



HAMIDIAN EPIC:  
WAR LITERATURE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
HISTORY  
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

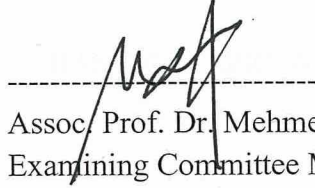
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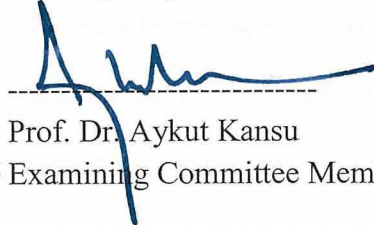
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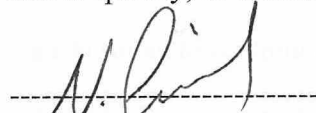
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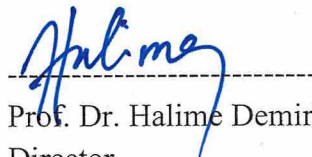
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## ABSTRACT

### HAMIDIAN EPIC: WAR LITERATURE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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This study explores the ways in which epic literature represented, supported, and legitimized the Ottoman regime and its ideology in the late nineteenth century. During the Hamidian Era (1876–1908), reinventing an authentic source, an old genre in the Ottoman literature, for its social and political desires, the regime became resourceful to create a harmonious relationship and prevented potential antagonisms between imperial objectives and popular nationalisms. Epic literature reproduced, created, and promoted a sacred aura around the Ottoman dynasty and the personality of Abdülhamid II. In line with this, epic themes refashioned the concept of ghaza and re-invented the image of the ghazi sultan to confront nationalist and/or constitutionalist criticisms and to consolidate the political power of the ruling dynasty and the sovereign.

**Keywords:** Abdülhamid II, Epic Literature, Ideology, Ottoman Military History, War Literature.

## ÖZET

### DÂSİTÂN-I HAMİD: GEÇ ONDOKUZUNCU YÜZYIL OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NDA EDEBİYÂT-I ASKERİYE

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Mayıs 2016

Bu çalışma geç ondokuzuncu yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda, Osmanlı destan edebiyatının mevcut yönetimi ve ideolojisini hangi yollarla temsil ettiğini, desteklediğini, ve meşrulaştırdığını tahlil etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Siyasi iktidar, II. Abdülhamid Dönemi'nde (1876–1908), toplumsal ve siyasi gerekçelerle yeniden icat edilen geleneksel bir edebî türü, emperyal hedefler ve rağbette olan milliyetçilikler arasındaki olası uzlaşmazlıkları önlemek ve aralarında uyumlu bir ilişki yaratmak amacıyla kullanmıştır. Destan edebiyatı, Osmanlı hanedanı ve II. Abdülhamid'in kimliği etrafında mukaddes bir hale kurulmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Buna uygun olarak, destansı motifler, milliyetçi ve/veya meşrutiyetçi eleştirilerin önünü kesmek ve mevcut iktidar ve hükümdarın siyasi gücünü pekiştirmek amacıyla gaza kavramını yeniden popüler hale getirmiş ve gazi-sultan imgesini yeniden üretmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** II. Abdülhamid, Epik Edebiyat, İdeoloji, Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi, Savaş Edebiyatı.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the help of all my mentors at Bilkent University. My dissertation advisor Akif Kireççi patiently read several copies of this study. His meticulous criticism, valuable remarks, and endless enthusiasm guided me and encouraged me to progress. Without his motivation and support, this thesis could not be done.

I am also grateful to the members of the dissertation committee. Berrak Burçak guided me throughout the writing process and I also benefitted from her coaching and generous friendly support. I owe the expertise and support of Oktay Özel, who not only warned me regarding the intricacies of history as a craft, but also supported me intellectually. I am indebted to professors Mehmet Kalpaklı, Aykut Kansu and Nazan Çiçek for their valuable suggestions and challenging comments. I owe special thanks to Professor Özer Ergenç, who has been very helpful during the years I have spent at Bilkent.

I am indebted to Bilkent University and Turkish Historical Association that funded my dissertation research. I should thank to the staff at National Library in Ankara, where I collected the bulk of sources that consisted the backbone of this study.

Michael D. Sheridan, Ümit Fırat Açıkgöz, and Melih Egemen have read parts of this dissertation and provided very valuable comments. I owe much to their criticisms and suggestions.

I am also thankful to dear friends at Bilkent, including Aslıhan Aksoy Sheridan, Sena Hatip Dinçyürek, Merve Biçer, Burcu Feyzullahoğlu, Tarık Tansu Yiğit, Ayşegül Avcı, Melike Tokay Ünal, Fahri Dikkaya, Doğuş Özdemir, Abdürrahim Özer, Mert Öztürk, Nil Tekgül, Aslı Yiğit, Harun Yeni, Elvin Otman, and Neslihan Demirkol for their pleasant support in several ways. I also owe many thanks to Saadet Büyük Güler, Erdem Güler, Gizem Tongo Overfield Shaw, Barış Asan, Berna Kamay, Barış Celep, Gül Çatır Açıkgöz, Nagihan Gür, Onur Usta, Fatih Karataş, Murat Karamustafaoğlu, Ali Can Ergür, and Ferit Moral for their friendly support.

I dedicate this thesis to my family that supported me in innumerable ways to this end. It is also dedicated to the memory of my friends Burak Samed Yıldız and Ayşegül Keskin Çolak, who passed away during the course of this project.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BEO</b>	Bâb-1 Âlî Evrak Odası
<b>BOA</b>	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
<b>DH. MKT.</b>	Dâhiliye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi
<b>EI</b>	Encyclopedia of Islam
<b>MF. MKT.</b>	Maarif Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi
<b>MKT. MHM.</b>	Mektubî Mühimme Kalemi
<b>Y. EE.</b>	Yıldız Esas Evrâkı
<b>Y. PRK. AZJ.</b>	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Arzuhaller ve Jurnaller
<b>Y. PRK. BŞK.</b>	Yıldız Perakende Evrâkı Mâbeyn Başkitâbeti
<b>Y. PRK. HR.</b>	Yıldız Perakende Evrâkı Hariciye Nezâreti Maruzâtı
<b>Y. PRK. TKM.</b>	Yıldız Perakende Evrâkı Tahrirât-ı Ecnebiye ve Mâbeyn Mütercimliği

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“Because our empire was founded by conquerors, its end was epic.”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, empires around the world tried to balance threats from within and without. The Habsburgs, the Ottomans, the Romanovs, the Meiji Japan, and the Qajars struggled against each other and at the same time looked for a way out of emerging nationalisms. In order to survive the turmoil created by emerging and powerful nationalist movements, they attempted to eliminate such centrifugal forces by transforming their bureaucratic apparatus and by crafting more centralized state systems.

Trying to maintain their sphere of influence, *ancien régime* empires suffered from a constant multifaceted state of crisis. Military modernization projects and administrative regulations addressed larger social reforms, which caused social disturbances that in

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<sup>1</sup> Falih Rıfki is comparing the Ottoman Empire with the British Empire: “Because our empire was founded by conquerors, its end was epic. Because yours was founded by merchants you are making a liquidation,” *Taymis Kıyıları* (İstanbul: Akşam Matbaası, 1934), p. 126, quoted and translated in Bernard Lewis, “The Ottoman Empire and its Aftermath,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan., 1980), p. 35.

many cases troubled central authority. Rising irredentist nationalist movements challenged the sovereignty rights of dynasties, such as those of the Habsburgs and the Ottomans.<sup>2</sup> The political reforms of *ancien régimes* and the leaders of the monarchic social and political order, especially in early modern Europe, were supported by modern forms of addressing the public to satisfy the ever-increasing need to boost their legitimacy and popularity.

During or immediately after these reform attempts, and indeed throughout the nineteenth century, modern epic literature flourished as a genre with the aim of bolstering *ancien régime* empires against modern threats and/or popularizing the rule of nation states. Modern reformers used epic themes either to invoke a glorious past or to legitimize state-formation. Writers of epic literature, mostly under sovereign patronage or as members of the royal entourage, tended to take advantage of military victories and defeats to justify current reforms as well as to popularize the current rule. In addition to mounting pressure on the media, the rapid emergence of such loyalist authors helped in “blurring the lines between official and impartial texts.”<sup>3</sup> By recalling past victories and describing the recent military successes of the ruling dynasty, epic literature *per se* tended to reinforce the monarchies’ control over public opinion.

Throughout the modernization process, governments needed the epic as a genre to strengthen their legitimacy and political power, as well as to consolidate their position in history. As such, modern epic functioned more as a didactic tool of indoctrination than as

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<sup>2</sup> Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 5.

a mode of entertainment. What is more, modern epic on the one hand required protagonists who shared common ideals, while on the other hand it encouraged, motivated, provoked, manipulated, and mobilized the public. Through epic literature, along with many other tools of indoctrination, political power shaped public opinion. Other tools of governmental control over society included taxes, laws, prisons, local administrations, railways, telegraph cables, police forces, and garrisons.

In the course of the nineteenth century, modern epic literature typically either represented or encouraged colonial desires, imperial deeds, and national fervor, as well as patrimonial legitimacy for various agendas in different contexts. The challenges from both within and from outside encouraged governments to invest in transforming the mechanisms of propaganda. Changing literary forms accompanied public displays of sovereignty. Methods of communication developed with new technologies, and the ruling classes seized every opportunity to communicate their dynastic legitimacy to their subjects. As such, the relationship between the sovereign and the subject was undergoing a process of transformation. As subjects became citizens, governmental politics increasingly engaged with and acknowledged them through modern tools of communication.

Epic literature is particularly reflective of modernization movements and the characteristics of the new order. The epic functioned as a literary sphere for political groups to either celebrate the government or criticize influential bureaucrats and unpopular reform measures. Although it represented diverse political ideas, nineteenth-century epic literature glorified the sovereign and the ruling dynasty, even if the latter lacked an authentically glorious past to which to refer.

In general, nationalist criticisms of monarchic rule were answered by refashioning the monarch as the inheritor of a glorious past, replete with heroic accounts of the dynasty's founding fathers. One of the oldest literary genres, which had long functioned to narrate the acts and deeds of the founding fathers, the epic was re-invented as a genre in the nineteenth century to reassert the ruling king as the legitimate sovereign. In this way, epic literature served as a site in which history was co-opted as part of *ancien régimes'* quest for political legitimacy.

With the emergence of modern literary forms and the advancement of print technology, writers of epic literature found a chance to deliver contemporary war accounts to a larger audience on a daily basis. Throughout the nineteenth century, changing loyalties and the birth of nation-states encouraged authors to recall and re-create narratives of past victories and heroes. However, nineteenth-century epic literature was not limited to the re-invention of past accounts in order to create a common past for all citizens: writers also utilized heroic accounts from contemporary wars, such as the Crimean War in 1856 or the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, to create the modern popular epic.

Especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, due to developments in print technology, epic literature became increasingly linked with journalism. News from the front helped epic writers by constructing an audience with shared sensibilities and memories. In addition to journalism, modern genres that sometimes included epic accounts, such as novels and dramas, also became popular. During the nineteenth century, novels and dramas featuring epic themes helped unite members of society around certain values and norms. As a result, ordinary citizens became more familiar with heroic themes and war stories.

In the Ottoman context, the re-emergence and increasing popularity of epic literature in the nineteenth century was related to modernization reforms, especially in the field of education, and to developments in print culture. Heroic accounts, which before the Tanzimat Era (1839–1876) had mostly been part of oral culture, and war literature, the audience of which was limited to the military professionals, became part of modern print culture only with the progress in print technology and the educational reforms of the Hamidian Era (1876–1908). Before the state attempted to increase the rate of literacy in the empire, Ottoman epic manuscripts were known only to a small audience. In the late nineteenth century, writing became part of a growing print capitalism. Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans engaged either in writing or printing activities.<sup>4</sup>

The rise of print culture also resulted from developments in public education. According to Johann Strauss, the “spectacular rise of printing and publishing” owes much to the Tanzimat reforms, especially in the field of education, which triggered the growth of a reading public.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Frierson claims that Abdülhamid II inherited the communication techniques of the Tanzimat reformers, who aimed to re-centralize the state by educating their subjects, and added his own new technologies of communication. For Frierson, as a result of the official program of “teaching more Ottoman subjects to read, then expanding the number and thematic breadth of publications for them to read,”

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<sup>4</sup> Basing herself on the examples of Hüseyin Cahit, Ahmed İhsan, Ahmed Midhat, Kasbar, and Arakel, Neslihan Demirkol shows how writing and publishing became part of the emerging capitalism due to the development of the publishing business. See Neslihan Demirkol, *1850–1900 Yılları Arasında Edebiyat Yayıncılığı Alanının Yeniden Biçimlenmesi ve Edebiyat Çevirileri Piyasasının Doğuşu*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis (Bilkent University, 2015), pp. 148-83.

<sup>5</sup> Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries),” *Middle Eastern Literatures*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003), p. 42. For educational reforms in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, see Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2001); Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

an expanded Ottoman public sphere appeared by the late 1890s.<sup>6</sup> As a major part of these publications, war literature in general and epic literature in particular had a role to play in the Ottoman state's campaign to create subjects—that is to say, citizens—who were more loyal to the political power.

This is not to say that modern states created the new society through epic literature.

Although modern state structure was dominant, as was the social climate it created, the audience for epic literature was not entirely produced and oriented by these heroic stories. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire radically transformed its traditional military system. Since the installment of a universal conscription system in 1844 and the refashioning of a military career as something valuable and desirable among the male subjects of the modern state, the readers of epic literature gradually became identified with epic heroes. Male subjects could become members of the military establishment, enlist in the army, participate in war, take part in military victories, make their families proud, and raise their sons to be future soldiers. Thus, modern epic literature was no longer simply fiction: it became a contributor to the larger fabric of producing a new, modern society.

This study aims to analyze the ways in which Ottoman epic literature represented, contributed to, supported, and legitimized the contemporary regime and its ideology in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. It also emphasizes the function of the war literature in the growth of print culture during the Hamidian Era. By investigating the emergence of war literature in the late nineteenth century, one of the objects of this study

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth B. Frierson, "Gender, Consumption and Patriotism: the Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere," Armando Salvatore & Dale F. Eickelman (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2004), pp. 103-04.



is to show how modern examples of the genre integrated with or diverged from the classical Ottoman war literature. Bearing in mind the fact that the Ottomans produced epics from the beginning to the end of their history, this dissertation investigates how and why early and late representations of the genre were used to provide legitimacy for the ruling power.

The main concern of this study is to explore the ways in which war literature in general and epic literature in particular was utilized for social and political purposes during the Hamidian Era (1876–1908). The mechanisms that were used to “invent a tradition”<sup>7</sup> in the form of a literary genre functioned to create a modern sphere of communication between the state and its subjects. Rather than importing modern Western techniques in order to cope with the challenges to its legitimacy and make its policies more intelligible to society, the Hamidian regime preferred to recall, recreate, and remobilize an authentic source, in this case a traditional genre in Ottoman literature. During this process, Ottoman epic writers not only recalled a distant past so as to legitimize the current sovereign, but also, as Billie Melman puts it, “invented continuities” among the heroic accounts from the past, manipulating the description of contemporary so-called “successes” and describing future possibilities.<sup>8</sup> This attempt derived from the official project to preserve the social life and political power in a world of “constant change and innovation.”<sup>9</sup> Due to its historical relationship with the political power, and as an “invented tradition,” the

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<sup>7</sup> For the explanation of the term, see Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup> Billie Melman, “Claiming the Nation’s Past: the Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. ¾ (Sep., 1991), p. 575.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” pp. 1-2; Peter Heehs, “Myth, History, and Theory,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 1994), p. 3.

Ottoman epic allowed Abdülhamid II to legitimize his rule, boost his popularity, remobilize Ottoman society, and protect the social and political order in a changing world.

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire underwent a legitimacy crisis as a result of newly emerging ideologies, as did other *ancien régime* empires, such as the Habsburg, Russian, and Japanese empires. The Ottoman Empire employed a wide variety of different mechanisms in response to this legitimacy crisis. One of these measures consisted of modern Ottoman war literature, which comprised a wide variety of different works, ranging from textbooks for students in the newly established modern military schools to legal military codes, and from books on military technology to works on discipline. This study, which focuses on war literature as an Ottoman response to the legitimacy crisis, argues that the nineteenth-century Ottoman military transformation entailed a social transformation just as much as it altered the military sphere. The study examines how modern Ottoman war literature aimed to redefine and reshape the novel relationship between the sultan, Ottoman society, and the army. In order to demonstrate this multifaceted transformation process, the study adopts a composite theoretical approach combining three different perspectives; namely, the themes of discipline, collective memory, and the “invention of tradition,” which all came together to shape the main contours of the nineteenth-century Ottoman epic.

Modern Ottoman epic served a multifunctional purpose. Its legitimizing function helped the sovereign to consolidate and boost his rule, his dynasty, and his claim to the caliphate, but also his image as a ghazi. Mostly written to celebrate Hamidian rule and to represent the sultan as the architect of a modern Muslim army, these epic accounts also functioned

as a mechanism that established a novel relationship between ruler and ruled by embellishing upon the relationship between the sultan and Ottoman society. By reinventing an old genre according to its own social and political desires, the Hamidian regime proved resourceful in creating a harmonious relationship, and as such, prevented potential antagonisms between imperial objectives and popular nationalisms. Therefore, epic literature reproduced, created, and promoted a sacred aura around the Ottoman dynasty in general and around the personality of Abdülhamid II in particular. In line with this, epic themes also worked to refashion the concept of ghaza and re-invented the image of the ghazi sultan in order to confront nationalist and/or constitutionalist criticisms and consolidate the political power of the ruling dynasty and the sovereign.

Regarding the theme of discipline, Ulrich Bröckling, in his work *Discipline*,<sup>10</sup> outlines the ways in which military commentaries transformed the nature of the military order and the emergence of the military class as a distinguished social and political actor.

Considering the richness of the sources in the Ottoman context, Bröckling's interpretation can be adapted to the late-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire in an attempt to understand the basic tenets of the military modernization process and the increasing role of the army in politics.

In terms of late Ottoman concerns about military history, studies on modern technologies of cultural memory can be helpful for an understanding of the aims of late Ottoman writers. Jan Assmann addresses the production process of collective memory in *Das*

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<sup>10</sup> Ulrich Bröckling, *Disiplin. Askeri İtaat Üretiminin Sosyolojisi ve Tarihi*, translated by Veysel Atayman, second edition (Istanbul: Ayrıntı, 2008).

*Kulturelle Gedächtnis*.<sup>11</sup> Late Ottoman military histories should be revisited according to Assmann's interpretations of the study of the past as a point of reference. By analyzing Ottoman writers' methodology concerning what to remember and what to forget when writing the military history of the Ottoman Empire and of Islam, this study examines how nineteenth-century Ottoman writers went about fashioning the canon of this history.

What is more, Eric Hobsbawm's analysis of the "invention of tradition"<sup>12</sup> for political purposes is useful as regards modern examples of epic verse and epic accounts during the Hamidian Era. These examples reinterpret the re-emergence of epic accounts in late Ottoman written culture as an attempt to reproduce a traditional literary genre aimed at boosting the popularity of the Hamidian rule.

This composite theoretical approach represents the multiple tasks of epic literature as a genre in particular and of war literature in general. Late Ottoman war literature emerged in response to a variety of needs and served to fulfill various purposes, ranging from education to the creation of a collective memory. These sources were a part of the central administration's arsenal meant to strengthen its relationship with the Ottoman army as well as with Ottoman society. They constitute a discourse that reminds subjects of their responsibilities *vis-à-vis* their state and their sovereign. They produce a "usable past"<sup>13</sup> allowing the regime to convince citizens of the regime's just and legitimate political power. They eulogize the current sultan for his victories, even though these victories may

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<sup>11</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung, und Politische Identität in Frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions."

<sup>13</sup> "Adaptation (of tradition) took place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes," Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," p. 5.

on occasion be merely invented. They also try to meet contemporary problems with authentic solutions, in this case by revisiting old epic accounts as well as creating new ones.

After summarizing the history of epic literature in the international and the Ottoman contexts in the first two chapters, the study will focus on the nineteenth-century reinvention of the Ottoman epic. The first group of examples is chosen from among the military commentaries that ran parallel with the ongoing military modernization project in the empire. Mainly written by military officers, these works aimed to emphasize the relationship between military and social reforms, promoting a well-disciplined, well-regulated, and obedient society, which was the prerequisite of a modern army. Through the military modernization process and the military commentaries, the central Ottoman administration underlined obedience to the ruler. The political and social border between the sultan and the army was reconstructed through such texts as these. While the army became equated with the sovereign, the personality or persona of the sultan became the sole source of inspiration for the Ottoman army in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

The next part of the dissertation deals with the nineteenth-century re-invention of the long-forgotten ghazi notion. Ottoman intellectuals revisited heroic accounts from Islamic and Ottoman military history. Military victories by the early Muslims and the Ottoman dynasty, especially between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, were revisited to support the claims and popularity of the ruling sovereign as the caliph and the heir of the Ottoman throne, as a means of confronting threats from both within and without.

Chapters VI and VII are particularly concerned with the epic literature of the Hamidian Era. Following the catastrophic defeat by Russia in 1877–1878, Ottoman epic writers managed to create heroic accounts, especially regarding the legendary defense of Gazi Osman Pasha at Plevna in the Balkans. As a source of inspiration, that military success helped to revitalize the Ottoman epic throughout the Hamidian Era. Modern genres, such as drama and the novel, helped epic writers to popularize military matters by picturing everyday experiences, on the front or at home, of soldiers and ordinary Ottomans during wartime. As the epic became popular as a genre, the distance between the front and the home, as well as the distance between the army and society, disappeared.

After the military victory in 1897 against Greece, the genre reached its peak in popularity in terms of the number of published books. While possessing many features of the early Ottoman war chronicles, these works also represented several characteristics of the Hamidian Era. First, epic writers emphasized the legitimacy of the Ottoman attack, as one of the great powers in Europe that prioritized international law and the requirements of modern diplomacy. Second, they portrayed the empire as a provider of human rights against militant power magnets, this time in the Balkans and on the Greek peninsula. Third, in a more modern manner these epic accounts refrained from narrating violent war scenes. They gave information about Ottoman pashas and weaponry, and mainly consisted of information about the geography, population figures, economic and agricultural activities, and most significantly the wealth of the relevant region.

