrative, neglecting the social and economic aspects of events, and that Ottoman history would *not* be treated as part of the general Turkish history.

The first volume of the history, which was thought to be an introduction to the main work and covered predominantly the pre-Anatolian Turkish, Byzantine, and Seljuk periods, appeared in 1917, eight years after the Institute was founded. This delay was caused largely by the members' inability to work together in a coordinated and harmonious manner; however, there was another contributing factor to the ineffective performance of the Institute. After the substantial territorial losses during the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, the policy of Ottomanism came to be seen as unworkable, and the government's approach shifted drastically to a Turkish nationalist discourse. Therefore the driving principles behind the Institute's existence changed during this period. Controversy about the content of the proposed history also raged continuously within the Institute. Among its members were Turkish nationalists, such as Necib Asım, but also documentary-minded historians such as Ahmed Refik. Unable to agree on a workable approach, members of the Institute reformulated the article in its constitution regarding its mission of composing a history and aborted the project altogether. While this initiative did not reach completion or yield a comprehensive Ottoman history, the endeavour had important outcomes for the Turkish historiographical tradition. The bimonthly journal of the Institute, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası*, the first issue of which appeared in April 1910, continued for thirteen years, at which point the title of the journal was changed to the *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası* [Journal of the Institute for Turkish History] and continued for another ten years. The journal included numerous invaluable scholarly articles, editions of documents and source materials, and became a school in its own right. It was instrumental in spreading the methodology of working with hard evidence; hence it was influential in the establishment of the new form of Turkish scholarly historical writing.

The Ottomans designated historical writing as a 'science' (*'ilm-i tarih'* or *'fenn-i tarih'*), though the separation of scholarly professional and popular forms of historical writing occurred only after the start of the twentieth century. The rejection of old-fashioned, dynasty-centred historiography by the new generation of historians was part of the larger development of a positivist, disenchanting, and anti-monarchical worldview that crystallized over the course of the nineteenth century. The modern historical writing that emerged from this change in worldview had various political tones, but its defining trait was a demystification of earlier concerns and models of explanation. It no longer tolerated, for instance, a predestinarian historical approach or astrological explanations for events.

## EARLY REPUBLICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Turkish historiography in the early republican period (1923–46) needs to be understood in the context of a cultural revolution, the seeds of which were sown during the late imperial era. It was not as cataclysmic a revolution as the Russian or the Chinese, nor as momentous in terms of its impact on the rest of the world, but it had its own radical solutions, such as the change from an Arabic to a Latin alphabet (1928). This was one of the many steps taken to distance the new regime and its citizens, particularly the new generations, from the Ottoman and Islamic past, but it was not a complete rupture as some have portrayed it. On the one hand, the republican cultural revolution, operating at a distance from or even irreverence towards the ancient regime, had an emancipatory function: it brought about a release from the '*Nachteil der Geschichte*' in the sense of the oppressive weight of 'our past'. On the other hand, and at its worst, it made history the tool of ideological manipulation in the service of competing visions of a nation-state, with varying degrees of attachment to or detachment from Ottoman and Islamic traditions. Most academic historians practised their craft in the space between these extremes but not necessarily or immune from their magnetism.

Notwithstanding the ideological imbroglios, the republican era witnessed the consolidation and institutionalization of modern history-writing practices which produced numerous publications of original research, including many studies, some of them seminal, on Ottoman and Turkish-Islamic history. And notwithstanding sharp political differences, republican intellectuals were united in their perception of and opposition to a hegemonic European historiography that questioned, particularly during the decade before the foundation of the republic, the legitimacy of Turkish claims to a respectable place among modern nations. This defiance of the barbarian's role often assigned to Turks in Western historiography, and the exigencies of constructing national consciousness among a population that included millions of Muslim (but not necessarily Turkish-speaking) refugees from distant parts of an empire now lost, fostered an eagerness to prove that Turks were an ancient and civilized people.

The fecund intellectual environment of the late empire, particularly after the reinstatement of constitutional monarchy in 1908, had already inspired various accomplished and influential studies, including some that paved the way for an appreciation and appropriation of the pre-Ottoman and pre-Islamic history of Turks. But the newly founded republic had to steer its own nation-building project in a disciplined manner. John Dewey was invited from the United States in 1923 to conduct research and write a report on the educational policies of the fledgling state; Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the hero of the Turkish war of independence (1919–22) and the president of the new republic until his death in 1938, held conversations with Dewey during the latter's two-month residence and enquired about the pedagogy of history education in particular. From 1925, students were

sent to Europe to study not only natural sciences but also history, archaeology, art history, and related disciplines. Some of them, and their professors in different European universities, were handpicked by Atatürk. Afet İnan, for instance, was sent to Switzerland twice (1925–7 and 1935–8), the second time to work with Eugene Pittard. She was a pivotal member of a committee that in 1930, in close collaboration with Atatürk, produced *Türk tarihinin ana hatları* [Outline of Turkish History] that constituted the basis of new textbooks and of an official history thesis to be propounded in the 1930s.