The last chapter focuses on the period between the victory over Greece in 1897 and the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II in 1901. Interpreting the epic literature of this era, especially the conquest accounts after the war and eulogies that were produced for the

silver jubilee of the sultan, this study argues that the modern Ottoman epic genre helped the sovereign to consolidate and boost his rule, his dynasty, his claim to the caliphate, and his image as a ghazi. Primarily written to celebrate the Hamidian rule and to represent the sultan as the creator of a modern Muslim army, these epic accounts restored and enhanced the public image of Abdülhamid II and embellished upon the relationship between the sultan and Ottoman society.

## **Epic in the Ottoman Context**

Starting from as early as the fifteenth century, the Ottomans documented the wealth and sources of income within the Ottoman lands, as well as the bureaucratic and legal activities that the administrative center executed throughout the empire. The central administration managed to control a vast geography through tax and cadastral registers (*tahrir defterleri*), court registers (*sicil*), waqf registers (*waqfiyye*), records of daily bureaucratic activities (*rûznâmçe*), sultan's orders (*firman*), sultan's permissions (*berat*), sultan's urgent orders (*mühimme*), petitions (*lâyiha*), records of official disputes over legal matters (*hüccet*), and orders to the lower-ranking bureaucrats (*buyruldu*).

Besides administrative documents, Ottoman written culture, in continuity with the classical Arabic and Persian prose and poetry traditions, consisted of several genres, such as chronicles and historical accounts (*tevârih*), autobiographies (*tercüme-i hâl*), hagiographies (*menâkıb*), biographical encyclopedias of poets (*tezkîre*), travelogues (*seyahatnâme*, *menzîlnâme*), long verse narratives (*mesnevî*), advice books

(*nasihatnâme*), festival accounts (*surname*), diplomatic records (*münşeat*), fortune-telling books (*falname*, *yıldızname*), and miscellanies (*mecmûa*).

As early as the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans had also started to produce epic accounts (*gazânâme*) meant to emphasize the role of their state in the history of Islam and its civilization as ghazis, defenders of the Islamic faith against the Christian world. In the following centuries, Ottoman epic writers recorded the heroic acts and deeds of the ruling sultans in order to boost the popularity of the Ottoman dynasty in Muslim world.

Epics such as *gazavatnames*, *fetihnames*, and *zafernames* have served as one of the major sources of Ottoman history in several ways. Mostly written by authors with close relations to the political center, Ottoman war literature, and in particular epic accounts, have proven very significant to an understanding of the ways in which the ruler and ruling elite interpreted or promoted their central roles in the history of the empire. Since their inception, the Ottomans made sure to record their military campaigns, conquests, and victories. Ottoman *gazavatnâmes* emerged in the early fifteenth century to celebrate the warrior qualities of the early Ottoman ghazi warriors, promote chivalric codes, and encourage the ghazis to fight for the Islamic faith. Similar to medieval European war tales, Ottoman writers produced these very entertaining stories in a pure and simple language, free of the complex rhetoric and tropes of the contemporary court literature.

In their original form, *gazavatnâmes* usually do not describe the particular conquest of a city or a castle. Instead, such particular victories are related in another genre, the *fetihnâmes* or “conquest stories.” The Ottomans wrote *fetihnâmes* in the fifteenth and the



sixteenth centuries to describe the process of Ottoman military expansion. Starting in the late seventeenth century, *fetihnâmes* transformed into *zafernâmes* or “victory stories,” with some alterations in their literary form. *Zafernâme* writers drew less on the entertaining supernatural stories that were told as decorative elements in the *gazanâmes* and *fetihnâmes*.

The earliest extant examples of *gazanâmes*, *fetihnâmes*, or *zafernâmes* in Ottoman Turkish date to the early fifteenth century. Starting with that period, the Ottomans began to produce stories of the founding fathers, inspired by oral tradition or earlier histories. For instance, Aşıkpaşa (1400?–1484?) based his *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* (1480?), which argued that the ghazis were responsible for the early Ottoman military success, on Yahşi Fakih’s *Menâkib-ı Âl-i Osman* (1400s).<sup>14</sup> Such literary works presenting accounts of war, such as *tevârihs* and chronicles, help us to understand certain mysteries about early Ottoman history in general.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the sixteenth century, when Ottoman history writers became official palace officers, Ottoman epic accounts increasingly became narratives of the acts and deeds of single sultans. For instance, Şükri Bitlisi’s *Selimnâme* (1523–1524) and Sinan Çavuş’s *Süleymannâme* (1542–1543) portrayed the military campaigns of the powerful sultans of

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Wittek, “The Taking of Aydos Castle: a Ghazi Legend and its Transformation,” George Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb* (Cambridge: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 664.

<sup>15</sup> Agah Sırrı Levend, *Gazavat-nameler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey’in Gazavat-namesi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ankara: T.T.K. Basımevi, 2000), pp. 1-5. Levend listed over 150 extant works. For an understanding of the influence of *ghaza* phenomenon on Turco-Islamic written culture, see Ali Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: a Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

the era.<sup>16</sup> The writers of epic found generous patronage under such “golden age” sultans, such as Selim I (r. 1512–1520) and Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). Up to the nineteenth century, the foremost examples of the genre were primarily accounts of the military campaigns of individual sultans or commanders. After the sixteenth century especially, the Ottoman sultans gradually left command of the army during campaigns to their viziers or able generals. Over time, heroic accounts of Ottoman commanders and their campaigns replaced the *şehnâmes*, a general title for such works as the *Selimnâmes* and *Süleymannâmes*, which narrated the sultans’ military campaigns. Epic stories of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, who led the Ottoman army during the siege warfare against the Habsburgs in the famous defense of Kanije in 1601, and Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, who conquered Crete in 1669, indicated the continuity of the ghaza tradition and its literary representations.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, Ottoman epic writers depicted the campaigns meant to defend the empire from Russian, Austrian, and Persian threats, unlike the earlier epic literature, which instead describes Ottoman military advances. Such epic accounts as Bursalı Hüseyin Ağa’s *Mir’at’üz-Zafer* on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1711, Silahşör Kemani Mustafa Ağa’s *Revan Fetihnamesi* on the Iran campaign of 1724, and Ömer Bosnavi’s *Tarih-i Bosna der Zaman-ı Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa* on the war against the Habsburgs in 1736 consisted mainly of descriptions of the refortification of old castles, political intricacies, diplomatic envoys, and treaties.

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<sup>16</sup> See Şükri Bitlisî, *Selim-nâme* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi, 1997); Sinan Çavuş, *Süleymannâme: Tarih-i Feth-i Şikloş, Estergon ve İstol-Belgrad* (İstanbul: Tarihi Araştırmalar Vakfı, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> See Câfer İyânî, *Cihadnâme-i Hasan Paşa*; anonymous *Tarih-i Fâzıl Ahmed Paşa ve Feth-i Kandiye*. These manuscripts are not yet published.

The last examples of Ottoman epic in the traditional style were combat accounts depicting Cezzar Gazi Ahmed Pasha's (d. 1804) fight against the Napoleonic army at Acre in 1799. This *Gazânâme-i Cezzâr Gâzi el-Hacı Ahmed Paşa* was the last example of Ottoman epic literature in classical prose form. Throughout the nineteenth century, Ottoman literature in general and the Ottoman epic in particular would undergo great transformations in terms of theme and style.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, leading officers' commentaries meant to inform the reformer Sultan Selim III (r. 1789–1807) about the ongoing reforms in the Ottoman army made extensive use of the contemporary intellectual production regarding warfare. The significance of these commentaries was that they made a connection between modern military formation and the modern social order. The commentary writers observed modern disciplinary policies in contemporary European armies and realized that the new order must be complemented by social reforms as well. Both Mahmoud Rayf Efendi, in *Tableau des Nouveaux Reglements de l'Empire Ottoman*, and Mustafa Reshid Çelebi Efendi, in *An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid*, proposed that the traditional segments of society should be dissolved or re-organized.<sup>18</sup>

In line with the social and military reforms being implemented, one of the oldest organizations in the Ottoman Empire, the Janissary regiments, came to be seen as pockets of resistance to the new order redefining the terms of the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. In 1826, the Janissaries were replaced by the *Asakir-i Mansure-i*

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<sup>18</sup> Mustafa Reshid Celebi Effendi, "An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid," in William Wilkinson (ed.), *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia Including Various Political Observations Related to Them* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, 1820).

*Muhammediye* (Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad). In its early phase, the inexperienced *Muhammediye* army fell short in its actions during the Greek Revolt of 1827, and in 1831 was defeated at the hands of the rebel Ottoman governor Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769–1849). Encountering heavy losses, the Ottomans had to open the straits to Russia in order to balance Muhammad Ali Pasha’s forces and acquire military protection, which in turn alerted England and France. In European politics, the future of the Ottoman Empire became the main issue and was called the “Eastern Question,” referring to the political maneuvers carried out between the European powers and Russia throughout the nineteenth century. The empire became a member of the Concert of Europe after the Western powers aligned with it against the Russian army in the Crimean War (1853–1856).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the empire took several measures to cope with the increased amount of modern diplomacy required. Students were sent to Europe to satisfy the need for personnel to be employed in foreign affairs and in the Translation Office. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most important propagators of social and political reform came from among those who had received an education abroad. Using such technological developments as the printing press, they translated many works from the European languages. The emergence of the popular press, especially in the late 1860s, led to a simpler Ottoman language. New popular genres, such as drama and the novel, emerged and began to replace the traditional genres of Ottoman literature.

The traumatic losses against the Russian armies in 1877–1878 triggered major political changes in the Ottoman Empire. The Hamidian Era that followed witnessed the remodeling and strengthening of the notion of the emperor, the institution of the

caliphate, and the imperial system.<sup>19</sup> Some historians have portrayed the political orientation of the Hamidian regime toward Ottoman identity as by and large a result of the shifting demographic structure of the empire after the losses in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Due to the huge numbers of immigrants from the lost territories, the Muslim population came to exceed the non-Muslim population for the first time in the history of the empire.<sup>20</sup> The inhabitants of the remaining lands still consisted of several different ethnic and religious groups. According to this approach, the more homogenous composition of the subjects led the sultan to alter the Tanzimat policies, which were aimed at a multiethnic and multifaith empire. Instead, Abdülhamid II reinvented and made efficient use of the title of caliph, primarily in order to integrate the refugees into Ottoman society and channel their energies towards unity and the modernization projects. At the end of his reign, the Ottoman Muslims were well on the way to achieving their full potential within the newly introduced institutions and to becoming significant actors in the affairs of the Ottoman state.<sup>21</sup>

Until the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire still held North Africa, the east of the Balkans, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Holy Lands of Islam, including Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. In terms of developing an ideological basis to boost the central

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<sup>19</sup> Selim Deringil, "Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876–1909)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), pp. 345-46.

<sup>20</sup> Kemal Karpat, "The *Hijra* from Russia and the Balkans: the process of self-definition in the late Ottoman State," Dale F. Eickelman & James Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 137-46.

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed study on the changing population structure, see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). For Abdülhamid II's policies of caliphacy, see Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

power to protect the empire, Abdülhamid II emphasized the demographic and geographical integrity of the imperial domains by encouraging Pan-Islamism and refashioning the notion of the caliphate. Emphasizing the common religious identity and historical heritage of the people in the region, this policy would affect the future of the Ottoman lands for decades to come.

The influence of Abdülhamid II's policies extended even to those cadres who would take part in nation-building processes after the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire. Some of the future leaders of the post-Ottoman Middle East were educated in the Hamidian schools and were part of a particular political and cultural milieu.

### **The Emergence of Modern Ottoman Epic in the Hamidian Period**

Ironically, the re-emergence of war literature coincides with the period that follows the embarrassing Ottoman defeats at the hands of the Russians. From a state of crisis to a military victory, the first two decades of Abdülhamid II's reign witnessed the re-emergence of Ottoman epic. Writers published the war stories of the new heroes who went to the Balkan or Caucasus fronts in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 or the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897. The advancement of print technology even allowed them to now illustrate their works with photos of these heroes, of the battlefield, and of modern war machines. This war literature narrowed the distance between the front and the home.

During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, the epic genre started to resurface after news concerning a certain heroic commander and his troops reached Istanbul. Osman

Pasha (d. 1900) had managed to successfully defend the besieged castle at Plevna in 1877. Trapped in the castle, Osman Pasha's forces had been deprived of logistical support. Regular Russian cannonfire prevented the Ottomans from leaving the castle. In fact, they were the only Ottoman forces to remain in the Balkans. The Russian troops advanced as far as Edirne. Osman Pasha attempted an attack on the Russians but failed due to the fact that supplies were running low. He only surrendered after being wounded during his final attempt to leave the fortress. The Ottoman media, with the support of the government, managed to create a war hero out of the persona of Osman Pasha. The Ottoman newspapers rushed to publish heroic stories about him, presenting him to the public as a *ghazi*. Marches were written in his name. When he arrived in the Ottoman capital, the pasha was granted the title *ebu'l-meghazi* (father of the *ghazis*) by the welcoming committee.<sup>22</sup>

With this quick turn of events, it suddenly became fashionable to publish legendary stories of Ottoman warriors, founding fathers, conquerors, and great sultans of the foundation era and “the golden age.” Publishing heroic stories from the Islamic past became also widespread at this time.<sup>23</sup> The Ottoman writers were looking for a “usable past” from Turkish or Islamic sources in order to create a collective memory for the Ottoman public.

In addition to such popular heroic genres, modern Ottoman war literature also emerged, including books on general military knowledge and technology as well as books dealing

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<sup>22</sup> Metin Hülagü, *Gazi Osman Paşa* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1993), p. 259.

<sup>23</sup> One of the most important examples is Abdülhak Hâmid, *Tarık yahud Endülüis Fethi* (İstanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1296/1879).

with the history of the Ottoman wars. These texts were assigned to students in the newly founded military academy.

Late Ottoman war literature was clustered mainly around two major wars. It emerged with the heroic Plevna defense and reached a peak with the victory over Greece in 1897, following the latter's border encroachments in Thessaly and Crete.<sup>24</sup> The Ottoman army's defeat of Greek forces in a brief war became the central theme of marches, sagas, eulogies, poems, special newspaper volumes, and the reinvented *fetihnames* and *zafernames*.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, epic writers immediately put Abdülhamid II at the center of interest as the patron of the victory. The sultan declared war on April 17 and the Ottoman armies reached Morea on May 10. The first reason for this success was the railroad constructed during the Hamidian Era, which allowed the Ottoman troops to be transported to the front in a very short period of time. Second, during his reign, Abdülhamid II established close diplomatic relations, especially with Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, in order to help equip the Ottoman army with the latest technology.<sup>26</sup> Third, and also as a result of this diplomatic relation, the sultan's army enjoyed the supervision of German officers, such as Goltz Pasha.

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<sup>24</sup> Nadir Özbek also pointed out that movement in his "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876–1909," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> Some of these are Mustafa Reşid, *Gönüllü Askerlerimizin Şarkıları* (İstanbul: Yovanaki Panayoditis Matbaası, 1313/1896); Emin, *Kaside-i Zafer yahud Muzafferiyetnâme* (İstanbul: Asır Matbaası, 1313/1896); Mustafa Reşid, *Milona Marşı* (İstanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1313/1896); *Guzât-ı Şüheda yahud Gazi ve Şehitler* (İstanbul: Yovanaki Panayoditis Matbaası, A İrfan, 1315/1898).

<sup>26</sup> See Naci Yorulmaz, *Arming the State: German Arms and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire Before World War I* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).



Following the victory in the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897, the popularity of the sultan reached a peak. The regime became more self-confident, even to the point of inviting opposition members in exile back to the empire. Between the victory in 1897 and the sultan's silver jubilee in 1901, the union between the sultan, the army, and the society was fortified. The sultan became the chief subject of the newly born epic literature.

As a result, writers from all around the empire had reason to celebrate Abdülhamid's silver jubilee. Jews celebrated the sultan for rescuing their co-religionists in Thessaly from the "barbarian" Greeks, Greeks for protecting the patriarchate in Istanbul, and Arabs for constructing the Hejaz Railroad. By 1901, Ottoman epic writers had come to portray the sultan as the sole protector not only of the Ottoman Empire and Islam against foreign intervention, but also as the protector of loyal non-Muslim groups against nationalist agitators.

The time frame covered by this dissertation starts with the re-emergence of war literature after the Plevna defense, during the war against the Russians in 1877, and then focuses on the relevant literature that emerged following the victory over Greece, before ending with the writings celebrating Abdülhamid II's silver jubilee.<sup>27</sup> This twenty-five-year period witnessed the consolidation of the Hamidian regime and the refashioning of the war literature. The abundance of war accounts written during this, one of the most peaceful periods of Ottoman history, demonstrates the deepening affiliation between war literature and political power.

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<sup>27</sup> The most important of these is, El-Hac Es-Seyyid Mustafa, *Tebrikname-i Milli, Cûlus-i Meyanın Me'nüs-i Hilâfetpenah-ı Âzâminın Yirmi Beşinci Devr-i Senevi-i Kudsi* (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901).

One of the most significant characteristics of modern Ottoman epic literature lies in its complex political allegiances. In general, heroism was a trope used to popularize the current regime and to confront nationalist challenges, constitutionalist criticism, and foreign intervention. By the time of the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman war literature had become entirely dedicated to introducing, listing, documenting, promoting, and celebrating the Hamidian Era's modern advancements in general, and its military advancements in particular.

## **Literature Survey**

Two questions, among many others, have been very significant for researchers of Ottoman history over the last century. With the help of the vast amount of various types of primary sources that the Ottomans left behind, historians have tried to answer the questions of how a small principality on the border between the Islamic and Christian lands managed to become a world power, and under which conditions a world power was able to survive over three hundred years of decline.

In *Between Two Worlds*, Cemal Kafadar discusses the ways in which the early Ottomans interpreted the foundation of the state and in what ways students of the empire have read these centuries-old sources. Studies on the foundation of the Ottoman state began in the final years of the empire and became an increasingly popular topic for Ottomanists

throughout the twentieth century. Among many theories, Paul Wittek's “*ghaza* milieu and its ethos” has been the most discussed so far.<sup>28</sup>

Wittek conceptualized the *ghaza* ethos according to religious, social, and political motivations. Divorcing the notion of *ghaza* from its completely religious emphasis, he opened the way for an analytical reading of the primary sources. According to Kafadar, for an understanding of “the ideals and the motives of the frontier (*uc*) society and to grasp how they conceptualized the *ghaza*, we need to study warrior epics and hagiographies from earlier times.”<sup>29</sup> The significance of the *ghaza* ethos in describing the conditions that led the Ottoman state to become an empire can be reconstructed by a close reading of the primary sources that report on the objectives of the founding fathers. Studies on Ottoman epic literature have remained limited to research on the age of military expansion. In early republican Turkey, for reasons both political and pragmatic, historians were focused on the pre-Islamic era, using archaeological and anthropological methods. According to Büşra Ersanlı, early republican historians “believed that the early material past could be linked to Mustafa Kemal’s victory over Anatolia.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, historical studies on the early Anatolian and Turkish past accompanied the early republican epic accounts on Mustafa Kemal’s military successes, starting from the Battle

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<sup>28</sup> For the theories on the foundation of the Ottoman state, see Oktay Özel & Mehmet Öz (eds.), *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a: Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu Üzerine Tartışmalar* (Ankara: İmge, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: the Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 62. On *ghaza* ethos also see Colin Imber, “What Does *Ghazi* Actually Mean?,” Çiğdem Balım Harding & Colin Imber (eds.), *The Balance of Truth: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Lewis* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Büşra Ersanlı, “History Textbooks as Reflections of the Political Self: Turkey (1930s and 1990s) and Uzbekistan (1990s),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May 2002), p. 340.

of Gallipoli, which announced him as “the ghazi.” For Ersanlı, “the Ottoman past, especially the Middle Ages, was isolated from national history, except for the Ottomans’ military-political victories.”<sup>31</sup>

In line with this, researchers into the Ottoman past have neglected to consider late Ottoman epic literature a symptom of nineteenth-century political developments in the empire and their repercussions in the intellectual sphere. In part, this lack of interest stems from the age-old question of periodization in Ottoman historiography. Until recently, Ottoman historians have been inclined to divide Ottoman history into two main periods, the age of expansion and the age of decline, with the latter setting in after the empire reached beyond its ability to mobilize its forces to furnish, protect, and control its dominions. When separating Ottoman history into periods, historians have viewed European advancement in military technology, starting with the seventeenth century, as the dividing line between the Ottoman golden age, which lasted until the end of the sixteenth century, and the empire's effort to catch up with Europe in the following centuries.<sup>32</sup> Ottoman historiography evaluated later developments according to the concepts of Westernization or transformation in military technology, disregarding cultural change and continuity in military terms. This is not to say that the studies on the epic literature of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries are more than sufficient.

Besides victorious stories concerning the conquest of Constantinople and the rapid

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<sup>31</sup> Ersanlı, “History Textbooks,” p. 340.

<sup>32</sup> The main advocate of this type of periodization is the famous Ottomanist Bernard Lewis, see his *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). For a criticism of this viewpoint, see Karen Barkey, “Changing Modalities of Empire: a Comparative Study of Ottoman and Habsburg Decline,” Esherick, Kayalı & Van Young (eds.), *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 168-73.

expansion in the Balkans during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), it is still early to claim that Ottoman historians have clearly introduced us to the cultural dimensions of Ottoman military campaigns and their textual representations. Most of the work on this literature has thus proven to be either facsimile editions or mere translation of the original works.

An analysis of the Ottoman war literature is significant not because it depicts the performance of the Ottoman army on the battlefield, but rather because it reflects the yearning of the writer for the “ideal” sultan and the “ideal” regime. These texts also criticize deviations from the Ottoman norms established by the founding fathers.<sup>33</sup> The objections of the Ottoman epic writers to the ongoing transformations have been interpreted as symptoms of degeneration.

The concept of “the age of decline” has been strongly criticized for some decades now.<sup>34</sup>

The Ottoman nineteenth century can no longer be seen as a period of “desperate efforts of a group of westernized, idealist bureaucrats to save the country from its doom,” as declinists claimed. The reformist enthusiasm of the “men of Tanzimat” has been highly

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Asian History* (1988), Vol. 22, pp. 74-77; Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, vol. 4 (1997–98), pp. 30-5. On the “Ottoman Way”, see Virginia Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 9-12.

<sup>34</sup> For some of the anti-declinst views, see Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,”; Rhoads Murphey, “Continuity and Discontinuity in Ottoman Administrative Theory and Practice During the Late Seventeenth Century,” *Poetics Today*, vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 1993; Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 22-23; Mehmet Akif Kireççi, *Decline Discourse and Self-Orientalization in the Writings of al-Tahtawi, Taha Husayn, and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernization in Egypt and Turkey*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

appreciated.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, recent historical evaluations regarding the late Ottoman Empire have rarely gone beyond constructing versions of the modernization paradigm based on official documents.

This study evaluates modern Ottoman epic literature as a symptom of the transformation movements rather than as a symbol of decline. It claims that the changes in the epic genre throughout the nineteenth century reflected the changing political and social inclinations in the empire. Contrary to the declinist arguments interpreting the rapidly changing ideas of Ottoman intellectuals in the nineteenth century as signals of anxiety, this study emphasizes the complexity of the intellectual environment in terms of the debates around the nature of violence, the terms of modern discipline and order, the nature of the Ottoman state, the political uses of history, and the relationship between the army, society, and the sovereign.

## Sources

War literature incorporates every type of literary work, from epics to commentaries on military technology. By using war literature (*edebiyat-ı askeriye*),<sup>36</sup> this study seeks to uncover the relationship between the changing ideology and the changing literature of the Hamidian era. It aims at a better understanding of the similarities or differences of the Hamidian era from earlier periods in terms of the literature's ability to reflect social and

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<sup>35</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999), pp.229-62.

<sup>36</sup> The term was first used in Osman Senai, *Edebiyat-ı Askeriye* (İstanbul: Tarik Matbaası, Kasbar Matbaası, 1315/1897).

political changes. According to Cemal Kafadar, “it is inappropriate to conceptualize *ghaza* by assuming that it was one and the same notion of 'war of the faith' from its earliest emergence to the end of the empire.”<sup>37</sup> As the concept changed, the literature of *ghaza* changed with it. Analyzing a traditional genre in its modernized form and trying to find its remarks concerning the final ideological formation of the state may be instructive for a better understanding of the late Ottoman condition.

The late nineteenth-century Ottoman war literature (*edebiyat-ı askeriye*) has by and large not been subjected to a scholarly scrutiny. For the so-called age of Ottoman decline, heroic-epic stories have been seen as either oxymoronic or absurd. Furthermore, researchers have failed to understand the inner dynamics of the genre or the social symptoms on which modern war literature works. Instead, historians have focused on the official impulses behind the so-called decline of the Ottoman Empire, rather than interpreting the re-emergence of epic literature as a reflection of intellectual dynamism.

During the Hamidian era, every type of literary genre that comments on war, which might be called as war literature, experienced a definite boom. The re-emergence of an age-old genre in a modern context might be attributed to, in part, the tendency of the Hamidian regime to produce national confidence and a sense of solidarity and loyalty among fellow Ottomans to their state.

In this study, the term “war literature” is used in its broadest sense so as to better emphasize the richness of the genre and of the literary culture of the period. Heroic accounts of the Ottoman *ghazis* and founding fathers; epic poems; epic songs; anthems;

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<sup>37</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 91.

textbooks prepared for military schools; books on military technology, basic military knowledge, and military philosophy; advice by foreign correspondents employed in the Ottoman army; Napoleonic and Prussian war accounts; special newspaper editions for the benefit of war veterans; plays and memoirs—all these constitute the major sources of this dissertation.

Studies on the early Ottoman primary documents, mostly epics, reveal the ways in which primary sources might be used to generate legitimacy for the ruling power. Studies on epic literature, thanks to the genre's intense relationship with the Turco-Islamic ideology of the realm<sup>38</sup> and its articulation of themes from both tradition and the changing conditions, may help us to better understand the Hamidian Era, when the transformation was intense and the ideology, whether invented or imported, was consolidated. In order to expose the relationship between politics and literature, general studies on modern epics, such as of those of the Victorian era, will also be surveyed.<sup>39</sup> These readings will also be helpful to question the conditions within which “the institution of literature works to nationalist ends.”<sup>40</sup>

Apart from these sources, secondary sources will be used as well, including recent works on nationalism, patriotism, the idea of making sacrifices for the nation, the “invention of

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<sup>38</sup> Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (London: Phoenix, 2000), pp. 65-69; Halil İnalçık, “Padişah,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi IX*, p. 494.

<sup>39</sup> Steven Attridge's work on the reactions of Victorian writers to the Boer War (1899–1902) is worth mentioning. See his *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Simon During, “Literature – Nationalism's Other? The Case for Revision,” Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 138.



traditions,” and “imagined communities.”<sup>41</sup> As such, the concentration will be on those significant and decisive examples that may help us to better understand the relationship between the regime and the war literature.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, popular texts will be used to emphasize the crucial role of the war literature in introducing the public to the political designs of the ruling power.

## Methodology

This study is based on sources from the field of literature. It deals with literary sources in order to understand the mentality of a certain period. One of the main significances of literature as a historical source derives from its intermediary position between official ideology and public opinion. Literature not only helps the creation of a certain historical phase, but also the cultural dynamics of the transforming relationship between society and political power.

War literature is especially helpful to identify with the uses of literature in historical studies in that it not only reorganizes, but also represents the relationship between political power, the army, and society. War literature combines the instruments of the

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<sup>41</sup> I am not only referring to the well-known works of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawn, but also to the secondary literature that is based on their ideas. For instance, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney tries to explain the use of traditional symbolic images during Japanese modernization in order to create a sense of patriotism according to the framework of “invented traditions.” See her *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Such as Osman, *Millî Selkû'l-ceyş* (İstanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1301/1884); Âbidin Paşa, *Âlem-i İslâmiyyeti Müdafaa* (İstanbul: Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1315/1897); *Padişahu İğfal Edenler* (İstanbul: Mekteb-i Fünûn-u Harbiye-i Şâhâne Matbaası, 1315/1898).

ideological projections of political power onto society, such as order and discipline, with heroic themes. The interaction between historical studies and literature aids researchers in constructing an alternative approach to studies based solely on official archives. As opposed to archival documents, which were produced for the official purposes of the state, literature addresses the collective area between various sectors of social, political, and cultural organization.

Recent studies on the mentalities of certain historical phases explore the literary works that were produced in various periods. Specifically, students of nineteenth-century history refer to literature as well as to archival documents for a comprehensive narrative of the past. Studies on Victorian England, France's escalating between imperial and republican politics, the unification of Germany, the Meiji modernization of Japan, the Habsburg modernization, Russian-Orthodox imperialism, and American democracy—all which I will explore in the following chapter—are increasingly becoming involved with literary products.

In particular, many studies address war literature in order to analyze the nineteenth-century transformation of the relationship between the state, society, and the army. Starting from Clausewitz's *On War*, historians began to discover the intellectual foundations of the militarization of society in the modern era. Besides commentaries, historical studies entered the sphere of literature, which reflected the political, social, and cultural reasons and results of the changing attitudes toward warfare as early as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Today, historical studies agree on the relationship between literature and nineteenth-century militarization. Especially after the developments in print technology and the increasing literary rates in the second half of the century, war literature became a

useful source for history. To give just one example, without referring to Kipling's works and his contribution to the development of jingoism in England at the end of the nineteenth century, any study of high imperialism and the resulting Boer War would be incomplete.

Studies on the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire have neglected war literature as a historical source. Military commentaries, books on military history, and late Ottoman *gazanames* have fallen into oblivion for students of Ottoman modernization period. Some of the epic works of famous writers, such as Namık Kemal and Abdülhak Hamid, have only been analyzed by researchers of literature, but without historical perspective. This study is based on the idea that war literature can be a good resource to present a more comprehensive narrative of the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

In this study, war literature is separated into the sub-categories of military commentaries, history books, and epic works, including various genres such as the novel, drama, and accounts of contemporary heroic stories. Each sub-section consists of both textual analysis of the related examples and comparative evaluations of the texts. In this regard, selected works are taken from various genres so as to develop a dialogue between the texts, and finally to reveal the mindset of the writers and the atmosphere in which war literature was produced during the Hamidian Era.

## Outline

The next chapter will focus on the relationship between ideology and epic literature in the non-Ottoman world. From Alexander romances, tales about the prophets, sagas of the wandering tribes, and legends of the conquerors all the way to the nineteenth-century epic narratives, writers were patronized by the political power and affected by the political milieu. In order to legitimize their rule, rulers supported the production of epic literature and assigned writers to document the victories and achievements of the current rulers or the founding fathers of the state. Furthermore, epic writers themselves contributed to, manipulated, encouraged, and/or documented political or ideological transformation. In that sense, epic literature exhibits the internal dynamics of periods of transformation, modernization, or ideological crisis. Whether to depict the heroic stories of empires and nations, or basically to reflect their ideological position, epic writers used literary methods, themes, and tropes.

The third chapter of this study deals with traditional Ottoman epic literature. It aims to demonstrate the fact that, as one of the earliest genres in Ottoman literature, epic had been associated with politics from the very beginning of the Ottoman history. The main argument of this chapter is that the epic genre was influenced by and represented the political environment when the Ottoman state transformed from a state into an empire in the middle of the fifteenth century. In line with this, the chapter endeavors to mark the literary symptoms that emerge during an ideological shift. Following the centralization of political power, the chapter implies the changes that occurred within the epic genre in terms of themes and tropes. After the fifteenth century, The production of Ottoman epic

literature gradually became monopolized by the political center. The *ghazi* brothers of the foundation era were cast away and members of the ulema wrote epic stories exclusively about the Ottoman sultans, which continued up to the nineteenth century, when the relationship between ideology and epic was redefined.

The fourth chapter aims to make a connection between the military modernization of the Ottoman army and modern social rearrangements during the nineteenth century. It suggests that the military reformation attempts were intermingled with a larger social agenda. Modern disciplining policies and the notion of obedience were related to the reconstruction and redefinition of a contract between the Ottoman sultan and his subjects. While after the destruction of the Janissary forces, the Ottoman army became isolated from the rest of the society, it also appeared as a social institution geared at distributing the central ideology and its premises. That is to say, the Ottoman army became an intermediary of a legitimation process that aimed to readdress the hegemony of the sultan over his subjects and the empire over its domains. Moreover, the army, which monopolized the right to use violence, became over time a pioneering organization in dismissing the marginal elements within society and forming a modern Ottoman nation.

The empire's concern for its historical roots throughout its "longest century"<sup>43</sup> is helpful for a better understanding of the changing relationship between historical studies and political intentions in the modernization period. Furthermore, regarding intellectual production, the audience that the intellectuals addressed should be questioned in terms of

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<sup>43</sup> The term "longest century" was borrowed from İlber Ortaylı, who analyzed the meticulous efforts of Ottoman bureaucrats throughout the nineteenth century to save the empire in his *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999).

its size and identity. The epic literature was intended to attract the attention of the “Ottomans.” In most cases, the Ottomans represented an imagined community that was destined to protect its habitat, not as a savage conqueror, but as a protector of the rights of the people. The source of the empire's legitimacy to do so can be traced back to history, to the empire’s high level of civilization and justice, and to the qualities that the Ottoman rulers attributed to themselves.

Related to the regime's quest for legitimacy, the fifth chapter elaborates on the role of the late Ottoman war literature in inventing traditions.<sup>44</sup> Even though there are still an abundance of untouched primary sources and archival documents, inventing traditions in the late Ottoman case has only become familiar to us thanks to recent studies.<sup>45</sup>

According to Hobsbawm, “for the greater part of history we deal with societies and communities for which the past is essentially the pattern for the present.”<sup>46</sup> The significance of Abdülhamid II’s reign in terms of inventing traditions is that, during the period, the Ottoman traditions were crystallized in two, not separated, forms. Firstly, the history of the Ottoman dynasty was revisited, sometimes created, and much embellished upon. Ottoman genealogy became a matter of interest. A mausoleum for the father of Osman, Ertuğrul Ghazi, was built in Söğüt, the assumed birthplace of the state. The legitimacy of the imperial sovereignty was defended against separatist movements.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For the concept “invented tradition,” see Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*; Eric Hobsbawm, “The Social Function of the Past: Some Questions,” *Past & Present*, vol. 55 (1972).

<sup>45</sup> Hakan Karateke & Maurus Reinkowski (eds.), *Legitimizing the Order: the Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Hobsbawm, “The Social Function...,” p. 3.

Secondly, the caliphate, which had been neglected for centuries, was refashioned as an official policy.<sup>48</sup> Defending and representing the world of Islam, the Ottoman sultan emerged as the leader of the Islamic world in a modernized political environment.

Throughout the era, the Ottoman geography was, culturally and spatially, organized and ornamented with representations of the new policy of invented traditions in a uniform manner. Epic literature, for its part, symbolized the diversity of Ottoman and Islamic representation. Firstly, the Ottoman sultan was represented as the protector of the Islamic world.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, the Islamic past from diverse geographies and historical periods was revisited.<sup>50</sup> Thirdly, the legitimacy of the Ottoman state, derived from the peaceful era of Ottoman rule and tolerance for different ethnic and religious groups, was emphasized and used against the newly emerged and emerging nationalisms.<sup>51</sup>

The sixth chapter deals with epic representations of the Hamidian regime. It begins with a discussion of the empire's disastrous defeat at the hands of Russia in 1878. Although the Ottomans suffered a decisive defeat, epic writers managed to publish the stories of Ottoman heroes following that date. Gazi Osman Paşa, especially, who defended the

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<sup>47</sup> The case is not specific to the Ottoman Empire. For a detailed description of the late Habsburg politics of representation and legitimacy, see Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848–1916* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> For Deringil, the attempt to rejuvenate the caliphate was the “most traditional of inventions.” Selim Deringil, “Legitimacy Structures,” pp. 350-56.

<sup>49</sup> For an example printed after the Ottoman victory against Greece, see Abidin Paşa, *Alem-i İslamiyyeti Müdafaa* (İstanbul: Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1315/1897).

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Ziya Paşa, *Endülüs Tarihi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (Dersaadet: Takvimhane-i Amire, 1276–1280/1859–1864).

<sup>51</sup> “İstikbale çıktı ordaki Türkler / Birlikte Rumlar hem Yahudiler / Buyurun buyurun diye da'vet ettiler / Çok ettiler Yunanlardan şekvayı,” a poster prepared after the victory against Greece, Selanikli Felek Mehmed, *Mükemmel Destan-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Yovanaki Panayoditis Matbaası, 1313/1896).

Ottoman stronghold in Plevna for months even after the other branches of the Ottoman army in the Balkans had retreated, became an actor in the epic stories.

After two decades of technological modernization under the leadership of Abdülhamid II, the Ottomans enjoyed a victory over the Greek army in 1897. After this victory, the production of modern Ottoman epic literature reached its peak. Celebrating the *ghazi* sultan, whose army had finally enjoyed a victory, these works concretized the political power of Abdülhamid II and silenced his critics for a while. For the first time, authors added images, maps, and encyclopedic information to the heroic stories of the Ottoman soldiers in Thessaly. They did not fail to remark that the aim of the campaign had been to bring justice and order to Greece.

The last chapter deals with the epic works written in celebration of the silver jubilee of the sultan in 1901, when the political might of Abdülhamid II was at its climax. It aims to reveal the ways in which Ottoman epic literature was entirely tied to the central power and became its propaganda device at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The epic works that were produced to celebrate the silver jubilee of the sultan were mostly in the form of *cülusnâme*, eulogies that had for centuries been written in honor of the enthronement of the Ottoman sultans. These also included celebratory hymns performed in the patriarchate and poems written by Arab intellectuals to thank the sultan for constructing the Hijaz Railway or to encourage him to prepare a jihad. Others consisted mainly of written accounts of the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II. The celebratory works written for the silver jubilee of the sultan not only offered a record of the schools, hospitals, prisons, and many other public works that were built during the Hamidian Era, but also described new laws and regulations. The material forms of the



relationship between the ruler and his subjects were documented and the religious and the administrative responsibilities of the parties toward each other were emphasized. Based on the production or reproduction of a modern imperial enterprise and its militarized social formation, the chapter aims to describe literary representations of the modern *ghazi* sultan and his obedient and mobilized subjects.

Therefore, this study makes a connection between the political aspirations of the Hamidian regime and the re-emergence of epic literature in the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It aims to demonstrate the convoluted relationship between the epic genre and the dominant social culture. In parallel with the social projections of the Hamidian regime, throughout the Hamidian Era epic writers emphasized social codes such as obedience, pietism, frugality, moral qualities, and martial character. In time, epic writers came to represent the figure of an ideal Ottoman *ghazi* according to these social norms, while Abdülhamid II became the leading *ghazi* in Ottoman epic literature.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL USES OF EPIC LITERATURE

“Take up the White Man’s burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—<sup>52</sup>”

Following the emergence of the Ottoman press in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman reader gradually became familiar with Western heroic figures from the modern era. Among many others, the acts and deeds of such great men as Napoleon Bonaparte, Friedrich II, Kaiser Wilhelm I, Thomas Jefferson were translated into the Ottoman language. Biographies of the Western great figures were published for consumption of the Ottoman reader. They represented the changing understanding of heroism and emphasized the ways in which an individual sacrifices for the greater good and as well as for society, in the modern world. Biography writers put forward the reformation of the republican or imperial ideologies and the leitmotifs of modern Western political systems. This complicated the influence of the genre on the Ottoman collocutors.

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<sup>52</sup> Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (February 1899), p. 290. Celebrating imperialism, Kipling’s poem is emblematic to address the political roles of epic literature.

While modern political developments inspired the imagination of the Ottoman writers, imperial or nationalist debates impinged on modern epic literature. The motivation behind the representation of modern Western emperors and conquerors to the Ottoman public is significant to understand the dynamics of the late nineteenth century Ottoman literature. The re-emergence of epic literature in the nineteenth century was not an isolated phenomenon unique to the Ottoman Empire. Other empires experienced similar processes as well. A better comprehension of the relationship between current politics and literary methods necessitates a comparative look however. Modern imperialist or nationalist ideological references were also reflected in the contemporary epic literature of various European and Asian Empires such as that of the British, American, the Habsburg and the Japanese Empires. This chapter aims to analyze the repercussions between literature and ideology in the non-Ottoman world to better grasp the transformations within Ottoman literature. As such, the chapter will present the international context in terms of the re-emergence of epic literature in general with special reference to the Ottoman Empire.

Epic is one of the oldest genres in world literature. From Peloponnesian Wars (434–401 BC) to Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC), epic narratives have been one of the most significant sources. Through the language and symbols in epic literature, historians study the cultural relationship between ancient Greece and Near Eastern societies, the differences between European accounts and Arab accounts on Jerusalem, changing hands between crusaders and Muslims. This chapter aims to demonstrate the significance of epic literature to understand the changing political environment in *ancien régime* empires throughout the modern era. For the purposes of this study, epic refers to a literary genre

either represented or encouraged colonial desires, imperial deeds, national fervor, as well as patrimonial legitimacy for a variety of agendas, in different contexts, throughout the history.

Starting from the eighteenth century, epic as a genre underwent transformation in form, content and the audience it addressed. The genre became increasingly involved with the political agenda. The introduction of new literary forms, such as the novel and drama, affected the writing style of the epic. What is more, technological advancements in print encouraged the writers of epic literature to address a larger public. As such, epic as a genre gradually became part of a larger war literature, which included works to inform the public on almost every issue as regards warfare, including military technology and textbooks for military students. Furthermore, the relationship between heroic accounts and sovereignty became more closely defined by this literature.

In terms of the British Empire for example, English epic literature in the early modern era employed adventure-seeking heroes, reflecting the commercial, mercantilist policy of the empire. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the military class replaced merchants in terms of its central role in governmental affairs. As the commercial establishment was replaced by the British army in India or in other English colonies, the writers of epic started to encourage political bodies or created the literary support for the imperialist civilizing mission.

When we turn our gaze toward America however, the first epic hero in the United States was the founder of the country. Firstly, American epic writers polished the heroic image of George Washington as a citizen soldier: he not only was represented as a cultivated

member of the society but also as a gifted warrior. Second, it was always Christopher Columbus who came to the minds of the American epic writers. His persona was mostly used in a didactic manner, according to which the Westward expansion of the American colonies was legitimized. As such, the desire for discovery of new lands was represented as a crucial characteristic of American history, while undervaluing the sufferings of the Native Americans at the hands of colonizers. Third, the figure of the cowboy was introduced. Roosevelt, himself, was a cowboy who managed to climb up to the presidency. American epic writers created the cowboy figure as a chivalric but not aristocratic, personifying American democratic ideals. As we can see, political trends determined the thematic changes in epic literature in the United States.

In continental Europe, the political scene witnessed the emergence of novel ideas after the French Revolution. Nationalism started to threaten the political order in the Habsburg Empire, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. As a response, *ancien régime* empires refashioned their policies in order to cope with the separatist movements. While writers who supported the idea of the nation-state were trying to legitimize the new political actors by searching or inventing ancient heroic stories of the nations, epic writers under imperial patronage were trying to boost the persona of the emperors or the heroic and legitimate deeds of the ruling dynasties.

The period between the Napoleonic Wars and the WWI witnessed the worldwide struggle of the empires either for the so-called civilizing mission, for dominating the resources, markets or simply for maintaining their imperial integrity. Comparing non-Ottoman examples with the Ottoman case in terms of the relationship between ideological transformation and epic literature, several remarks can be made. First of all, *ancien*

*régime* empires, which were reproducing the epic style through the end of the nineteenth century, already had an epic tradition as a literary form. Second, the re-emergence of the epic genre especially in the nineteenth century can be linked to the changing ideological formations of the imperial system with a civilizing mission. Third, the changing ideological conditions that were expressed in the epic were mostly connected to the desires of the dominant political actors. Fourth, the re-emergence of the epic was followed by a period during which the literary themes were not related to warfare but to liberal ideals.

In terms of the Far East, the Meiji Period and Japan's struggle to create a modern imperial system was based on mobilizing the society under the paternal figure of the emperor. Like the Ottomans, the Japanese state promulgated several documents that announced the ways in which the state formed its relationship with society. These newly formed laws and institutions were supported by cultural products in every aspect of the social sphere, from education to daily lives of the subjects. New political inclination of the Japanese Empire and its reflection on the cultural production may be useful to understand the Hamidian Era.

During the nineteenth century the Habsburg Empire was the most prominent regime which fought against nationalist movements, other than the Ottoman Empire. In order to resist separatist movements, both emperors put forward their traditional dynastic rights to rule, their duty in terms of protecting religion and creating a system in which no ethnic group had superior legal status. In that sense, both empires were trying to create a supranational system and invest in the idea of unity around a sense of imperial citizenship. The dynasty and the emperor's persona as well as their public image had

become the most important instruments to mobilize the new ideological frame of the states. While newborn nation-states such as Germany were searching for national epics from history, throughout modern era, *ancien regime* empires transformed their ways of representing legitimacy. They commissioned literature to promote religious symbolism, patrimonialism, dynastic nationalism, and persona of the emperor.