Several institutions were created to experiment with new ideas, train historians and history teachers, and forge a new historical consciousness among the public. A Turkish Historical Society (THS) was instituted in 1930 under the patronage of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Many of the new historical ideas had been debated at his fabled dinner table, which regularly included intellectuals eager to shape the new regime and its ethos. The foundation of THS implied a gradual but unmistakable institutionalization, as engendered by congresses and academic publications (such as the quarterly *Bellekten* from 1937). The first two congresses met in the presence of Atatürk and under his auspices. The venue for the first of these, held in 1932, was Ankara's newly established People's House, an appropriate site for 'the aim of explaining the new approach to history and teaching of history to teachers and the public'.<sup>19</sup> People's Houses were created across the country to perform social and educational functions and serve the goal of mobilizing public opinion towards the ideals and ideological tenets of the republic, including its new perspectives on history; several brought out their own publications with many new findings on local history and relevant selections from sources. The second congress, held in 1937 at the Dolmabahçe Palace, with an international character, hailed a more academic turn. The main theme of the congress was the classification and documentation of Turkish history. Thereafter, congresses have been held with some regularity on three- to five-year intervals until today (2011).

Closely related was the keen interest taken in archaeology, art history, and historical linguistics. The first excavation under the auspices of THS was launched in 1935 at Alacahöyük, a site associated with the Hittites, as part of the project to prove that Anatolia was an ancient homeland of the Turks. At the 1932 congress of THS, Afet İnan had declared: 'And this too must be well recognized that our ancient Hittites, our ancestors, were the first and autochthonous settlers and owners of this country of ours today.'<sup>20</sup> The historical, archaeological, and linguistic studies executed under the patronage of republican institutions after the 1930s eventually turned more sober, but not necessarily free of involvement in

<sup>19</sup> Our translation. Official website of THS: <http://www.ttk.org.tr/index.php?Page=Sayfa&No=1>. Türk Tarih Kongresi, 2-11 Temmuz 1932 yılında Ankara Halkevi'nde yapılmıştır. Amacı yeni tarih görüşünün ve tarih öğretiminde tutulacak yolun öğretmenlere ve kamuoyuna anlatılmasıdır, accessed 6 September 2009.

<sup>20</sup> 'Tarihten evvel [!] ve tarih fecrinde', *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi*, 2 July 1932, 41 (authors' translation).

national 'causes'. A much deeper chord was struck by variants of Anatolianism and Turkism. The romance of a Turkish homeland in Inner Asia continues to be appealing, while that of a Hittite ancestry waned, except in some small circles; but the story of Turks after their Islamization and migration into Anatolia remains the overwhelming concern of historians and the public as 'our story'. As expressed by Remzi Oğuz Arık, an archeologist, 'the Byzantines, the Hellenes, the Assyrians, even the Hittites only exploited Anatolia according to their needs, they colonized it, while the Turks are the only nation that made Anatolia into a patria' after the battle of Mantzikert (1071).<sup>21</sup> This understanding implied the burgeoning of a deep and abiding interest in research on the Seljuks of Anatolia, pioneered by Mükrimin Halil Yınanç as an autonomous field.

Conflicts after the October Revolution led to a new wave of emigration of scholars from former imperial Russia and brought some of the best-trained Turcologists to Turkey. Zeki Velidi Togan, for instance, brought a broad Eurasian perspective to Turkish history; while his critique of the Turkish history thesis rendered him controversial and forced him to take refuge in Vienna, he returned to Turkey in 1939 and produced several influential studies, including a monumental *Umumi Türk tarihine giriş* [Introduction to General Turkish History] (1946). Another influx of émigrés came from Germany in the 1930s, just as institutions of higher education were reconfigured toward the creation of universities on a European model in 1933. Many new fields were established in the new universities, including some that were seen to contribute directly to the broader historical investigations of Turkicity, such as Sinology and Sumerology, as represented by renowned professors W. Eberhard and H. G. Guterbock, respectively. Some of these German scholars took an active part in the scholarly life of the country, training students such as Bahaeddin Ögel, the first Turkish Sinologist, for whom, as for almost all of his peers, use of the non-Turcological fields remained by and large limited to what they offered with respect to the history of the Turks.