## 2.1. Imperialism

The bond between epic and empire, from Homeric epic to the transformation of the genre according to modern requirements, represent the ways in which the empires utilized epic literature to legitimize their deeds throughout the history. The intimate association between the epic as a genre and the political power in the history of western literature started with Virgil's *Aeneid* (29 B.C.). It is one of the first examples to represent the intimate connection between epic literature and political legitimacy. After the long lasting civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey, and after that between Julius' heir Octavian and Mark Anthony, the Roman Empire replaced the Roman Republic. Octavian became Augustus (r. 27 B.C. – A.D. 14), meaning the sacred one, and became the first emperor of the Roman Empire. Augustus conquered Spain, Dalmatia and Egypt, and recovered the financial situation that was in bankruptcy after the civil wars. He managed to control all military units across the empire and gained their loyalty. Therefore, he intimidated political power magnets in the senate or in the periphery. His reigning period has been called *Pax Romana* in history. During his tenure, Augustus was titled *tribunicia potestas* (the highest administrative authority), *pontifex maximus* (the highest religious authority),

and *pater patriae* (the father of the fatherland). These titles had not been used in Roman Republic before, and were unfamiliar to the Roman ears at the time. Combining with the newly acquired actual powers of the emperor, they could raise reaction. Virgil's role was to make these novelties be legible for the Romans, to make them seem old, to legitimize them.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Aeneid, the epic account of the birth of Roman Empire and the acts and deeds of Augustus emerged.

The Aeneid depicts the adventures of Trojans, who left home for Italy to find a second home after they lost the first one to Greeks and managed to build Rome after overthrowing the natives. The book is consisted of two parts. First part is the account of repetitive defeats and losses of the Trojans on the way to Italy. The unfortunate past followed the Trojans and the only way to succeed for them was to overcome the memory of traumatic events and the feeling of decadence. The second part narrated the victory of Trojans against the natives. The second home would be "made possible by the conquests."<sup>54</sup> Only by then the psychological burden of the past shall be defeated. With full of hope and enthusiasm, the Aeneid encouraged Trojans to:

"Arm you in soul! With heart of perfect hope  
prepare the war! So when the gods give sign  
to open battle and lead forth our brave  
out of this stronghold, no bewilderment,  
nor tarrying, nor fearful, faltering mind  
shall slack our march."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979), p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 52.

<sup>55</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, translated by Theodore C. Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), Book 11, Lines 1-28.



In the Aeneid, Virgil aimed to indoctrinate his compatriots to forget the sorrowful memory of civil wars and promised good fortune under Augustus' leadership. For him, the victory in the battlefield shall decide the destiny of the empire. An empire should be aware of menaces of the feeling of loss and decadence. Even though epic literature's enthusiastic tone did not diminish in time, it witnessed formal, thematic, and mental differences in time according to changing political and social tendencies.

In order to express political and social transformations, new literary genres, especially novel, emerged during the modern era. For many historians of literature, old genres became inconsequential and were replaced, especially after the French Revolution. According to Allan Pasco, while *ancien régime* empires declined, epic genre declined with them. Because, Kings symbolized heroicness and what was noble before he was dethroned.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, even though the noble genres faced a fatal blow, they did survive. Epic *per se*, adjusted to the changing conditions immediately. By generating a new language, themes, tropes, forms and interlocutors, its intimate relationship with the ideological discourse continued. While epic literature became an agent of expressing nationalist sentiments, it also became an agent of the transformation of empires to the modern conditions, by supporting imperialism, patrimonialism, dynastic nationalism, religious symbolism, and persona of the emperor.

Modern epic developed in two ways. The first one is based on the legend of Virgil. From Thomson to Kipling, writers of epic literature encouraged imperial administrations to be

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<sup>56</sup> Allan H. Pasco, "Toppling from Mount Olympus: The Romantic Hero," Steven M. Oberhelman (ed.), *Epic and Epoch* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1994), pp. 233-47.

militarily and politically active in the colonies. By using a more direct literary tone, they represented the colonization as a process of civilizing the so-called barbarian societies. The second was based on questioning modern, positivist, and materialist ideology and narrative. To provide an example, let us look at Goethe wrote *Faust* in the first half of the nineteenth century. The protagonist, Doctor Faust was a scientist, who desired to acquire every kind of knowledge in the world. But this knowledge was not about the temporal and empiric one. It was eschatological and transcendental. In this work Goethe criticized the progressive narrative. His epic hero, Faust, was an inactive person, who was not penetrating into daily course of things. This character personality signaled an important shift in the tradition of epic writing. Trying to contextualize the re-emergence of epic literature as a symptom of modernity and its discontents, Franco Moretti stressed the modern deviation of the genre from the ancient epic as: "Here, the contrast with the ancient epic is really very strong. In Homer, even the hero's inactivity produces practical consequences of great importance: it is, in its own way, action. In Faust, on the contrary, the hero's presence seems always to leave things as they were, in a kind of gigantic spectacle...the grand world of the epic no longer takes shape in transformative action, but in imagination, in dream, in magic."<sup>57</sup> In that sense, epic literature resulted from an intellectual reaction to the dominant positivist-realist culture, which undervalued literary imagination, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Faust changed the history of epic in certain manners. The book's most important contribution was that the epic account exceeded the fields of militarism, realism, and savagery. Modern epic would be enriched by the reflections of more complex heroic

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<sup>57</sup> Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic*, translated by Quintin Hoare (London & New York: Verso, 1996), p. 16.

figures. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenin*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we meet heroes that did not fulfill the requirements of the heroic figures in traditional epic literature.

Nevertheless, the uneasiness of modernity was not reflected in many other examples of the modern epic. Romantic nationalism encouraged the re-emergence of ancient national epics and the production of the new ones. Modern epic writers continued to celebrate activism, military victory, chivalrism, heroism, the modern-positivist idealism, and the ideals of an empire. This is firstly related to the fact that empires were still very influential in world politics. Imperialism found an echo in the literature. Intellectuals were racing against each other to give advices to the imperial political bodies about the ways in which they may acquire and keep colonies. Secondly, the idea of nationalism, which can be imagined as the antidote of the empire, also brought dynamism to epic literature. Political milieu and even patronage accelerated the creation of heroic stories that take their themes either from history or modern era.

In the nineteenth century every imperial rule was challenged by nationalist ideologies and was left with no choice but to generate various ideological and social mechanisms to maintain loyalty to the state in their domains. To this end, dynastic empires customized the ideology of nationalism according to their imperial precepts and produced the idea of imperial nationalism. However, because the formations of the empire and the nation substantially conflicted with each other, the content of imperial nationalism was debated. The following section evaluates the historical process during which nationalism became an imperial concept and shows the various ways how epic literature eventually came to represent the crystallization of merger between epic ideals and nationalism.

The notion of imperial nationalism varied according to the concept of belonging, which determined the conditions into which the subjects of empire became the citizens. For a nation, the notion of belonging is associated to a common race, language, history and territory. Yet, for an empire, the notion of belonging is arbitrary. Second, imperial nationalism is separated from nationalism according to the notion of expansion. A nation is limited to its first covenant (*mîsak-ı millî* in Turkish). However, an empire is meant to be pro-expansionist for new markets, labor, “civilizing mission”, etc.<sup>58</sup> Yet, every dynastic ancient regime empire experienced this ideological shift differently and the epic, as a traditional form, re-emerged in various contexts according to its own circumstances. Victorian England for example, was a nation state with an imperial mission. It was depended on the definition of a national character. Firstly, it considered its citizens as its soldiers as well. Secondly, it aimed a politically unified nation. Therefore, a new kind of chivalric representation of warfare emerged.<sup>59</sup>

In order to show the specific characteristics of the Victorian epic, Colin Graham investigates the cultural politics of the epic poem in Victorian England. He tests the epic style through Bakhtinian analysis, which is based on the relationship between linguistic models and ideology. For Graham, the Victorian epic is monological, seeks to form a

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<sup>58</sup> Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism, and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism, and Identity*, p. 9.

single voice, a single style to express a single world-view, the one that is politically dominant.<sup>60</sup> Epic serves the future memory of a past; it constructs a past for the future.

The relationship between the formation of the British army and Victorian literature is significant. Peck observed that the vast majority of Victorian novelists, especially before the 1890s, did not make any reference at all to soldiers, the army or military matters.

There was nothing but few after Napoleonic Wars.<sup>61</sup> Most Victorians chose to concentrate upon domestic issues. For Peck, this was due to the fact that England moved from an aristocratic, military dispensation to a middle class, liberal culture. In the last twenty years of the century, however, there was an extraordinary resurgence of militarism. The rise of Jingoism, widespread enthusiasm and popular interest for the army was coincided with the new politics of race, nation and empire. The new heroes, whose epic stories were being told, were the heroes of the empire.<sup>62</sup>

Expansion, invention and self-representation were among the priorities of the nineteenth century empires. Official policies differed according to the capacity of the state to cope with the threats, or to seize the opportunity, which were the two main themes in nineteenth century epic literature. Yet, indication of official policies on literature or the latter's role to activate and support the decisions of the first is ambiguous. The dynamics of literature may not be directly compared with the imperial rhetoric. Moreover, many literary works were not written to celebrate imperialism but to criticize it and the “white

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<sup>60</sup> Colin Graham, *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire, and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester, UK & New York: 1998), p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> John Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. x.

<sup>62</sup> Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature*, p. 136.

man's burden.” Besides, the policies of expansionism, mercantilism, colonialism, monarchism, absolutism, traditionalism, cosmopolitanism, or supranationalism were firstly criticized in belles-lettres.

Nevertheless, literature helps to track the experiences of modern states and to understand the ways in which these political organizations reproduce themselves. It helps to recreate the notions of expansionism, traditionalism, invention, imagination, legitimization, representation and rhetoric of the modern empires. Literature is significant to investigate decisive moments for ideological transformations from early modern times to modern era and from the age of empires to nations. Epic is a form in which the initial drive for imperial ideology is both produced and represented. That is to say, the genre of epic may generate the moment for the empire and/or a state to make decisions that are vital for its future. Imperial faith, mostly decided by the purpose of expansion, was tried to be manipulated or influenced by epic writers. Second, epic represents the past of the empire. Imagining a meaningful past for the empire, it reproduces the ethereal categories on which the state was built. Third, epic is related to the present moment. In times of ideological crisis, growing tension between the parties, epic literature is useful to provide unity, to remind the parties about the metaphysical antecedents of imperial ideology and to mobilize the energies of the imperial body to achieve its hereditary goals.

Reflections of English imperialist ideology on literature started to be seen well before England established itself as a world power and the biggest colonial empire in the world, possessing the most important colonies on the globe. Writers of the Elizabethan Era tried to combine a relationship between imperial deeds and literature. Shakespeare repeatedly invoked matters regarding English politics, when he wrote the history of ancient Rome,

the mightiest “western” empire in history. In his play *Richard II*, taking lessons from inner or outer threats against Rome, he addresses defensiveness and protection of England.

“This other Eden, demi-Paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
....  
Against the envy of less happier hands.”<sup>63</sup>

Shakespeare was one of the pioneers to introduce imperial identity into English literature. Nevertheless, English readers would have to wait for a century for literature to characterize England as a colonial power and the propagator of modernism.

The stories of Spanish conquistadors in the Americas had been published in the eighteenth century England to inspire schoolboys.<sup>64</sup> In this case, the ways in which a handful of Europeans conquered the Aztec Empire is represented through literature is worth mentioning. The source of inspiration was not only a successful military expedition of mighty Spanish Empire in the first half of the sixteenth century, but also the representation of the world as full of opportunities for colonizers. The Aztec Empire was represented as ready to be conquered, having no political use, incompatible with the realities of the time, depending on an archaic culture with a primitive religious system, sexually effeminate and ridiculously pompous.<sup>65</sup> The features of the other were meant to inspire young generations in England, which was already celebrating its military

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 47.

<sup>64</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 349.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), pp. 138-40.

campaigns overseas in the eighteenth century. British Empire of the eighteenth century was modern, puritan, protestant, and against the culture of imperial lavishness of the sixteenth century Spain.

Nevertheless, there were similarities in literary illustrations. The stories from the Americas really seemed to work in inspiring English youth. British Empire as the most powerful colonial power was built after the conquest of India. And, according to Green, the story of the conquest of India was also written by using romantic and exotic themes. For instance, “Hindu religion is presented as all the cruelty and superstition, Hindu character as at best feminine.”<sup>66</sup> English schoolboys were raised to believe that the political system in England was the finest, religious life in England was the most down-to-earth and the situation of English army was beyond comparison.

Aggressive commercial emphasis in the eighteenth century English literature separates the English example from early modern Spanish and other examples later in the modern era. The relationship between commerce and imperialism echoed in David Mallet’s epic poems as:

“I see thy Commerce, Britain, grasp the world:  
All nations serve thee; every foreign flood  
Subjected, pays his tribute to the Thames.”<sup>67</sup>

Celebration of British commercial expeditions and militarism sharpened the distinction between the subject nations and their rulers in the imagination of English literate classes.

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<sup>66</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> James Thomson & David Mallet, *Alfred: A Masque*, (1740), Felicity Nussbaum (ed.), *Plays of David Mallet* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), pp. 43-4.



Due to their underdeveloped physical conditions, archaic military practices, absurd religious beliefs and archaic world-views, the others were doomed to be slaves. On the other hand, England, as being the pioneer of positive sciences and mercantilism was represented as their shepherd. For Mallet, due to its advancement, England shall rule:

“Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;  
Britons never will be slaves.”<sup>68</sup>

English epic did not continue to be the record-keeper of the ephemeral glories of a colonial power. A long time after Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott continued to emphasize the themes of adventure, mercantilism, domination of inferior races at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when England was questioning the pros and cons of colonialism. British Empire had become extremely dependent to the East India Company in the course of the second half of eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Being in relation with the inferior races and their cultural and political primitivism, liberals at home suspected the malignant effects of the colonies to England, especially in terms of corruption. Adopting historical events from English past, Scott blended British colonial advance with chivalric, idealistic themes in order to counsel English ruling classes for moral governance that guaranteed “the triumph of the white race.”<sup>70</sup>

Napoleonic Wars gave an opportunity to English writers to allege English ideological superiority. According to Green, “to English eyes, as Alexander Welsh puts it Napoleon was an embodiment of will, ambition, passion, while England herself seemed an

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<sup>68</sup> Mallet, *Alfred: A Masque*.

<sup>69</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 114.

<sup>70</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 128.

embodiment of reason, prudence, realism.”<sup>71</sup> Scott, as a devout opponent of Napoleon's policies, wrote *Waverley*, picturing the value of prudence and patriarchal modes of authority in a Scottish village, under the influence of French military advance.

Besides, Napoleonic Wars provided non-fictional English heroes for epic writers.

Admiral Nelson, the first recipient of the Ottoman Imperial Order of the Crescent (*Hilal Nişanı*) given by Selim III (ruled 1789–1807), spent his military career in fight against Napoleon's army and became one of the heroes in Victorian epic poetry with another war hero, who became famous in the battle of Waterloo, Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington. Alfred Tennyson, a famous epic poet who was the favorite of Queen Victoria, recalled their glories on the battlefield on the eve of Crimean War, the most important English military enterprise after Napoleonic Wars. He portrayed Nelson as:

“Mighty Seaman, this is he  
Was great by land as thou by sea.  
Thin island loves thee well, thou famous man,  
The greatest sailor since our world began.”<sup>72</sup>

Therefore, following the long-lasting dominance of adventurous, commercial and colonial themes in English epic literature, noble, heroic motives settled themselves. That is not to say, English literature discarded imperialism from its inventory. Literary production continued with different methods. Robinson Crusoe, who left his aristocratic background and left England for a career in law and ended up having a plantation abroad, left his place for the servants of the kings and queens. Adventure-seeking heroes of early modern

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<sup>71</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 101.

<sup>72</sup> Alfred Tennyson, "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, vol. 1 (New York: MacMillan, 1896), p. 527.

empire left their seats to lords, viscounts and dukes who earned these titles for their services in British army.

Alongside the epic works that honor British commanders, glorifying accounts of common British soldiers appeared especially during the Crimean War (1853–56). Epic writers, such as Tennyson, represented the struggle of English troops abroad as the noblest of all causes. British soldiers, joining the army from all parts of the commonwealth, were exalted as agents of English civilization and nobleness against Russian tyranny and terror. In 1854, Tennyson portrayed fearlessness and sacrifice of the soldiers in Crimea, who would experience destruction in the hands of Russian forces, in his requiem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, as:

“Forward the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the Guns he said:  
Into the Valley of Death  
Rode the Six Hundred.”<sup>73</sup>

The touching story of the Light Brigade contributed to the legend of Crimean War to endure for a long time. Many British composers, such as Sir Granville Ransome Bantock (1868–1946), produced musical works based on the story of the Light Brigade. In 1890, Rudyard Kipling wrote his famous *The Last of the Light Brigade*, echoing Tennyson's poem. In order to draw attention of the English public opinion about the conditions of British troops abroad and to criticize insufficient support from the political body at home, he wrote that:

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<sup>73</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poems*, Vol. 2 (London: MacMillan, 1908), p. 225.

“O Thirty million English that bubble of England's might,  
Behold there are twenty heroes who lack their food to-night;  
Our children's children are lisping  
to “honour the charge they made”  
And we leave to the streets and the workhouse  
the charge of the Light Brigade!”<sup>74</sup>

Born in Bombay to an English family and experienced colonial life in the first-hand, Kipling became the apex of modern English epic. He was the most popular English writer and the first English recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, all of which he gained by giving literary products that support British imperialism and its military organization. He achieved his success through combining traditional adventurous themes in English epic literature with the realist pictures of British military power, which was unrivaled during the Victorian era. Kipling was the foremost epic writer to interpret British imperialist experience at its height. Nevertheless, his legacy was far beyond purely representing his country's power.

In today's post-colonial atmosphere, especially after Edward Said's *Orientalism* that exposed the intimate relationship between imperialism and intellectual production in the western world, Kipling's works have become innuendo. Kipling wrote *The White Man's Burden* in 1899 to celebrate United State's capture of Philippine Islands. The title itself represents the ideological motivation behind imperialism. The white man's burden was primarily the white man's duty to educate the inferior races. Kipling negated the favors of imperialism for the colonizer and suggested imperialism as a humanitarian aid. Instead of being exploited by imperialism, the colonies appeared as a burden on the shoulders of the empire. Due to the fact that the colonized people cannot judge what is good for them, the

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<sup>74</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Collected Poems of Rudyard Kipling* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 212.

colonizer decides the ways in which they should be supported in order to make them part of the civilized world. Kipling called the colonizers to:

“Take up the White Man's burden -  
Send Forth the best ye breed -  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild -  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.”<sup>75</sup>

During the Boer War (1899–1902), which was the most expensive, long-lasting and publicly criticized British military expedition after the Napoleonic Wars and before the WWI, Kipling was accused of Jingoism and lost his popularity. Due to the unpopularity of the war, his works supporting the British cause in South Africa were chastised at home. Mere Jingoism would not be popular anymore in the twentieth century, at least for colonial desires.<sup>76</sup>

From Milton to Kipling, English epic literature is the most helpful example to show the close relationship between epic literature and imperial deeds. Themes of adventure in epic works coincided with the emergence of British Empire, when commercial goals inspired English entrepreneurs to make connections with local providers abroad. In time, epic literature reflected military expansion that stemmed from the desire to control global trade. Throughout the nineteenth-century, epic literature in Britain became organically linked to the colonial enterprise. Epic writers, such as Kipling, not only celebrated

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<sup>75</sup> Kipling, *The Collected Poems*, p. 334.

<sup>76</sup> H. L. Varley, “Imperialism and Rudyard Kipling,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol.14, No.1 (Jan. 1953), p. 124.

English colonialism but also visited English colonies and supported British cause as journalists living in colonies, “eating army food, using army fodder for their horses, riding out with the patrols, viewing the advance from the frontline and drinking the officers’ grog in the mess.”<sup>77</sup> In *fin de siècle*, epic writers became journalists, embedded to imperial troops fighting for the colonies. The next section looks at the nationalist adversaries of the empire and the ways in which they used the epic literature for their own political intentions.

## **2.2. Nationalism**

Besides supporting colonial enterprise and imperial deeds, epic literature supported the ideologies challenging the old establishment. This part evaluates the relationship between epic literature and rising nationalist movements in the following manner. First, it is going to demonstrate how epic accounts helped the liberation of United States from the mighty British Empire, and the creation of a nation according to modern principles. Second, it is going to contemplate on how epic literature supported or represented the destruction of *ancien régime* in France, invention of a French nation, promotion of constitutionalism, and triggered the separatist movements in other European Empires. Lastly, it focuses on Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia to show epic literature’s role in creating a past for the nations. Through primitive and folkloric themes, epic literature helped nationalist

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<sup>77</sup> Donal P. McCrachen, “The Relationship Between British War Correspondents in the Field and British Military Intelligence During the Anglo-Boer War,” *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2015), p. 111.

movements in continental and eastern Europe to claim an ethnic and geographical basis for the states they desired to create.

The national consciousness in North America emerged well before the American Revolution. Citizens of the British colonies were identifying themselves not as Americans but as subjects of the most powerful state in the world, the Britain, before the Revolution. Language, culture, history, law and customs tied them to the king and the Commonwealth. The American revolutionaries “were freeborn Englishmen claiming their rights as British citizens.”<sup>78</sup> In a short time, the United States freed itself from the Commonwealth and selected a president, whose first message was encouraging the spirit of American nationalism. George Washington, in his inaugural speech, defined the nationalist understanding of the country:

“The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.”<sup>79</sup>

George Washington, the general of the Continental Army, the liberator of his country, and the first president of the United States, was represented as a heroic figure

immediately after his death in 1799. The epic accounts on Washington started with

Mason Locke Weems' *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General*

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<sup>78</sup> Dan H. Doyle, "Beginning the World Over Again: Past and Future in American Nationalism," Susana Carvalho & François Gemenne (eds.), *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and Representations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 81.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Samuel Flagg Bemis, ““America” and “Americans”,” *The Yale Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (July 2011), p. 131.

*George Washington* (1800). Different from the traditional epic heroes, Washington was represented not only as a soldier, but as an agent of republican ideals. Weems' Washington was "the dutiful son, the affectionate brother, the cheerful school boy, the diligent surveyor, the neat draftsman, the laborious farmer, the widow's husband, the orphan's father, the poor man's friend."<sup>80</sup> Unlike god-like heroic creatures in European history, Washington was a citizen-soldier of the republic. European ancient regimes, monarchies and corruption seemed even more preposterous as the founding fathers of the United States were propagating democratic values, and modest, civilized citizenship with equal rights.

The values and ideals on which the founding fathers supposedly built the United States were developed as a reaction to the ancient regimes and their ideals in Europe. Nevertheless, the cultivation of the United States was permeated through the colonization of American frontier. Westward expansion and Indian massacre were planned and executed by the government. The republic was becoming an empire and its policies were needed to be legitimized. According to Cadot, "the problem, therefore, was no longer to break with a European heritage, but to find a way to legitimize the Indian genocide and the imperialistic expansion of the United States in a national myth."<sup>81</sup> The history of colonization needed to be re-written.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, many epic books about the life and discoveries of Christopher Columbus appeared. He was represented as the adventurous Englishman,

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<sup>80</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1800), p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> Christine Cadot, "Rediscovering Columbus in Nineteenth-Century American Textbooks," Susana Carvalho & François Gemenne (eds.), *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and Representations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 99.



Robinson Crusoe, who had also abandoned his past for a new world. The theme of discovery became a literary theme through which American imperialism was legitimized. It was also pumped through textbooks that glorified the story of Columbus. In his *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), Washington Irving depicted Columbus as a farsighted person, who was following recent scientific developments. Besides, Irving put forward not only imperialist desires of his hero but also his urge for spreading civilization and the Christian faith. Columbus tried to convince Spanish rulers by contemplating that “the whole (discovered) might speedily be brought into subjection to the church; and thus, as had been foretold in holy-writ, the light of revelation might be extended to the remotest ends of the earth.”<sup>82</sup> American children were indirectly taught the charm of discovery, and thus colonialism.

Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* right after the American Civil War (1861–1865). The story takes place in 1840s Mississippi, at the then frontier of the United States. The political condition of the region was pro-slavery and anti-federalist. Obviously, Twain tried to criticize the southern politics and life-style. The epic heroes of the book were children, trying to flee their homeland. His intention was to crystallize the dichotomies between the center and periphery. Twain portrayed that frontier as a place of terror and murder. The periphery had its own rules, everyday life circumstances and even a specific temporal time. It needed the leadership of the center in order to terminate the ongoing violence.

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<sup>82</sup> Washington Irving, *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Carvill, 1828) p.104.

The conquest of the West, Indians and Southerners was significant in the first century of the history of the United States. Literature responded to the demands from the political bodies by generating literary tropes. Twain's dichotomy between the south and the north summarized the role of literature in legitimizing American imperialism in the nineteenth century. His children characters shared the same values with Christopher Columbus, which basically were curiosity, prowess and a revolutionary desire.

Furthermore, the cowboy figure, as an epic hero in American popular literature, became famous in the 1880s. The cowboy was created as an amalgam of both democratic and aristocratic virtues. Quoting from Vorpahl's *My Dear Wister*, Green pictures the characterization of the figure as, “the fine essence of Anglo-Saxonism,...conqueror, invader, navigator, buccaneer, explorer, colonist, tiger-shooter.”<sup>83</sup> The cowboy was a chivalric figure; yet did not belong to the aristocracy, more suitable for the so-called democratic American ideals.

Theodore Roosevelt (r. 1901–1909), the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, was himself a cowboy, a hunter, an explorer and a soldier. He had a ranch in the frontier, in Missouri, where Tom Sawyer lived years ago. As a sheriff, once he captured three thieves. He was against hanging them though. Thus, he protected them overnight, inspired by Leo Tolstoy, and brought them for a trial in the town.<sup>84</sup> Roosevelt himself represented what Twain proposed in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: the northern law and order to fight against the violence in the frontier. Roosevelt wrote *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman, Ranch*

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<sup>83</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 254.

<sup>84</sup> Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), p. 384.

*Life and the Hunting-Trail*, and *The Wilderness Hunter*, depicting the life in the Frontier as a cowboy. He attended to the 1898 Spanish-American War in Cuba, with his team made of volunteer cowboys. This heroicism and sacrifice led his way to the office as the vice president and later the president of the United States.

His masculine attitude did not clash with the diplomatic character of the office. The brutal, barbarous characterization of a Hollywood cowboy was yet to come. In a sense, Roosevelt was a replica of George Washington, in terms of being a citizen-soldier. Nevertheless, he also carried the adventurous character of Columbus. After his tenure in the office, he left America for a safari in Africa. He and his hunter friends travelled around Kenya, Congo and Sudan. His adventurist character epitomized the American ideal of desire for discovery.

After the 1789 Revolution, which, according to Ernest Renan, constituted, “the French epic,”<sup>85</sup> French experience would become an integral concern of modern epic literature. Instead of celebrating commercial glories, main features of the new regime in France became fashionable. Accordingly, objections of the revolutionaries or the moderns to the ancient regime were to be the main themes in literature during the following century. That is to say, the nineteenth century literature inspired, manipulated or reflected political crisis, desire of change, radicalism, and fresh ideologies across Europe.

In France, the epic, following in the footsteps of the English, had been produced to celebrate the change and to condemn the status quo in a different manner. The story of

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Martin Thom, "Tribes within Nations: the Ancient Germans and the History of Modern France," Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, p. 29.

Napoleon was among the first themes to inspire the epic. Leo Tolstoy portrayed him as, “the poor young man who started with no advantages and raised himself by his own efforts to the heights of his profession, and then seized supreme power in France, rewrote its laws and education system and everything else became emperor and finally ruled Europe and dominated the world...Napoleon's enemies were old established systems of privilege and sentiment, feudalism, tradition, corrupt empires.”<sup>86</sup> According to Tolstoy, “this Buonaparte has turned all their heads; they all think of how he rose from an ensign and became Emperor. Well, well, God grant it.”<sup>87</sup>

Tolstoy pointed out the middle class background of the emperor to emphasize that any citizen from modest background can climb the ladders to be a ruler in modern era. State business was not limited to aristocracy. The example of Napoleon served the intellectuals around Europe a romantic story to make the new democratic state system more intelligible for the reader. Besides, it is meant to encourage the middle class to participate in democratic movements and decision mechanisms in governmental issues. Needless to say, the new generation of soldiers with proper modern military education was privileged among the middle class citizens to decide the future of the country and the nation.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the story of Napoleon Bonaparte had circulated among the European youth. Although, counter-reformation movement and its representatives in literature demonized the persona of French self-made soldier-emperor, revolutionary, mostly nationalist, ideas were galvanized by what happened in France.

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<sup>86</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 35.

<sup>87</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (London: Wordsworth, 2001), p. 31. For the uses of the figure of Napoleon in Russian literature, see Robert L. Jackson, "Napoleon in Russian Literature," *Yale French Studies*, No. 26, The Myth of Napoleon, (1960).

Toppling the old regime, French revolutionaries removed the remnants of the ancient order in France and led the way to their country to participate in the world of colonizers, bringing civilization. After he conquered Alexandria, he promised the people of Egypt the system he aimed to establish in Europe. Against decadence, nepotism, sordidness, injustice and despotism, he promised democracy, meritocracy, progress and wealth.

Addressing the Egyptian people he said that:

“All Egyptians are now called upon to manage everything. The cleverest, the wisest and the most virtuous will govern and the people will be happy. There used to be great towns, broad canals and rich trade in this land. What destroyed them if it was not the greed, the injustice and the tyranny of the Mameluks?”<sup>88</sup>

The genre of epic also was used by the liberation movements to defend the campaign against the traditional system and to consolidate the power of the idea of change. Nevertheless, in Hegelian understanding of historical narrative and its artistic signification, epic as an art form was outmoded and incapable to signify, defend, celebrate, or collaborate with the notion of change.<sup>89</sup> Generally, it was based on a story of a certain hero who was assigned by the divine order, using barbaric methods to fight against the tyranny, approaching others in the most primitive and uncivilized manner. On the other hand, modern era has represented the advanced condition of dealing with the problems from despotism to ordinary crimes. With the agency of constitution and policing, deciding the offenses against public order and providing justice were delegated

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<sup>88</sup> Captain Joseph-Marie Moiret, *Memoirs of Napoleon's Egyptian Expedition 1798–1801*, translated and edited by Rosemary Brindle (London: Greenhill Books, 2001), p. 42.

<sup>89</sup> Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic*, p. 12. For an alternative approach on Hegel's concept of the possibility of a modern epic, see David James, "Civil Society and Literature: Hegel and Lukacs on the Possibility of a Modern Epic," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, Vol. 16, No.2.

to the hands of modern state. Therefore, heroism, as an individual performance, was announced to be an archaic behavior.

Even so, new formation of the state, either of an empire or a republic, needed to be justified against the objections against its legitimacy. The main source of Napoleon's rule and power was the fact that he created order in France. Reforming the system, the new self-appointed emperor reestablished the rule of law in his country. Even though his rule was the result of terror and radicalism, his reign reestablished peace. For Tolstoy:

“Napoleon is great because he rose superior to the revolution, suppressed its abuses, preserved all that was good in it equality of citizenship and freedom of the speech and of the press – and only for that reason did he obtain power.”<sup>90</sup>

That is to say, Napoleon Bonaparte, as an epic figure himself, showed that the change is not always something to be refrained from; some changes are beneficial. This idea was ultimately supported by literature. Balzac is still remembered for his words saying that “what Napoleon had done by the sword, I shall achieve it with the pen.”<sup>91</sup> Literature helped radical changes to be seen as normal developments, as far as they destroy aristocracy and offer democracy.

However, epic literature, as the traditional standard bearer of aristocratic values, was not ready yet to support national cause, in terms of themes. Therefore, epic writers started to bring ancient epics to light. Nationalist movements used old epics to form a nation, members of which shared a common past and a common plot that symbolized the birth of

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<sup>90</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Laure Murat, *The Man Who Thought He Was Napoleon: Toward a Political History of Madness*, translated by Deke Dusinberre (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2014), p. 115.

their nation. The more the plot was primitive, the more the plot was useful for the writer. Nobody could question its authenticity.

As a result, contrary to what Hegel had hoped for, primitivism was started to be celebrated. Establishing order by the sword refashioned the old epic stories of the European nations. The traditional epic works were published in their old appearances or were re-aestheticized in novel art forms. European nations, not necessarily nation-states, embraced primordialism and folk culture. For the first time, nation became able to counteract against the cultural dominance of empire. Once became the official literary form of empire, the genre of epic turned out to be the most important part of the ammunition of nationalist culture in its early phase. Historiography embraced the nationalist cause. For Breuille, "historical writing was accompanied by the collecting of national folklore and folksong, 'discovering' national epics, compiling grammars and dictionaries of the national language."<sup>92</sup> Epic writers offered nations the legitimacy they needed, in terms of literature, language, history, geography, music, heroes, to resist the sophisticated and wide cultural repertoire of empires.

Blood, race, genes, customs, religion, culture, environment, geography define a nation and its domains among many other variables. Nevertheless, one very significant value that makes a group of people a nation is memorable victories and defeats in the past.

Epics are selective readings. As they became transformed for centuries both in meaning and in context, they reproduced a historical account based on forgetting and

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<sup>92</sup> John Breuille, "Nationalism and the Making of National Pasts," Susana Carvalho & François Gemenne (eds.), *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and Representations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 11.

remembering. In modern context, the ideological cause tries to complete the historical proceeding of the text by determining its ideological function. Defining the nation, Ernest Renan says that:

“a heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people.”<sup>93</sup>

Epic creates history more often than history creates epic. Throughout the nineteenth century, anthropological and philological studies in Europe reached a peak. Researchers evaluated ancient texts as the birth certificates of nations.

Epic as a literary source for the origins of nations were first used in the context of Anglo-Saxon history, following the uncovering of *Beowulf*, a long epic poem describing the adventures of a Gothic hero fighting against supernatural powers. A more systematic attitude brought by the publishing of old heroic stories, *chanson de gestes*, which for Renan “are such a perfect mirror of the spirit of the times,”<sup>94</sup> especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. Reminding French people the stories of their glorious fathers from the medieval era fighting against the infidel Muslims abroad in order to obtain glory; they aimed to indoctrinate the value of a sacred cause and to alert people against the traitors. The story of the Franks fighting against the Saracens in spite of a vassal's disloyalty,

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<sup>93</sup> Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" translated by Martin Thom, Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Renan, "What is a Nation?" p. 10.



*Chanson de Roland* was the most important example of this movement and is still very popular.<sup>95</sup>

The movement of discovering and publishing old epics was also very vibrant in the countries, which were suffered from the Napoleonic Wars and French aggression.

Different versions of *The Tale of Igor's Campaign, the story of Russian union against the Turkish threat in the twelfth century*, were published during the modern times.<sup>96</sup> The main motive of the movement or publishing old epics was for the nations to claim legitimacy against the threat of invasion by great forces. For their part, old Scandinavian epics were published in order to claim the right of existence of the Scandinavian nations against the Russian threat during the nineteenth century. Finnish *Kalevala*, Estonian *Kalevipoeg* and Icelandic *Njals Saga* are among them.

The modern interest in the folk culture was entirely political. For Fichte, the German idealist who also fought against Napoleon's army, "those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by

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<sup>95</sup> Joseph Bédier, *La Chanson de Roland* (Paris: L'Édition d'art, H. Piazza, 1927).

<sup>96</sup> For the first English translation of the tale, see Leonard A. Magnus (translated and edited), *The Tale of the Armament of Igor* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915).

nature one and an inseparable whole.”<sup>97</sup> Language is “the outcome of a particular history, the legacy of a distinctive tradition.”<sup>98</sup>

The interest for the roots of German nation proliferated in the time, when there was no German nation, but German speaking people who were mainly living under French occupation. Herder, Fichte, and Arndt generated their ideas about the relationship between language and nation, when German speaking middle classes and intellectuals were under the influence of French language and culture.<sup>99</sup> German nationalist intellectuals tried to neutralize the French influence and to create a unified German nation, members of which had a shared language, literature, religion and music. In the aftermath of Napoleonic Wars, *Die Nibelungenlied*, the most colorful account about the lives of ancient Teutons, became very famous in German speaking countries. Richard Wagner composed old German epic pieces such as *Der Fliegende Hollaender* (1843), *Tannhaeuser* (1845), *Lohengrin* (1850), *Das Rheingold* (1854), *Die Walküre* (1856), *Tristan und Isolde* (1864), *Götterdaemerung* (1874) and *Parsifal* (1882). Epic works created a nationalist discourse both in Germany and Italy, thanks to the works of Verdi such as *Nabucco*, which constituted the cultural background of unification of both countries in the middle of the century.

Epic literature’s contribution to the emergence of nations in the nineteenth-century Europe was twofold. First, epic writers created modern heroes, such as Washington and

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<sup>97</sup> Johann Gotlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, translated by R.F. Jones & G.H. Turnbull (Chicago & London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), pp. 223-224.

<sup>98</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 52-55.

Napoleon, who would lead nations to be recovered from corrupted old system. Second, researchers discovered old epic tales to claim a common past, a myth, a language, an imagination, and a homeland for the members of the nation. The empires' always had epic stories of great kings and dynasties. Throughout the nineteenth century, epic writers, historians, anthropologists, even musicians worked to create or invent epic accounts to support the national cause. The next section looks at *ancient régimes*, such as the Habsburgs and the Romanovs, and the ways in which they used the epic literature to compete with the separatist movements.

### **2.3. Patrimonialism**

The revival of old epics for the sake of modern nationalist claims is understandable. However, the revival of old epics in the old style empires needs analysis. The image of the tsar and ecumenical claims of the Russian Orthodox Church envisioned the idea of Russian identity for the major part of the nineteenth century. For the sake of imperial cause, Russian writers demanded submission of different ethnic and religious groups within and outside the empire. During the Crimean War, Russian literature was full of mottos such as “understand and submit, O Nations, for God is with us” or “for the Orthodox faith, for the motherland, and the tsar father.”<sup>100</sup> Imperial formula of Russianness was built around patrimonialism, the persona of the tsar, and the Orthodox Church. The main advantage of that *modus operandi* was firstly geographical. The

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<sup>100</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861 – 1917* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 218.

tsardom created an enormous sphere of influence. Second was spiritual. The area of influence of the Russian Church was extensive, threatening the integrity of neighbors, such as the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire, considering the high number of their Orthodox subjects.

Literature served to construct an intimate bond between the tsar and his subjects. Mikhail Kheraskov's (1733–1807) *Rossiada* was the pioneer of Russian epics that accounts the glories of heroic tsars from the past. Being part of the “efforts to recover a native Russian culture,”<sup>101</sup> *Rossiada* narrated Ivan the Terrible's conquest of Kazan in 1552. Many stories were published throughout the nineteenth century, such as *Anecdotes and Legends About Peter the Great, the First Emperor of the Russian Land, and about his Love for the State* (1873); *Tales of the Tsar Father Peter the Great and How He and His Stalwart Soldiers Fought the Enemy* (1892); and *The Legend of How the Soldier Saved the Life of Peter the Great from Death at the Hands of Bandits*, “portraying the tsar (especially legendary Peter the Great) as a model of self-sacrifice and hard work, a generous man grateful for the unknowing service of a loyal soldier, and a valiant leader in the battle.”<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the supremacy of the Orthodox belief was used in relation to the national cause. In case of the stories about the battles against Muslim people, the plots end happily after the conversion of the Orient to the Orthodoxy. The framework of Russian heroic behavior was also created in expense of the others. While the Russians held very positive characteristics, for instance “Turks appeared...as a people of both beastly cruelty and

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<sup>101</sup> Simon Dixon, *The Modernization of Russia 1676 – 1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 167.

<sup>102</sup> Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 219.

natural indolence and debauchery.”<sup>103</sup> Russian epic writers emphasized the distinction between Russians and others, in terms of ethnicity and religion. Russian epic accounts were consisted of the encounters with the others.

One version of epic, depicting the stories of captivity in the hands of mostly oriental people became very famous among Russian writers. Popular literature, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, narrated the stories of Russian captives in the hands of mostly exotic people. Titles such as, *Slavery among the Asiatics*, *The Female Slave or Three Weeks in a Harem*, *Turkish Prisoner*, *The Terrible Treasure or the Tatar Prisoner* were very regular. These stories reflected Russian curiosity about the other. However, they also represented the fact that Russia, its people and its soldiers were portrayed to be in a constant threat from the outer world. Second, these stories symbolized the intact relationship between the concept of adventure and empire, which we can also see in English epic literature. Third, taking place in different geographies, casting people from different origins, Russian epics introduce the world of empires that differ from the parochial pictures in contemporary literary examples of nation-states in terms of habitat, nature, culture and spirit.

According to an old story, founder of the House of Habsburg, Rudolf I (r. 1273–1291) came across an exhausted priest carrying the Eucharist (consecrated bread) in the forest and gave the priest his ride.<sup>104</sup> This mythical anecdote was accepted by the Habsburgs as the starting point of the practice of the Eucharist and the dominance of the Habsburgs in

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<sup>103</sup> Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 233.

<sup>104</sup> Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca: Österreichische Frömmigkeit im Barock* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1982), p. 20.

the Catholic Church. It had carried very significant messages for the Habsburgs for centuries. However, the story only became very popular after a series of chronicles during the seventeenth century, the age of the Austrian Baroque.<sup>105</sup> It was the time, when the intimate relationship between the House of Habsburg and the Catholic Church became popularized and visible via arts and architecture all around the empire.

This contract between the religious institutions and the state was disrupted in the second half of the eighteenth century. Maria Theresa (r. 1745–1765) and her son Joseph II (r. 1765–1790), the followers of the rationalism of the age of enlightenment, altered the church-state relationship. Religious aura was ejected from the public display of the dynasty. According to Unowsky, “the state now communicated more directly with the population, no longer relying on the church and the Catholic orders to teach their subjects duty and loyalty to the imperial family.”<sup>106</sup> The emperor started to appear in public, wearing military or bureaucratic uniforms. The public display of the court was no more flamboyant.

Immediately after Franz Joseph (r. 1848–1916) was enthroned, he revitalized the pompous court etiquette and ceremonial protocol of baroque. The aim was to reinvigorate the timeworn image of the emperor and the dynasty. Answering the nationalist threats, holiness and power (*macht*) of the emperor, including the dynasty's traditional relationship with the Catholic Church was actuated. Pompous display of the emperor and the dynasty was observed in every occasion, such as Catholic or secular rituals, jubilee

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<sup>105</sup> For a list of chronicles, see Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*.

<sup>106</sup> Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism*, p. 16.

ceremonies, provincial festivities throughout Franz Joseph's long reign. The main idea was to imply and offer traditional patrimonial protection to the subjects of the empire and guarantee their loyalty in return.

That is to say, Russia was not alone to use a blend of religious symbolism, patrimonialism, persona of the emperor and dynastic nationalism to fortify its political claims. The nineteenth century Austrian Empire was a typical example of dynastic regimes that seek dynastic patriotism, even if they had to use nationalist arguments. Dynastic patriotism and national belonging were presented as mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive.<sup>107</sup> Identification with the emperor reached a peak. Moreover, unlike Queen Victoria, Franz Joseph retained significant power within the constitutional system. At the same time, like the Ottomans, the Habsburgs could not claim to embody the spirit of any single dominant nation within the state.<sup>108</sup> Unowsky focuses on the official festivities in Austria during the reign of Franz Joseph. For him, official festivities defined national identity as a constituent element of a broader identification with the emperor-father. Every detail of Franz Joseph's life had become a matter of ceremony in the hands of the state officials.

The history of the late Habsburg monarchy, valid for the Ottoman state as well, cannot just be reduced to a narrative of rising nationalist movements and diminishing state unity. The spread of national movements was accompanied by the expansion in forms of monarchical self-representation and dynastic political rituals that aimed to promote a

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<sup>107</sup> Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism*, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism*, p. 5.

supranational patriotism.<sup>109</sup> Military service had gained more complex connotations. Such aspects of military service as being obliged to wear the emperor's uniform, swearing an oath of loyalty to his persona, obeying the commands of his officers, traveling through and/or living in different areas of the monarchy, and being confronted with other ethnic groups would all have raised the individual's consciousness about the multinational empire and its sovereign.<sup>110</sup>

Some other dynasties could manage to transform patrimonial revivalism into national mobilization. In Japanese example, the state's efforts to militarize the masses began in the Meiji Period (1868–1912), and it was mainly based on the emperor's persona as a paternal figure. Ohnuki-Tierney investigates the development in Japan of a totalitarian ideology, centered on the emperor, that began in the nineteenth century and that culminated at the end of the WWII. For her, the processes of refashioning the emperor and the imperial system were empowered through the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution, “Imperial Prescript to Soldiers”, and “Imperial Prescript on Education.”<sup>111</sup> The Japanese example is important for understanding the Ottoman case, since both were transforming their laws and institutions. The rituals instituted in the Meiji period were means to create a “theocracy” and to unite the Japanese into one political body.

Therefore, the imperial rituals were synchronized with the newly instituted rituals in

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<sup>109</sup> Laurence Cole & Daniel Unowsky (eds.), “Introduction,” *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Laurence Cole, “Military Veterans and Popular Patriotism in Imperial Austria 1870–1914,” Laurence Cole & Daniel Unowsky (eds.), *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 39.