Universal standards of historical scholarship became part of regular training at universities during the inter-war years. Togan launched a course on method in 1929, which made use of English, French, German, and Russian works on the subject, and eventually compiled his lecture notes in a book that remains part of the curriculum in many history faculties.<sup>22</sup> It provides scientific introductions to such basics of historical practice as critical editions, source criticism, analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. Footnotes and bibliographies as well as a distinction between primary and secondary sources became standard, particularly under the rigorous editorship of various university journals from the 1930s onwards. The study of major European languages became a regular part of history education, even if the practice was far from perfect, but Arabic and Persian were

<sup>21</sup> *Coğrafyadan vatana* (1956; Ankara, 1969), 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Tarihde usul* (Istanbul, 1950).

dropped from the curricula, implying an eventual loosening of the ties between Ottoman historical studies and their medieval Islamic context. The number of translations from European languages increased by leaps and bounds, and some Turkish scholars started publishing in those languages, especially French. Fuad Köprülü's *Les origines de l'Empire ottoman* [The Origins of the Ottoman Empire] (1935), for example, was the outcome of his lectures at the Sorbonne, but the Turkish version did not appear until 1950. The modern organization of the Ottoman state archives, which can be traced back to 1846 when the Public Record Office (London) was a source of inspiration, accelerated during the late imperial and early republican era, and made the catalogued documents, at first small in number, available to researchers.

The use of the archives became an integral, perhaps even dominant, part of Ottoman historical studies from the 1940s onwards. Economic history, in particular, came into its own, thanks to an increasingly systematic exploitation of archival documents of a fiscal and demographic nature. Ömer Lütfi Barkan, the most prolific and influential scholar of Ottoman economic history, was appointed to the chair of History and Geography of Economics when it was founded in 1937 within the Faculty of Economics headed by Alexander Rüstow. The recognition of his work by Fernand Braudel in the 1950s fostered significant links with the Annales School, but even the earlier phase of Turkish historiography had not been oblivious to French social science.

In the realm of the social sciences, sociology reigned supreme and made an indelible impact on historical writing. Durkheimian ideas were introduced in the 1910s by Ziya Gökalp and some of his associates and students, for example Köprülü, and inspired the efflorescence of social history in a broad sense. A literary historian, Köprülü pioneered a sociologically informed cultural history of literary and political traditions with the goal, among other things, of establishing that Turkish traditions, rather than Byzantine or Arabo-Persian influences, could account for the accomplishments of the Seljuks and the Ottomans. Two of his students, Osman Turan and Halil İnalcık, eventually became the most accomplished scholars of Seljuk and Ottoman history, respectively. The history of folklore turned into a vibrant field in its own right in the hands of Pertev Naili Boratav, who applied rigorous historical methodology, partly inspired by Marxian approaches, to investigate medieval Turkish epics, proverbs, and the like, only to pursue his remarkable career outside Turkey after 1948 when he was dismissed from the university 'for spreading communism'. The early impact of German sociology can be traced to the arrival of émigré scholars, but the first mature application of questions and ideas deriving from Max Weber and Werner Sombart to Turkish history came in 1951 in the form of a brilliant study of 'medieval Turkish guild mentality' by Sabri Ülgener.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Sabri Ülgener, *İktisadî inhitat tarihimizin ablâk ve zihniyet meseleleri* (Istanbul, 1951).

By 1945, the main trends and perspectives of a republican Turkish historiography had emerged, only to be reshaped in the new global order after the Second World War. The opening up of the political arena to a competitive, multiparty regime and the eventual loss of power by the party that enjoyed a quasi-monopoly over the government until 1950 brought a calibration of the critique of the Ottoman past, or an opportunity for a more appreciative attitude towards the empire to surface. In the early 1950s popular journals were launched with a high dose of content on ‘our Ottoman past’, and films were made with Ottoman themes, but none of this implied a restorationist or monarchist historical movement. At the institutional level, some of the policies of the early republic were reversed. People’s Houses were shut down in 1951, the same year that saw the revival of public celebrations of ‘inherited traditions’. In Manisa, for instance, the new government reintroduced annual festivities that had been held ‘for hundreds of years’ in honour of a sixteenth-century sufi and an aphrodisiac concocted by him—a local celebration that had been abolished by the young republic in 1926 because it was ‘a remnant of the dynastic regime’.

#### TIMELINE/KEY DATES

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1821    | Greece gains independence from the Ottoman State       |
| 1851    | Academy of Sciences ( <i>Encümen-i danîş</i> ) founded |
| 1854–6  | Crimean War  |
| 1876    | Proclamation of the First Ottoman Constitution         |
| 1908    | Proclamation of the Second Ottoman Constitution        |
| 1909    | The Institute for Ottoman History founded              |
| 1912–13 | Balkan Wars  |
| 1919–22 | Turkish War of Independence                            |
| 1923    | Foundation of Turkish Republic                         |

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