<sup>111</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms*, p. 62.



villages, schools, organizations, and national shrines.<sup>112</sup> Textbooks, school songs and popular songs, popular theater reflect new political inclination of the Japanese state. Cultural products in Meiji Japan mostly were focused on the construction of the notion of sacrifice for the emperor.<sup>113</sup>

## 2.4. Conclusion

Throughout history, from Homeric verses to modern genres, different political structures and ideas benefitted from epic themes to legitimize or propagate their claims. Thanks to nineteenth-century developments in print technology, epic literature reached a wider audience starting from the early modern era. What is more, the emergence of nationalism encouraged writers of epic literature to invent a heroic past for the emerging nations. Epic literature not only reflected the political claims of empires and nations, but also the details of political condition. Whereas, in England, epic encouraged colonialism and imperialism, in France, Germany, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia, epic writers either told the heroic accounts of modern heroes or re-invented old epic tales to promote a common identity for the members of the nation. In *ancien régimes*, epic works aimed to support the legitimacy of kings and dynasties against new ideological challenges. Throughout nineteenth century, the political role of epic literature acquired further importance, and epic writers became more involved with politics and the political establishment. The next chapter deals with the Ottoman context. It first looks at the

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<sup>112</sup> Ohnoku-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms*, p. 91.

<sup>113</sup> Ohnoku-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms*, p. 259.

emergence of epic literature in the Ottoman Empire and then examines its transformation in line with the political developments until the re-emergence of the genre in the nineteenth century.



## CHAPTER III

### OTTOMAN EPIC TRADITION UP TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

“God’s grace and aid reaches him,  
who wars on God’s behalf.”<sup>114</sup>

This chapter tries to demonstrate that Ottoman epic literature had always been closely related to the political developments and actors in Ottoman history. Ottoman epic literature was created by the ghazis, the powerful actors of the early Ottoman history. After the conquest of Constantinople, the state became more centralized and was transformed into an imperial establishment. Epic literature gradually became an official activity, written to narrate the military campaigns of the reigning sovereign. Epic writers were assigned to narrate the heroic accounts of the powerful sultans, such as Selim I and Süleyman I.

After the sixteenth century, Ottoman conquests started to diminish and the sultans became less interested in joining the campaigning army. The Ottoman pashas became the

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<sup>114</sup> “Her kim ol Hak yoluna kılsa gazâ, erişür Hak’tan ona lütf u atâ,” Sinan Çavuş, *Süleymanname*, p. 23.

leaders in the epic accounts. Epic writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recorded the acts and deeds of the Ottoman generals and the long Ottoman battles against Austria in the West and Persia in the East. Until its re-emergence in the second half of the nineteenth century, epic as a genre had always reflected the developments, tendencies, and inclinations in politics, preferences in state affairs, shifts in the administrative system, intellectual debates, and power struggles among political actors in the Ottoman Empire.

This chapter aims to demonstrate the ways in which the Ottoman epic developed in a certain period, used certain tropes and narratives, and encouraged the ghaza ethos in certain circumstances. First, it shows shared or distinct interests among the texts from the fifteenth century, when the genre was gradually became a state monopoly. More willingly than exploiting the texts to construct a historical account, the main purpose of this chapter is to analyze the main traits of the Ottoman epic before its re-invention in the nineteenth century.

One of the oldest and the most popular genres of Ottoman literature, epic has a significant place among the written sources of Ottoman history. The written accounts of the Ottoman campaigns against their enemies are significant to comprehend the most unknown stages of the Ottoman past, particularly the eras of foundation and rise of the state.

Ottoman epic was born in the early fifteenth century, when the Ottoman state encountered the threat of dissolution after the defeat of Ottomans at the hands of Timurid forces in 1402. The Ottomans were ghazis, fighting to enlarge the domains of Islam in Western Anatolia. Ghazi identity was a significant source of legitimacy for the Ottomans

in Muslim world. In order to express the ghazi role of their state in history, the Ottomans started to produce epic accounts. Although for diverse reasons, the political blueprint of the Ottoman epic lasted even after the state legitimized its role in history to its Muslim rivals.

The earliest Ottoman sources with epic accounts were Ahmedi's (1334?–1413)

*İskendername*, an anonymous *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehemmed Han*, again an anonymous *Tevârih-i Âl-i 'Osman*, Enverî's *Düsturname* (1465), Tursun Bey's (1426? – 1491?) *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth* (1488), Kıvamî's *Fetihnâme-i Sultan Mehmed*, Aşıkpaşa's (1400? – 1484?) *Tevârih-i al-i Osman*, Mehmed Neşrî's *Kitab-ı Cihannüma* (1492), Oruç Bey's *Tarih* (1503), and Ibn Kemal's *Tevârih-i Ali Osman* (1500s). Ottoman historians have broadly used these sources to identify with the character of the Ottoman state before it became an imperial power, primarily due to its martial and legislative accomplishments.

Regarding the political motives behind creating epic stories of the later era to depict the ghazi characteristics of the founding fathers, Ottoman intellectuals not only invented and promoted the ghaza ethos as the founding principle of the state, but also fabricated, manipulated, or historicized the Ottoman past. Ghaza had always been an invented tradition in the Ottoman history? Addressing the epic genre as a major indicator of change, this chapter argues that the connection between the Ottoman epic and political struggle has been a pattern in Ottoman history depending on resistance against or support for the transformation of the state into an empire.

The first part briefly summarizes modern debates among the Ottoman historians on the ghaza ethos. Wittek's thesis, which argues that the early Ottoman military success was based on religious fervor, had been questioned since the 1980s by the supporters and the opponents of the relationship between the tribal identity and holy war ideology. The debate emerged as a reaction to the growing criticism against grand narratives and structures, in our case a grand spiritual ideology, in history writing in the Western academia during the 1970s. The first part of the chapter intends to expose the fact that the richness of that debate may offer different approaches to understand the dynamics of early Ottoman epic.

Second part starts with an analysis of the first written source on the early Ottoman history, Ahmedî's *Iskendername* (1412–13). Initial aim of Ahmedî (d. 1413) was not to report the chronicles of the House of Osman. However, relating his Ottoman history to the story of life and deeds of Alexander the Great, the author tried to represent Ottoman ghaza as part of a universal history. Ahmedî employed the tradition of *Iskendername* in Persian-Turkish-Islamic written high culture, which portrays Alexander as a ghazi, the sword of Islam. Leaving aside the traditional didactic character of such writings, the author discharged the chivalric-heterodox character within the discourse of early Ottoman ghaza and appropriated it into a more orthodox Islamic spirit. Ulema's reformulation of the Ottoman ghaza in the first half of the fifteenth century involved the canonization of the Ottoman epic genre in later decades.

The relationship between the centralization of the state starting from the mid-fifteenth century and the transformation of the Ottoman epic as a literary form is the subject of the third part. Reflecting political struggles before the reign of Mehmed II and centralizing

reforms later, the Ottoman epic witnessed an ontological transformation in the course of the fifteenth century. Using the works of Tursun Bey (d. 1499), Neşrî (d. 1520), and Aşıkpaşazade (d. 1484), this part demonstrates the relationship between the transformation of epic literature and the changes in the political structure. The argument is that the stories telling the holy wars before the reign of Mehmed II are different from the narratives of the post-1453 stories, in terms of plots, themes, and tropes.

One of the most important benefits of epic literature is that it reflects both contemporary ideological and intellectual transformation. The Ottoman fifteenth century has been accepted as the period when the Ottoman state became an empire. Many of the reforms and novelties, including the first Ottoman statute book, *kanunname*, were applied throughout the course of the century. Moreover, the fifteenth century witnessed the change of actors within the state organization. Central agents and Ottoman ulema became more decisive in the matters of the state.

The last section of the chapter shows how Ottoman epic accounts that were written in the sixteenth century and after reflect a more prosperous imperial establishment. Especially after the genre was centralized and epic writers gradually became palace officers in the sixteenth century, the themes and forms of Ottoman epic literature were transformed. Moreover, the Ottoman epics in time became gradually confined to the “Suleimanic-golden age” ideology. Ghazas of the founding fathers became less of a concern for the Ottoman intellectuals. Earlier ghazi sultans and their ghazi comrades were replaced by great sultans or military commanders, who were raised at the palace with extreme loyalty only to the sultan, leading large armies in long-lasting campaigns.

The halt of Ottoman advent after the seventeenth century resulted in the demise of Ottoman epic literature. Other than a few examples to narrate the Iran Campaign in 1733 and the combat with the Russian navy at the Aegean islands in 1770, the genre was unpopular throughout the eighteenth century. Epic writers did not produce epic accounts of the early Ottoman history. The early Ottoman past was hardly remembered by historians until the nineteenth century. Only in the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman bureaucrats made extensive reforms to surpass the *ancien regime*, they decided to commemorate their remote past. Epics dealing with the early Ottoman history therefore resurfaced for political objectives in modern era.

### **3.1. The Ghaza Ethos**

Debates on the ways in which Ottoman epic narratives should be interpreted engaged historians' attention throughout the twentieth century. Epic sources that narrated early Ottoman victories encouraged modern historians to concentrate mostly on the warlike nature of the state that emerged on the borderland between the Christian and the Muslim worlds. Among many theories, Paul Wittek's "ghaza milieu and its ethos" is the most discussed so far. Wittek conceptualized the ethos according to religious, social and political motivations. Wittek witnessed the first victory of the Anatolian movement in İnönü War (1921) against Greeks, who claimed themselves heir to the old Byzantine soil in the Western Anatolia after the First World War. For Wittek, there should be a spiritual basis for such a victory. He evaluated the event in an Austrian newspaper as the revival



of the soul of Turkish ghaza.<sup>115</sup> Separating the notion of ghaza from its religious connotations, Wittek opened the way to an analytical reading of the primary sources. He was the first to propose the notion of ghaza as the spiritual character of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans owed their motivation that led them to become a world power to the spirit of ghaza.

In order to understand the nature of ghaza and the ghazi state, historians needed to re-study the early Ottoman chronicles. According to Kafadar, for an understanding of “the ideals and the motives of uc society” and to grasp how they conceptualized the ghaza, we need to study warrior epics and hagiographies from the earlier times.<sup>116</sup> The significance of ghaza ethos in describing the conditions that led the Ottoman state into an empire can be reconstructed by a close reading of the primary sources that report the objectives of the founding fathers.

Epic texts reflect the reactions of the Ottoman intellectuals to political developments and ideological change in the empire. In order to expose the intimate relationship between the Ottoman epic and ideological milieu in the empire, the texts need to be analyzed according to their position vis a vis religion, heroicism, shifting meanings of the state, historical production, and political legitimacy. Ambiguity and complexity as much as differences and similarities between the themes and tropes should be highlighted.

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<sup>115</sup> “Nun kämpft die türkische Krieger um durch die Geschichte geheiligten Heimatboden-(der) Schlachort ist wohl bekannt aus den alten Chroniken, die von Osman und Orchan, die beiden osmanischen Herrschern erzählen. Man kann (sich nur) vorstellen, welche moralische Kraft den Truppen Mustafa Kemals daraus erwächts.” Quoted in Colin Heywood, “A Subterranean History: Paul Wittek (1894–1978) and the Early Ottoman State,” in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 38, Issue 3, The Early Twentieth Century and Its Impact on Oriental and Turkish Studies (Nov., 1998), p. 394.

<sup>116</sup> Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 62. On *ghaza* ethos also see Imber, “What Does *Ghazi* Actually Mean?”

Wittek's ghaza theory laid the foundations of the debates on the origins of the Ottoman Empire throughout the twentieth century. Even though it was commonly accepted by the Ottomanists that there was a spirit, a nature, a motive, an essence, or an ideology that led the Ottoman rise, many Ottomanists criticized ghaza theory either for Wittek's complete confidence on the Ottoman sources or for his categorization of ghaza as holy war, as jihad.

Rudi Lindner offered one of the most comprehensive criticisms on ghaza theory so far. He firstly criticized Wittek for his formulation of the first Ottomans not as members of a tribe but as ghazi bands, who volunteered and united for the holy war and for common interests.<sup>117</sup> Lindner gives the example of the name *Osmanlı* as coming from the first chief of the tribe.<sup>118</sup> Secondly, he questioned Wittek's primary sources not only for their credibility but also for they were produced by settled historians, who saw tribal people as destructive and harmful. For Lindner, "historians dislike nomads."<sup>119</sup> That is to say, learned of the fifteenth century Ottoman world produced their works in the center. Thus, they politically and culturally defined the nomadic tribes as disturbing the peace. According to Lindner, therefore, these early Ottoman accounts were also unreliable when they label the first Ottomans as ghazis.

For Lindner, ghaza theory fails to explain the reason behind the early Ottoman success. Ghaza, as an exclusivist ideology, denies cooperation and heterodoxy. In the Ottoman

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<sup>117</sup> Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1938), pp. 7-13.

<sup>118</sup> Rudi Paul Lindner, "What Was a Nomadic Tribe?," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 24, No. 4, (Oct., 1982), p. 697.

<sup>119</sup> Lindner, "What Was a Nomadic Tribe?," p. 689.

context, the existence of the Christians in ghazi bands, the tolerance against the non-Muslim residents of the region, and the significant role played by the heterodox groups is not compatible with the motives of ghaza.<sup>120</sup> The ideas of the fifteenth century Ottoman historians on their Ottoman ancestors reflected the political milieu of their own time, instead of echoing the early Ottoman ethos.<sup>121</sup>

Halil İnalçık made an attempt to combine the tribal identity and ghaza ideology by contemplating on the material factors, say population pressure that led the nomadic tribes in the Byzantine frontier to be ghazis.<sup>122</sup> For him, neither religious motivation nor tribal identity was sufficient to understand the deeds of nomads.

The meaning of tribal ghaza must be reconsidered by analyzing the writings of the settled fifteenth century Ottoman historians. Moreover, if the Ottoman ghaza would be considered as unorthodox, stemming from the special conditions of the border of the Islamic world and conflicting with the orthodox precepts of Islam, it would not be holy. In order to overcome that problem, using an ulema-made text that sets the rules for ghaza, Şinasi Tekin re-defined the place of ghaza in Islamic tradition by separating ghaza from jihad the ways in which the first represents the offensive war and the latter means the defense of the occupied Muslim land.<sup>123</sup> As a result of Tekin's effort, the assumed

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<sup>120</sup> Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1983), p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 51.

<sup>122</sup> Halil İnalçık, "The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State," in *International Journal of Turkish Studies* II (Madison, Wisconsin: 1980), pp. 71-79.

<sup>123</sup> Şinasi Tekin, "XIV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış Gazilik Tarıkası "Gaziliğın Yolları" Adlı Bir Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Metni ve Gaza / Cihad Kavramları Hakkında," in *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 13, (1989), p. 143.

contradiction between orthodoxy and ghaza was disentangled for many of the Ottoman historians today, even if we may think that the Ottoman ulema were apparently trying to control the manners of ghaza activity.

Eventually, Kafadar and Darling tried to support ghaza theory by claiming that Lindner rushes to define the notion of ghaza as an exclusivist form. Freed from the questions about the relationship between orthodox Islam and ghaza, after the latter was determined to be a “special” ideology for “unique” geographical conditions, they offered a more flexible approach regarding the meaning of ghaza. Ghaza developed into “rather than being pure expression of a group’s ethos, then, in each case it was a deployment of representations of that ethos for particular purposes.”<sup>124</sup> Historians’ interpretation of ghaza became more multifaceted.

Colin Imber criticizes Şinasi Tekin and Cemal Kafadar for their interpretation of *Gazilik Tarikası*, the oldest Ottoman manual for ghaza etiquette, in terms of its treatment of the phrase ghaza. For Kafadar, the text, its representation of ghaza, and its religious formation helps us to understand the “special” conditions of the holy war in this unique “cultural universe.”<sup>125</sup> Imber thinks that the rules depicted on the text for ghaza are not specific to the conditions of the western frontier of Muslim world. For Imber, “the rules for *ghazilik* in the *Risaletü’l-İslam* are precisely, both in their details but in their order of presentation, the standard Hanafi rules for *jihad*. There is nothing, therefore, that ties the

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<sup>124</sup> Linda Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” in *Studia Islamica*, No. 91, (2000), p. 159. “Obviously the gaza thesis was much more flexible than its critics made it out to be.” in Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 58.

<sup>125</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 64.

contents, as opposed to the language of the text to a specific place or time.”<sup>126</sup> These Islamic guides addressed all Muslims and every Muslim military activity in the frontier of Muslim world, instead of referring to the condition in Western Anatolia.

Recent representation of ghaza in historiography as a specific form of holy war that is separated from jihad is highly problematic to understand the early Ottoman condition. Creating the history of early Ottoman mentality by using manuscripts, including epics, histories and etiquette manuals such as *Gazilik Yolları*, from fourteenth and fifteenth century as was proposed by Kafadar<sup>127</sup> is “ahistorical.”<sup>128</sup> Instead of creating a common cultural environment of the frontier through the understanding of an ethos in various manuscripts, it would be more productive and historical to consider the texts individually as regards their time, space, and agenda.

Historical debates on ghaza focuses on the daily life practices of the tribes at the frontier of the Islamic geography. Yet, ghaza as a literary theme also reflects power politics within frontier societies. Literary representations of the relations with non-Muslims, the battles, distribution of the booty, and administration of the conquered land demonstrate the writer’s social identity. The next part deals with the Ottoman ulema’s attempt to transform the epic literature into a part of written culture in the fifteenth century.

Throughout this process, in line with political developments, the Ottoman central

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<sup>126</sup> Colin Imber, “What Does *Ghazi* Actually Mean?,” in Çiğdem Balım Harding & Colin Imber (eds.), *The Balance of Truth: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Lewis* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), p. 170.

<sup>127</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 65.

<sup>128</sup> Ali Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: a Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 8.

administration gained control over the Ottoman epic literature, which was mainly limited to an oral tradition among the ghazis before.

### 3.2. Ghaza Narratives and Ulema

The fifteenth century epic writers represented their ancestors through religious references. Most of the manuscripts tried to place the early Ottoman past into the history of Islam by using literary tropes and themes. The fifteenth century Ottoman intellectuals interpreted the Ottoman history as part of a grand design. According to these writers, from Ahmedî to Tursun Bey, the Ottomans' role in history was ghaza.

Before the fifteenth century, Ottoman epic was part of an oral tradition. In order to entertain their audience, ghazis narrate the heroic accounts that they witnessed. The first debate emerged when members of the ulema class started to write epic accounts. Due to the fact that the Ottoman ghaza was part of a divine plan, its narratives should be cleansed from explicit violent accounts, which were widespread in late medieval Turkish texts, such as *Battalname*.<sup>129</sup> There should be a moral check point. Parallel to the political developments that centralized the state and diminished the influence of ghazis, the Ottoman epic was transformed throughout the fifteenth century.

Ahmedî's *Iskendername* was the first Ottoman epic to place the Ottoman ghaza experience into the universal history of the conflict between the believers and the non-

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<sup>129</sup> See Yorgos Dedes (ed.), *Battalname: introduction, English translation, Turkish transcription, commentary and facsimile* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1996).

believers. Via political, religious, and philosophical themes, Islamic literature often presents Alexander the Great as the warrior-prophet Zulkarneyn, whose name and stories were mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic Zulkarneyn is a just king, who built a wall to protect the believers from Gog and Magog during his military expedition to the East. Indian and Persian literary tradition adopts the epic story of Alexander to narrate "the journey of a prince to the end of the world."<sup>130</sup> He is represented as a warrior-prophet "sent by God to the inhabitants of distant lands."<sup>131</sup> Therefore, epic writers produced what can be called as Alexander-Romances and represented Alexander as a ghazi king, to support the deeds of contemporary ghazi sultans and states.

In Islamic literary tradition, Alexander-Romances were used to generate tropes when producing the stories of Alexander's successors, the ghazi-sultans, raising the flag of Islam in the distant lands. Ali Anooshahr gives the ghaza stories of Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 1002–30), who conquered eastern Persia and western India as the ruler of Ghaznavid Empire, as examples of this influence, by depicting Alexander as one of the Mahmud's role models.<sup>132</sup> Mahmud travels the land of the infidel, destroys their houses of idols, and spreads Islam. The distant lands are full of wild beasts, alien creatures, and extraordinary plants. These places are always in chaos, and simply wait a ghazi-sultan to bring order and justice of Islamic lands, *dar'ül-Islam*. Due to the fact that the land of the infidel is uncanny and is housing many geographical obstacles, the ghazi-sultan needs advice from

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<sup>130</sup> Peter Gaeffke, "Alexander in Avadhi and Dakkini Mathnawis," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 109, No. 4, (Oct. – Dec. 1989), p. 527.

<sup>131</sup> Mino S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romances of the Islamic Era," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 97, No. 3, (Jul. – Sep. 1977), p. 280.

<sup>132</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, pp. 67-72.

his entourage among whom must be several wise and learned people. Alexander-style Islamic expedition, or ghaza, does not need enemy provocation. For instance, epic stories on Mahmud's military expedition portray "a desire for treasures, religious zeal, a sense of adventure, and the excitement of war."<sup>133</sup> The duty of the ghazis was more than fighting against the infidel. Depending on Alexander-Romances, epic writers used ghaza as a literary theme to express the universal role of ghazi kings to conquer and re-organize the earthly kingdom.

Ahmedî's *Iskendername* was patroned by Suleiman Shah, the eldest son of Bayezid I, who re-claimed the Ottoman throne that was in great perils after Timur won the Battle of Ankara (1402) against Bayezid I and took the latter hostage. The reason behind the war was basically the claim to be the master of ghaza. While Bayezid I was fighting against the Christian west, Timur was fighting against the Hindus and pagans in India.

Correspondences of the two Turkish sultans have been represented by the historians as showing the intimate relationship between the understanding of the two sultans of dynastic legitimacy and Islamic holy war.<sup>134</sup> In that sense, the primary goal of *Iskendername*, which attached the first Ottoman history titled *Tevarih-i Mülük-i al-i Osman ve Gazv-i İşan ba-Küffar* to the legendary story of Alexander the Great, was to advocate the legitimacy of the Ottoman rule.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, p. 62.

<sup>134</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, pp. 120-128.

<sup>135</sup> For the relationship of Ahmedî with his Ottoman patrons, see Kamil Erdem Güler, *Thirst for Wisdom, Lust for Conquest: Ahmedî's 14<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Alexander Romance*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University (2013), pp. 36-43.



*Iskendername* is the first attempt to inscribe an Ottoman genealogy. It starts with describing the assistance of Ertuğrul Ghazi (d. 1281), the father of the Ottomans, to his Seljukid overlord ‘Ala al-Din Keyqubad by fighting against the infidels on the Christian border. After summarizing the holy causes and battles of Ertuğrul Ghazi, Osman I (r. 1299–1326), Orhan (r. 1326–1362), Murad I (r. 1362–1389), and Bayezid I (r. 1389–1403), Ahmedî tries to legitimize Suleiman’s rule. He promotes Suleiman Shah as a legitimate to-be ghazi sultan. For him, Suleiman was the most desired leader to bring back justice and order, which was removed by Timur’s military expedition to the Muslim frontier. Suleiman emerges as the first among equal emirs to reconstruct the Islamic order that was established by his ancestors before the Mongolian invasion.

“Bu arada Rûma yürüdi Temûr  
Mülk toldi fitne vü havf ü fütûr  
Çün Temûrün hiç ‘adli yoğidi  
Lâcirem kim zulm ü cevri çoğidi  
Zikr-i vahşet, çünkü vahşetdür yakîn  
Anı anmamak durur hîle hemîn  
Ol fütûr içinde gitdi şehriyâr  
Yıkılıp yakıldı çok şehir ü diyâr”<sup>136</sup>

Ahmedî’s appeal for Suleiman Shah’s enthronement is related to the authority gap in the region. In Suleiman’s persona, Ahmedî promotes the legitimate rule of the House of Ottomans as the leader of Islamic holy war. This intellectual endeavor can be seen as an answer to the legitimacy crisis the Ottomans experienced after the Battle of Ankara. This venture is related to disprove Khaldunian understanding of *asabiyya*, according to which after reaching maturity, the ruling dynasty, in this case the Ottomans would fulfill their role in history and was doomed to be ceased. Linda Darling demonstrates the relationship

<sup>136</sup> Kemal Silay, “Ahmedî’s History of the Ottoman Dynasty,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 16 (1992), p. 156.

between Khaldunian *asabiyya* and Aristotle's advices to Alexander the Great on how to rule.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Ahmedî's *Iskendername*, which ties the Ottoman past to Alexander, who brings justice and order to the non-Islamic world, is part of a discourse regarding how a legitimate rule should be formed. In that sense, using didactic-themes, *Iskendername* can be seen as part of the Turkish-Islamic advice literature.

According to *Iskendername*, legitimacy cannot be limited to the endeavor to bring Islamic justice and order. For Ahmedî, Ottoman *ghaza* was an obligation and the Ottomans took holy war as an initiative, unlike the Children of Israel. He reminds Sura al-Isra, which tells the story of the destruction of Israelis. According to the Qur'an, after Israelis were destroyed by the forces of Goliath, and lost their land, in an assembly they asked one of their prophets to appoint a commander to guide them against the enemy to gain their land back. Saul (Talut) becomes the new military leader for the jihad against Goliath. On their way, many Israelis refrained from jihad. By force of *Ihlas* (sincerity) the rest became triumphant to take their land back from the disbeliever. According to the Qur'an, after that victory, Children of Israel were given wealth, sons, and power. But Israelis later became arrogant and therefore idle. Which is why, they were expelled from Palestine forever in the hands of Romans.

Interestingly enough, Ahmedî thought that the Children of Israel were doomed because they avoided making *ghaza*. Defining *ghaza* as a religious duty upon Israelis, he believes that they did so because they were not sincere in their faith:

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<sup>137</sup> Linda Darling, "Social Cohesion ('Asabiyya) and Justice in the Late Medieval Middle East," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (2007), p. 332.

“Çün Beni İsrâ’ile gazv oldu farz

...

Ol gazâyâ korkudan varmadılar  
Hakkun emrine boyun virmediler  
Düşmene kıldı Hak anları zebûn  
Oldılar cümle zelîl ü ser-nigûn  
Kırdılar anları idüp dâr u gîr  
‘Avret ü oğlan kamu itdiler esîr  
Komadılar nesne kamu urdılar  
İllerinden dahi cümle sürdiler”<sup>138</sup>

Unlike the Israelis of Talut, Ahmedî clearly declares that the Ottomans had complete *ihlas* (sincerity) in their faith; their deeds were blessed and indisputably legitimate:

“Âl-i ‘Osmânun çün ihlâsı oldu hâş  
Buldılar Hak hazretinde ihtişâş  
Kanda vardılarısa yol buldılar  
İller alup halka gâlib oldılar  
Olsa ihlâsında anlarun zelev  
Düşeyidi işlerine bir kez halel”<sup>139</sup>

Colin Imber points out that Ahmedî’s emphasis on sincerity in the faith regarding the matters of ghaza “was far removed from the spirit of the active ghazis, for whom plunder was undoubtedly as strong a motive as religion.”<sup>140</sup> It cannot be expected that the Ottoman ulema was against the ghaza enterprise and openly criticized ghazis for their unorthodox actions. Nevertheless, ulema tried to standardize and officialize the ghaza ethos, which may invite autonomous behavior, by writing ghazi etiquette manuals as Şinasi Tekin demonstrated or simply by attaching the ethos to a Qur’anic interpretation as we see in Ahmedî’s *Iskendername*.

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<sup>138</sup> Silay, “Ahmedî’s History of the Ottoman Dynasty,” p. 152.

<sup>139</sup> Silay, “Ahmedî’s History of the Ottoman Dynasty,” p. 153.

<sup>140</sup> Colin Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth,” in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996), p. 308.

*Ihlas* alone is not adequate to justify the Ottoman holy war. Having God's blessings, the Ottomans need to have flawless judgment:

“Farz olalı bu halk üzere cihad  
Bunların gibi kim itdi ictihad”<sup>141</sup>

*Ijtihad*, which was prerequisite of holy war for Ahmedî, is a matter of dispute regarding the intellectual history of Islam. Islamic scholars tried to introduce some limitations to define who can or cannot make judgments by making analogies from the main sources of the Islamic law, the Qur'an, the sunna, the hadith, and the works of renowned jurists if the primary sources are not sufficient. Declaring the Ottomans as good *mujtehid*s, Ahmedî does refer to the modes of governmental rule as much as religious jurisdiction. Considering the fact that the early Ottoman state had to accommodate itself to the conditions of its neighborhood by taking pragmatic but also Islamically-correct measures, *ijtihad* was indispensable. However, *ijtihad* requires a coalition between the political institution and the *ulema*.<sup>142</sup> Ahmedî promotes the idea that the Ottomans had counseling from the best learned, the *mijtehid*, in their governmental enterprise, especially regarding the issues related to the holy war.

Even though history of the early Ottoman state cannot be directly related to the legendary stories of Alexander the Great in Ahmedî's book, the parts coalesce as regards to the significant function of scholars to legitimize the deeds of warriors. There is no doubt that the *ulema* were very influential in matters of the Ottoman state from its early history. The

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<sup>141</sup> Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth.”

<sup>142</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?”, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (Mar., 1984), pp. 12-15.

political power of that group was even more consolidated as they increasingly became needed for *ijtihād*. In later epics, we can track *ulema*'s role in the state's decision making processes and their maneuvers between different parties within political struggle.

Ottoman epic, *per se*, was a tool of political propaganda, not only of the state and dynasty but also of different political agendas among the political power magnets within the state enterprise from the very beginning. The next part analyzes the relationship between the fifteenth-century centralization policies in the Ottoman Empire, especially after the conquest of Constantinople, and the transformation within the epic literature, in terms of both literary themes and style.

### **3.3. Centralization of Ghaza**

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Ottoman State was in perils. Timur took Bayezid I and therefore the Ottoman throne hostage. Sons of Bayezid I were dispersed around Anatolia to gather support. While they tried to establish relations with local powers, they also needed to get along with Timur's forces. In this period, Ottomans became more experienced in diplomacy and administration. Instead of *ghazis*, the learned diplomats and bureaucrats, who had good relations with various power magnets in the region, became more important.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> For power politics in Anatolia after Timur's invasion, see Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007).

Wittek represented the era between the enthronement of Mehmed I in 1413, after eliminating the other contenders for the throne, and the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 as one during which disagreements between political agendas and parties became apparent. For him, these groups were leagued together as those for ghaza and those for hoch-Islamisch precepts.<sup>144</sup> This situation was created during the period of succession wars and surprisingly the dynamics stemmed from this symmetry led the Ottomans to generate effective solutions for governmental problems during the reign of Murad II and consequently conquer Constantinople during the reign of Mehmed II.<sup>145</sup>

Leaving Wittek's over-generalizations aside,<sup>146</sup> the first half of the fifteenth century witnessed the rise of the learned, the ulema, and the centralists. Çandarlı family of Turkish origin, whose members had already been influential in state's decision mechanisms for a while, reached their utmost power in the persona of Çandarlı Halil during his vizierate between 1429 and 1453.<sup>147</sup> The family represented one of the ideological centers within the state. They counseled the sultans in foreign affairs, made negotiations with the neighboring forces, and very influential in the affairs of the central administration. Therefore, they were among the most influential, which generated solutions for the state's problems after the interregnum period. Çandarlı Halil is

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<sup>144</sup> "Ces deux tendances, que nous appellerons brièvement la 'tendance ghazi' et la 'tendance musulmane,' son pour l'état ottomane d'une importance égale, et la tache principale de celui-ci devait être de les harmoniser," in Paul Wittek, "De la Défaite Ankara a la Prise de Constantinople," in *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, Vol.12, No. 2, (1938), pp. 4-5.

<sup>145</sup> Wittek, "De la Défaite D'Ankara," p. 33.

<sup>146</sup> For a criticism of Wittek, see Colin Imber, "Paul Wittek's 'De la Défaite D'Ankara a la Prise de Constantinople'," in *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 5, (1986).

<sup>147</sup> Halil İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar I* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1954), pp. 81-82.

recognized for his cautious spirit and unwillingness for war. He had the support of Sultan Murad II, the janissaries, and most of the bureaucrats.

The strength of the centralist party during the first half of the century does not mean that their authority was unchallenged. Even though the opposition forces were bereft of the support of sultan, they were able to challenge central authority particularly when the enemy was at the gates. This ghaza party caught such a chance after when Murad II surprisingly retired and left the throne to his son Mehmed II after defeating the Hungarian forces in the Balkans and Karamanids in Anatolia in 1444. Nevertheless, the challenge between both parties was overshadowed by the rise of sultanic authority, both as the protector of central power and the master of ghaza. The definition of ghaza was changing with the transforming structure of the Ottoman state. The ghaza ethos was to become a sultanic monopoly.

The anonymous *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehmed Han*, which was written after the Battle of Varna in 1444, depicts the chronicles of two parties fighting for the power alongside the epic account of the battle. The work was written just after Murad II died in 1451. It is the first Ottoman epic to constitute the image of an Ottoman ghazi king. Anooshahr mentions two texts that were produced just before Murad's "massive campaigns against Serbia and Hungary that lasted from 1438 to 1441,"<sup>148</sup> that inspired the author of *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehmed Han*. One is the anonymous *Battalname*, the stories of a ghazi of Arabic origin fighting against Byzantine in Anatolia. It describes the ghaza enterprise in the borderland between two worlds as independent

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<sup>148</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, p. 144.

from the central authority and its cultural environment, different from the Ottoman experience. However, illustration of Battal as a ghazi king who leads other ghazis may illuminate the image of Murad II in *Gazavat*.

The other text is Yazıcıoğlu Ali's *Histories of the Seljuks*, which is based on the idea that the Ottomans were the legitimate heirs to the Seljuk throne. More than picturing the relationship between the ghazis and their leader, it is interested in the legitimacy of central authority. However, parallel to *Battalname*, the text puts forward one individual monarch to lead the ghaza enterprise, this time the Seljuk king 'Ala al-Din Kayqubad as the leader of the ghazis.<sup>149</sup> These two preceding texts to *Gazavat* propose a balanced model for a ghazi king, both as a ghazi and the master of ghaza. Ghaza enterprise was becoming more and more dependent on to the political decisions of the center and the ruler in the frontier of the Muslim world.

In *Gazavat*, for the first time we see that two factions within the state clearly appear.

When summoned by Murad II for a declaration of war against the infidel, janissaries, the *kuls* of the sultan at once obeyed the decision of the sultan beyond all questions. On the other hand, *beylerbeyis* and *sancakbeyis*, who mostly consisted of emirs, not the slaves of the sultan, hesitated to agree to the sultanic order. According to *Gazavat*, that night the ghazi sultan decided that “inşa'allah bu iş tamam oldukça bu beğlerin haklarından gelüb kimin öldüreyim kimin süreyim.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, p. 145.

<sup>150</sup> Anonymous, *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehmed Han*, Halil İnalçık & Mevlüd Oğuz (eds.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), pp. 22-23.



*Gazavat* is the epic story of the Ottoman sultan becoming a sole power within the state, who only have to explain himself to his own sultan, the God. After Murad II left the throne to fifteen years old Mehmed II, Christian armies took their chances and started a campaign on the Balkans aiming to take back as far as Edirne, then the capital of the Ottoman state. Ottoman ulema and ümera gathered and advised young sultan to invite his father back to the head of the army. Murad II accepted the offer albeit reluctantly.

According to *Gazavat*, after passing Bosphorus, he kissed the ground and said:

“Ey kerimu rabb-i rahim hayy-i baka  
Mülk senindir bilüriz kim mutlaka,  
Ben kulunu etmiş idin sen sebab,  
Kim nizam-i ‘alemi edem taleb.  
Cümle esbaba sebab sen Padişah,  
Kulların pes gözede hüküm-i ilah,  
Hükümünün münkadı durur ins ü can,  
Mecmu’una sen verirsin cism ü can  
Ben kulun senden umarım yardımı,  
Zira senden gayrı bilmez derdimi.”<sup>151</sup>

In fact, by inviting back Murad II, the young sultan and his advisors did intend to offer the old sultan the control of Edirne while his son was fighting with the enemy.

Conversely, Murad II made the ghaza himself and left his advisor Çandarlı Halil to control Mehmed II in Edirne. By doing so, he was able to craft the ghaza as the chief ghazi and trying to prevent double-headed administration.

Mehmed II could finally assume the throne when his father died in 1451. During the besiege of Constantinople, he imprisoned his father’s advisor Halil, who had second thoughts about the besiege of Constantinople. After the conquest, the sultan ordered the

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<sup>151</sup> *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehemmed Han*, p. 48.

execution of this experienced vizier. In a short period of time, Halil's opponents were sent to exile or put to death, most probably in order to satisfy ulema, the proponents of Halil.<sup>152</sup> Without doubt, during the struggle between different parties, the unquestionable authority of Mehmed II after the conquest of Constantinople was deepened.

Ghaza and ghazis became completely dependent to the Ottoman emperor in the following decades. The Ottoman State monopolized every military activity in the region. Epic writers promoted the Ottoman rulers as the leader of the ghaza by using historical accounts. They represented the Ottoman dynasty and its contemporary leader as the legitimate heir of ghaza in the Muslim frontier.

Aşıkpaşazade pointed out the increasing Ottoman control of ghaza by reminding an abandoned ancient custom during the reign of Mehmed II. Since the time of Osman Ghazi, Ottoman sultans welcomed the martial music standing up, declaring and calling attention to ghaza.<sup>153</sup> “As the conqueror of Constantinople, however – namely, having achieved the ultimate goal of Anatolian frontier culture – the young sultan apparently perceived himself to have surpassed that culture and its primitive etiquette; he is reported to have abandoned the practice of standing up.”<sup>154</sup> The conqueror of Constantinople aimed to point out that he was not only a ghazi but also the master of ghazis.

On the other hand, formation of the Ottoman army started to change extensively from the mid-fifteenth century on. Ghazi bands were replaced by the bands of *timarli sipahis* and

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<sup>152</sup> İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerine*, p. 135.

<sup>153</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, Atsız (ed.) (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1970), p. 15.

<sup>154</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 146.

*kapıkulus*, whose services were either in return for land or resulted from the slave surplus from earlier ghazas. Mehmed II, during his first military campaign, made his exalted position vis a vis the army clear. According to Tursun Bey's *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, during the Karaman campaign in 1451, janissaries intercepted the sultan and asked for some "inducement." Sultan refused, summoned *yayabaşıs* (today's captain) held them responsible for the inconvenience, spanked them with a stick, and sacked them from the army. Celebrating the new politics (*siyaset*) of the young sultan, Tursun mentions that from then on until the end of Mehmed II's reign this "fearless class", *taife-i na-hayife*, referring to the janissaries, behaved themselves.<sup>155</sup> The Ottoman sultan eliminated any authority other than his and pointed out that he was the ultimate head of the army.

Debates on the ghaza theory, both for its supporters and opponents, does not cover the period after the conquest of Constantinople. The conquest was the turning point for the Ottoman tribe that made itself into a state due to its geographic and cultural location. Mostly the period after the conquest is accepted as the time when the Ottoman state became an empire by reading the past retrospectively. For instance, Kafadar's *Between Two Worlds* ends with a ghaza custom that was finished by the conqueror. Depending on Aşıkpaşazade and Neşri, Kafadar says that it was a custom for:

the Ottoman rulers would respectfully stand up at the sound of martial music as a sign of readiness for gaza...the young sultan apparently perceived himself to have surpassed that culture and its primitive etiquette; he is reported to have abandoned the practice of standing up.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Tursun Bey, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-feth*, Mertol Tulum (ed.) (Istanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977), p. 39.

<sup>156</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 146.

The etiquette of ghaza was transforming with the increasing dominance of the Ottoman sultan on the army.

Explaining the replacement of the frontier culture with the central, imperial culture through the anecdotes that symbolized the increasing hegemony of the sultan on the army is not sufficient to understand the mid-fifteenth century transformation of the Ottoman ghaza ethos. Nonetheless, histories that describe the era may reveal the ontological shift between the pre- and the post-1453. Tursun Bey's *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, Aşıkpaşazade's *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, Neşri's *Kitab-ı Cihannümâ* both illustrate the epic stories of the Ottomans from the foundation period to the end of Mehmed II's reign. In these histories, both of which were produced initially after the death of Mehmed II, the literary distinction between the pre- and the post-1453 is remarkable. By comparing diverse literary themes, a meaningful description of the mid-fifteenth century ontological shift may emerge. Epic literature may reveal the dynamics of the monopolization of ghaza enterprise in the fifteenth century around the sultan's persona. Furthermore, the transformation of epic themes into a monotonic pattern may help us to identify with the increasing impact of the central administration on the ghaza enterprise starting with the sixteenth century.

Post-1453 epic stories are based on a single pattern that basically consisted of three phases. First, the cause of the campaign is explained. This first part can be called as the legitimization part. Campaigns against the infidels were easy to legitimize by depending not only on religious but on various causes. Tursun Bey starts his account on the conquest of Bosnia by reminding Qur'anic Sura of Nisa: "And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by." Transition

between “the cause of Allah,” *sebili’llah*, and ghaza exposes the raison d’être of the Ottoman state clearly. Moreover, using that verse, Tursun Bey almost upgrades Ottoman ghaza to Ottoman imperialism. Spreading Islam turns into the divine assistance to those who wander for wealth. This wealth also may be unorthodox. Tursun Bey pictures Bosnia and its people as beautiful, worth conquering, possessing and ruling over. After all, the rule of the Bosnian king is not legitimate for the author, because the first did not obey the rules of inheritance and killed his own father for the throne.<sup>157</sup> According to Aşıkpaşa, the king of Bosnia surrendered his land when he heard of Mehmed II’s campaign against Bosnia. However, Mehmed II became very upset, because he wanted to take the land by force. The sultan asked ulema if the king’s wealth and blood is licit. One of the ulema said “bunun gibi kafirleri öldürmek gazadır.” Then they killed the king instead of taking him captive.<sup>158</sup> Bosnian example differs from the earlier epic accounts the ways in which it is akin to the politics more of an empire, not a ghazi state. Ulema’s control over ghaza stories become more and more vague or biased, and religious references developed into pro imperial-political gain, such as in Tursun Bey’s narrative.<sup>159</sup>

Mehmed II did not only hold military campaigns to the non-Muslim lands, but he also attacked Muslim territories, *dar’ül-İslam*, the east. Campaigns against Muslim and Turkish rulers were tried to be legitimized by claiming that the eastern threats obstruct

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<sup>157</sup> Tursun Bey, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>158</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, pp. 186-188.

<sup>159</sup> Tursun Bey, son of a governor of Anatolia, was from an important family. According to İnalçık, Tursun Bey was lucky as a historian as he witnessed the conquest of Constantinople and spent time with his uncle Ali Bey, who was responsible for the first Ottoman cadastral survey in Constantinople in 1456. Later, Tursun Bey participated the military campaigns of Mehmed II and became a secretary at the Ottoman *Divan*. See Halil İnalçık, “Tursun Beg, Historian of Mehmed the Conqueror’s Time,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Vol. 69 (1977), pp. 55-71.

ghaza, the foremost life goal of a Muslim ruler, i.e. the Ottoman sultan.<sup>160</sup> Mehmed II's struggle with the Karamanoğulları (Karamanids), a Turkish State stretching from the Mediterranean to Konya, most probably was the most challenging for the Ottoman sultan in his career. Karamanids could not manage to prevent the rise of Ottomans in military terms. On the other hand, while Ottomans were able to legitimize themselves by claiming the flag of Islamic holy war, Karamanids were claiming the Seljukid throne, and the caliphacy. Unlike the frontiers that the Ottomans were controlling, Karamanid region was a traditional Islamic center, housing old religious institutions. Mehmed II's sensitivity on the issue can be seen in both Aşıkpaşa and Neşri's account of the struggle between the Ottomans and the Karamanids during the reign of Mehmed II (1<sup>st</sup> r. 1444–46; 2<sup>nd</sup> r. 1451–81). According to Aşıkpaşa, Karamanoğlu Pir Mehmed violated the agreement he made with Mehmed II and did not help the latter during his campaign against Uzun Hasan, another Turkish ruler in Eastern Anatolia and Iran.<sup>161</sup> For Neşri, the reason for the dispute was different. Anatolian people complained about the wrongdoings of the Karamanoğlu Pir Mehmed on the Muslim population in the region. They cried “Karamanoğlu destroyed their land, confiscated their wealth, took their wives and sons, and plundered their possessions.” They said that “the Karaman land is worth such a just sultan like you.”<sup>162</sup> Therefore, the Ottoman sultan appointed his vizier Rum Mehmed Pasha to expel the sons of Karaman from their lands and conquer the region. For Aşıkpaşa, this misbehaved vizier, we can see that the word *rum* was used as a derogatory

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<sup>160</sup> Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi, p. 191.

<sup>161</sup> Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi.

<sup>162</sup> Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma*, Vol. 2, Faik Reşit Unat & Mehmed A. Köymen (eds.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1987), p. 779.

title in most of the fifteenth century histories, violated the Muslim population there, destroyed their houses, and disturbed their livelihoods. According to Aşıkpaşa, this *rum* vizier was after the revenge of his homeland, Constantinople, and therefore he was sacked by the just sultan, and his wealth was confiscated.<sup>163</sup> However, we see that this vizier was appointed to deal with the Karamanids only a year later again. Rum Mehmed Pasha arrived at Larende and Ereğli in the region, destroyed the mosques and *medreses*, and undressed the women and the boys in the village. The dwellers asked the vizier that “these lands are the waqf of the prophet of Allah. Now you destroyed these lands. How are you going to explain yourself to the Prophet in the day of Judgement, if the poor of Medine cannot get their means of subsistence from the profit of these lands?” Hearing these misbehaviors, Mehmed II dismissed Rum Mehmed, appointed instead Ishak Pasha, to correct the situation. He then expelled the ruling elite of Karamanids, and send the wealth of their land to Istanbul in order to flourish newly conquered Constantinople.<sup>164</sup>

Second part of the epic, is where the journey of the Islamic army, the obstacles on the way of conquest, and the battle scenes are described. Ottoman epic histories that describe military campaigns in the second half of the fifteenth century uses a literary pattern in accordance with the traditional epic accounts of Muslim rulers, especially those belong to the stories of the ghazas of Mahmud of Ghazni. According to the epic stories of Mahmud of Ghazni, a prominent role model for later middle-eastern ghazi sultans, first the sultan and his army have to surpass a natural barrier in the way with the help of God. In the land of the infidel enemy, the reader should expect violence and unusual things. When

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<sup>163</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, p. 193.

<sup>164</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, pp. 195-196; Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma*, pp. 789-791.

engaged with the enemy, the mighty sultan always becomes victorious by shedding blood of the infidel. The lost infidel commits suicide “out of fear, despair or shame.”<sup>165</sup> Epic stories on the ghazas of Mehmed II end differently if the enemy surrenders. The surrendered enemy may get rewarded according to the sultan’s decision.

The third part was the domination. The storyline depended on whether the people of the land was surrendered or fought back. Most of the time, the Islamic precepts regulating the means of conquest were followed. Islamic rule makes a distinction between the measures taken after the conquest. While it allows ghazis to seize the wealth in the conquered place for a limited period following the conquest, it protects the wealth of the surrendered. Either after warfare or a peaceful capture of a land, the trademark of the Ottoman rule stepped in. For instance, after when the governor of Lesbos surrendered the island to the Ottomans, Mehmed II initially demanded a report that includes a register of estates, including the belongings of the people, and a list of urban dwellers, villagers, military men. The sultan first separated his portion, *hass*, than divided the land among fief-holders, and gave the deserted houses to the Muslims. After that he appointed a governor and a kadi (judge). Then he turned some of the churches into the mosques.<sup>166</sup> This pattern was also noted in the accounts of the conquest of Kefe by the Grand Admiral of the Ottoman Navy Gedik Ahmed Paşa (d. 1482), in 1475. According to Aşıkpaşazade, after the land surrendered:

the standard of the sultan entered to the fortress. *Müezzins* gave the call to prayer. (Ottomans) eliminated the bells. Destroyed the idols of the infidel. Turned a grand

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<sup>165</sup> Anooshahr, *The Gazi Sultans*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>166</sup> Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma*, pp. 759-761.



church into a mosque. Performed Friday prayer. Read the Islamic *hutbe* on behalf of Sultan Mehmed Han Ghazi. Ahmed Pasha dressed the ghazis with the robes of honor. Granted money to the ulema and the poor. Pasha confiscated the treasure of the governor of the island to be sent to the sultan. Registered the people of the land class by class...<sup>167</sup>

*Defters* (official registers) symbolize the Ottoman domination. That does not mean marginal deviation from the earlier system in the conquered land. Ottomans generally observe ancient custom, *usul-ü kadim*. Based on pragmatic reasons, Ottoman conquests “were in fact a conservative reconciliation of local conditions and classes with Ottoman institutions which aimed at gradual assimilation.”<sup>168</sup> This did not mean property rights were protected. According to the Ottoman tradition, the land and its inhabitants belong only to the sultan. “This principle abolished all local and inherited rights and privileges in the Empire, and it was formulated essentially in order to confirm the Sultan’s absolute authority and to show that all rights stem from his will.”<sup>169</sup> In the Ottoman histories we frequently come across displeasure with novel practices and reforming viziers. Aşıkpaşazade for instance, portrayed Nişancı Pasha (Karamanî Mehmed Pasha), the man behind the land reform in the last years of Mehmed II’s reign, as evil. During the reform, many waqf or private estates around the country were made into the sultan’s treasury. “He abolished waqfs and estates that depends on Mohammedan sharia around the Ottoman country, and confiscated them on behalf of the treasury of the sultan... Some subjects were still holding lands given during the reign of Osman Ghazi... This *nişancı*, treasurer Karamanî Mehmed Pasha, violated this law... Many poor lost their

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<sup>167</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, p. 209.

<sup>168</sup> Halil İnalçık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” *Studia Islamica*, No. 2, (1954), p. 103.

<sup>169</sup> İnalçık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” p. 112.

lands... When he died he was buried without his head.”<sup>170</sup> In another event, both Aşıkpaşa and Neşri accuse Constantinople-born Rum Mehmed Pasha of taking revenge of the conquest from the new Muslim dwellers by imposing *mukataa*, paying the state a fixed sum in return for using the estate, in Istanbul.<sup>171</sup> This financial method became widespread in the following centuries, more than ever when the state needed cash flow.

The late fifteenth century accounts on post-1453 events in the Ottoman epic literature are mostly consisted of the epic writers’ personal experiences. The accounts are generally parallel to each other. On the other hand, the sources of the accounts on pre-1453, or before when the state became an empire, are less reliable. These sources rely on oral accounts and a small number of early written sources, most prominently a chapter named *Tevarih-i Mülük-i al-i Osman ve Gazv-i İsan ba-Küffar* in Ahmedi’s *Iskendername*, effect of which can be seen in Neşri’s work. For instance, Aşıkpaşazade, at the beginning of his work, mentions that he acquired a written source narrating the stories of the Ottoman dynasty until the reign of Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402) from Yahşi Fakih, son of Orhan Ghazi’s (d. 1362) imam. Part of an oral tradition, reliability of Aşıkpaşazade’s source, which links the house of Ottomans to the Oguz tribe, is questionable.

Pre-1453 epic stories in the late fifteenth century histories are full of colorful depictions, and symbolic usage. Most importantly, these accounts differ from the orthodox aura in the later epic narratives. Aşıkpaşazade’s story of the conquest of Bilecik, one of the earliest Ottoman conquests, is worth mentioning. According to the story the lord of

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<sup>170</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, pp. 229-230; Oktay Özel, “Limits of the Almighty: Mehmed II’s Land Reform Revisited,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1999), pp. 226-227.

<sup>171</sup> Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma*, pp. 709-711; “...sonra padişah onu it gibi boğdurdu” in Aşıkpaşa, *ibid.*, p. 158.

Bilecik and Osman Ghazi had a good relationship. Once asked, Osman said: “They are our neighbors. When we, the poor, arrived to this land they welcomed us.”<sup>172</sup> One day, the lord invited Osman Ghazi to his daughter’s wedding by sending precious gifts. Osman dressed some ghazis as women. They captured the lord, the bride, and enslaved the guests in the wedding party. Next day, they plundered İnegöl. They tore its lord’s body into pieces; destroyed the men; enslaved the women.<sup>173</sup> Whether these accounts were true or not, such excessive use of violence gives an idea about how extensively ghaza was transformed during the fifteenth century. Besides, the Trojan-like method of conquest in the story and the gambit that does not pertain to the values and principles of Islamic jihad may be of assistance to identify with the ulema’s aim to organize the principles of holy war in the fifteenth century.

Aşıkpaşazade’s epic story reporting the taking of Aydos Castle in 1328 is one of the most exemplary epic accounts that demonstrate the fictive character of early Ottoman ghaza narratives. According to Aşıkpaşazade: “apparently, the lord (of Aydos) had a daughter. One night, she saw the Prophet (of Islam) in her dream. She saw herself in a pit. A man with a pretty face appeared and took her out of the pit. He undressed her. Washed her and dressed her with silk garments.” Once she woke up, she realized that the head of the Turkish army that was attacking the castle was the man in her dream that she saw the night before. She threw a letter from the bastion of Aydos Castle, telling that she was

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<sup>172</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, p. 18.

<sup>173</sup> *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, pp. 18-21.

going to open the gates of the castle when its inhabitants are drunk. That was how the Ottomans took the castle.<sup>174</sup>

Maiden castle tales were extensively used within a romantic framework during the medieval ages. Plenty of oral and written accounts can be found, in both European and Middle Eastern cultures. There are several reasons for that. First, there are many castle stories, because the physical environment was full of castles. Second, since castles, as phenomena, are mysterious, adventurous, and exotic. Third, it was because the maiden figure represents something to be rescued. Fourth, in all written cultures, the castles are to be conquered.<sup>175</sup> Aşıkpaşazade's Rapunzel-like story fits into this generic scheme. For Wittek, "it is a romantic story...with the castellan's daughter letting in the Muslims, to become, at the end, the wife of their youthful leader."<sup>176</sup>

The similarity between the plots of maiden's castle stories in Europe and in the Ottoman World may be a result from the phenomenon of holy war. Romantic hagiographies of the crusades, namely *chanson de gestes*, may have influenced the ghaza accounts, whether be in oral or written form. According to Linda Darling, "the impact of crusades...strongly affected the culture of the eastern Mediterranean, generating a twelfth-century literature that romanticized the original Muslim conquests..."<sup>177</sup> Further

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<sup>174</sup> Aşıkpaşaoğlu *Tarihi*, pp. 37-38; also quoted in Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 65.

<sup>175</sup> For an early analysis of maiden's castle legends, see F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 741-750.

<sup>176</sup> Paul Wittek, "The Taking of Aydos Castle," p. 662; For Kafadar "such help (and love?) offered by Byzantine women who are incited in their dreams to fall for warriors of Islam seems to have been a fantasy of the ghazis." in Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 70.

<sup>177</sup> Darling, "Social Cohesion," p. 138.

study is needed to outline that effect and to introduce a common literary culture in eastern Mediterranean that was resulted by this interaction.

Furthermore, the story of the taking of Aydos Castle also includes erotic stories.

Aşıkpaşazade's historical narrative was depending on an oral account and he might have used erotic stories to attract attention of the audience who were most probably ghazis and motivate them for ghaza. However, his account violates Islamic orthodox precepts. Even though undressing and washing of a maiden by a pretty-faced Muslim man symbolizes purification, and conversion of a Christian into Islam, it does not quite fit into Muslim norms.<sup>178</sup>

Especially in Aşıkpaşazade's History of the House of Osman, we encounter differences between the plots in ghaza stories occurred before and after the reign of Mehmed II. Full of unorthodox details, early Ottoman ghaza accounts represent a sui generis milieu and its peculiar ontology. Unlike the narrative of conquests during the reign of Mehmed II, which corresponds to centralization of the holy war around the persona of the Ottoman sultan, early epics represent the culture of the frontier. In this particular issue, suggesting religion or state in binary oppositions between the frontier and the center is extremely problematic. Changes in the regimes of government, religious belief, discipline, and use of violence may exemplify the transitions involving the frontier and the center. On the other hand, the fifteenth century ontological shift regarding the ghaza discourse is associated with the modifications in written culture. Epic literature functions to represent such a transformation. The next part looks at the transformation of the Ottoman epic

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<sup>178</sup> William Hickman, "The Taking of Aydos Castle: Further Considerations on a Chapter from Aşıkpaşazade," in *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 99, No. 3, p. 402.

literature from the heroic accounts of ghazi bands into the stories of the acts and deeds of the Ottoman sultans and military commanders, during the sixteenth century.

### **3.4. Great Sultans and Commanders**

The Ottoman epic genre, and the Ottoman written culture in general, was transformed with the changing political environment throughout the sixteenth century. In the hands of palace historians, ulema within the palace entourage, and the authors who actually joined the military campaigns, epic's literary form was recovered from informal or vernacular features since this event. In literature, the notion of ghaza was monopolized by the central power in the persona of the sultan. Ghazi bands were replaced by the servants (kuls) of the sultan. The voice of early ghazis was replaced by record-keeping Sunni ulema. What did not change was the close relationship between the political power and epic genre.

The sixteenth century Ottoman epic literature mainly consisted of the campaign accounts of Selim I and Süleyman the Magnificent. Under the titles of *Selimnâme*, *Süleymannâme*, and *Şehnâme*, Ottoman epic gradually became officially formulated by historians to celebrate the military victories of Ottoman sultans or document the campaigns of famous commanders, such as Hayreddin Barbarossa.

Unlike most of the fifteenth century epic accounts, the sixteenth century Ottoman epic appears to be more ornate and complex. The earliest examples of the sixteenth century, such as *Selimnâmes* of İshak Çelebi (d. 1537), Sucudî (d. ?), Keşfî (d. 1525), Celalzâde Mustafa Çelebi (d. 1567), Kemal Paşazâde (d. 1536), and Hoca Sadeddin (d. 1599) are

both written in a very complex literary form that consisted of various rhetorical devices and Arabic or Persian phrases. In general, the authors are from the ulema or kalemiyye, the Ottoman scribal institution. Among them there are *kadis*, *şeyhü'l İslams*, *nişancı*, or *reis-ül küttabs*.<sup>179</sup> The Ottoman epic gradually became part of the court literature

Starting from reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), the sole power to confront the Christian world derived from the envoy of the God on earth. As a consecrated figure, the Ottoman sultan increasingly monopolized every military activity within the Ottoman geography and beyond. In line with this, the sixteenth century Ottoman epic usually revolved around the persona of the sultan. Ottoman epic proudly represented the political power of the sultan that was derived from a strong military capacity. In *Süleymannâme*, Sinan Çavuş emphasized that influence by narrating Francis I of France's cry for help from Süleyman the Magnificent against Charles V of the House of Habsburg. According to the author, Francis I sent a letter to the Ottoman sultan, addressing him as "sovereign of the seven climates, source of courage, refuge of the world!"<sup>180</sup> Sinan Çavuş represented the Ottoman king as the ruler of the world, above other kings. Moreover, he portrayed the sultan as the sole authority to protect the desperate, to help the helpless even if they were not Muslim. From being leaders of ghaza in the Western Anatolia, the Ottoman sultans became the most important actors in world politics in the sixteenth century, and the Ottoman epic recorded this transformation.

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<sup>179</sup> Mustafa Arğunşah, "Türk Edebiyatında Selimnameler," *Turkish Studies – International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Vol. 4, No. 8, Fall 2009.

<sup>180</sup> Sinan Çavuş, *Süleymannâme*, p. 59.

Richness of the epic accounts in the sixteenth century is derived from the long-lasting and various campaigns of the Ottoman sultans both beyond the eastern or the western borders of the Empire. From Egypt and Persia to Hungary, epic literature has been the most significant source to understand the sixteenth century Ottoman military advance. Epic accounts of the military campaigns of Süleyman the Magnificent, *Süleymannâmes*, are not only the sources for Ottoman military history, in terms of military techniques or logistics, but also for the everyday life within the campaigning Ottoman army and their strongholds. The relationship between the Ottoman forces and the local people narrated in epic accounts has helped the historians, who study the social and economic history of the borderlands. Furthermore, epic writers, such as Sinan Çavuş and Matrakçı Nasuh, started to decorate their Süleymannames with miniatures and drawings of the military camps, castles, Mediterranean ports etc. Besides the artistic changes in print culture, these visual novelties addressed the changes in epic literature. To be more realistic and to call attention to the distance of the battlefields from the Ottoman center, epic writers started to use imagery.

Later in the sixteenth century, writing the sultan's book became an official post in the Ottoman palace under the title *şehnameci*. *Şehnâmes* were histories particularly entitled to narrate the acts and deeds of a certain sultan. As a literary form, these epic, and in general historical accounts had been constituted according to a single, official mesnevi formula. The authors of *şehnâme* mostly aimed artistic prose instead of historical accuracy.<sup>181</sup> *Şehnâme*, as a literary tradition could not survive the changing political

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<sup>181</sup> Christine Woodhead, 'Reading Ottoman "Şehnames": Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century,' *Studia Islamica*, No: 104/105 (2007), p. 71.



atmosphere, which at the end diminished the role of the Ottoman sultans, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. After Lokman and Talikizade's *Şehnâmes* in the late sixteenth century, Ottoman official history writing ceased. The last important examples of *şehnâmes* were the epic accounts on the Ottoman-Habsburg Wars (1593–1606).

The age of ghazi sultans ended, when the sultans stopped attending the military campaigns in person. Starting from the seventeenth century, the Ottoman military campaigns had mainly administered by grand viziers and high commanders. Such campaigns of Tiryaki Hasan Paşa in Danube (1593–1606) and Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa in Crete (1645–69) were narrated in epic works, such as in Kafzâde Faizî's (d. 1622) *Hasenât-ı Hasan* and Mühürdar Hasan Ağa's *Cevâhirü't-Tevârih* (1669). These are very important sources for the Ottoman historians to understand the changing political structure of the Empire. Primary concerns both for the Ottoman statesmen and the epic writers had changed. Administrative transformation influenced the patronage relationship between the writer and the political power. With these developments, the strong appearance of the sultan in epic accounts disappeared.

Ottoman epic genre had declined throughout the eighteenth century. Among a limited number of sources, the first accounts are on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1711, such as Yeniçeri katibi Hasan's *Prut Seferini Beyanımdır* and Bursalı Hüseyin Ağa's *Mir'at'üz-Zafer*. Silahşör Kemani Mustafa Ağa's *Revan Fetihnamesi* was dedicated to the campaign of Iran in 1724. One of the last significant epic accounts in traditional form, Ömer Bosnavi's *Tarih-i Bosna der Zaman-ı Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa* was the account of the war against Habsburgs in 1736. The common characteristic of these latest epic accounts is that they depict the campaigns that were made to defend the Empire from Russian,

Austrian, or Persian threats, unlike the early epic accounts that describe the Ottoman military advance. Narratives of ghaza and conquest were replaced by the chronicles of fortification of old castles, political intricacies, diplomatic envoys, and treaties.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, epic accounts were mainly based on the contributions of certain commanders in certain battles. Çaker-i İsmail's *Gazavat-ı Gazi Hasan Paşa* lists the successes of Cezayirli Hasan Paşa in re-taking Lemnos from the Russian forces in 1770. Similarly, Cizyedarzade Bursalı Ahmed Bahaeddin's *Gazavat-ı Yusuf Paşa* mentions the contributions of Gürcü Yusuf Paşa during the war against Habsburgs in 1787. The last Ottoman epic account in traditional form is an anonymous *Gazaname-i Cezzar Ahmed Paşa*, which is based on Cezzar Ahmed Paşa's defense of Acre against Napoleon Bonaparte's forces in 1799.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman epic was not popular. During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman literature, in general, encountered tectonic transformations. Modern literary forms and advancements in print technology damaged traditional genres and styles. On the other hand, particularly for the epic genre, the failures on the battlefield and the prolonged re-organization of the Ottoman army threw cold water on heroic accounts. Ottoman epic genre lost popularity, in terms of the number of manuscripts until its re-invention in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Until the re-invention of the Ottoman epic literature, war literature functioned to reflect the changes in the military organization through commentaries.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Ottoman epic literature was born as a ghazi tradition, mainly consisting of the entertaining oral accounts of the ghaza tradition against the “infidels” in Anatolia. The earliest written source, Ahmedî’s *İskendernâme* differ from entertaining oral accounts. Ahmedî aimed to legitimize the disintegrated Ottoman state in the hands of the Timurid forces at the beginning of the fifteenth century by portraying the Ottoman state as part of universal history. The chronicles that followed *İskendernâme* emphasized the ghazi status of the Ottomans by describing their military acts in the Balkans. After Mehmed II conquered Constantinople in 1453 and installed centralization policies, the ghazis were alienated from the central administration. In line with this, epic literature gradually became an official genre, monopolized by the members of ulema. Throughout the fifteenth century, the Ottoman the military campaigns of the powerful sultans, such as Selim I and Süleyman I, became the main subject of the Ottoman epic. With the increasing military role of Ottoman sadrazams in the seventeenth century, epic literature started to narrate the military acts of these highest bureaucrats at the Balkan and Persian fronts acting as the heads of the army. With the stagnation of Ottoman military campaigns in the eighteenth century, the Ottoman epic literature lost its popularity, until its re-invention as part of the legitimation policies in the nineteenth century, when the state encountered separatist and/or constitutionalist movements.

Starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman central administration installed extensive reforms in the military organization. The next chapter examines the nineteenth-century Ottoman military commentaries, part of the nineteenth-century

Ottoman war literature, which advocated and/or represented the modern reforms in the Ottoman army.



## CHAPTER IV

### OTTOMAN WAR LITERATURE ON THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MILITARY REFORMS

“If the graves could open, and a Macedonian who marched with Alexander through the Granicus were to-day to come before us, even if it were only a simple warrior, we should imagine Alexander himself standing before us.”<sup>182</sup>

The Napoleonic Wars in Europe caused momentous changes in the conduct of warfare, in addition to the social and political atlas of Europe. Introduction of *levée en masse* in revolutionary France helped the republic to emerge large armies. This costly organization, which required great budgets, only could be achieved through the support of citizens that believe in the ruling power and its ideals. Carl von Clausewitz, a professional soldier in the Prussian army against France during the Napoleonic Wars and

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<sup>182</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *The Nation in Arms: A Treatise on Modern Military Systems and the Conduct of War*, translated by Philip Ashworth, second edition (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), p. 285; for the Ottoman-Turkish version, see Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Millet-i Müsellaha. Asrımızın Usul ve Ahval-i Askeriyesi*, translated by Mehmed Tahir (Istanbul: Ebüzziya Matbaası, 1305/1888), p. 564. Goltz's *The Nation in Arms* was translated into Ottoman-Turkish only five years after its German original *Das Volk in Waffen*, during his twelve years tenure in the Ottoman army as a marshall. He was sent to the Ottoman Empire after Abdülhamid II asked German emperor to help reforming the Ottoman army to resist the Russian threat in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

a preeminent author who wrote both on the theory and the strategy of war in the first half of the nineteenth century, declared wars as “mere continuation of policy.” For him, “war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means.”<sup>183</sup> Starting from the nineteenth century, the distance between warfare and politics narrowed. Successful political discourses created victorious military organizations.

In explaining how an army of an uneducated mass destroyed Frederick the Great’s professional soldiers at the Battle of Jena in 1806, Kant and Fichte related the French military success to the enthusiasm brought by the French Revolution.<sup>184</sup> Before the Napoleonic Wars, Prussian military service was open only to the aristocratic class. The Prussian Army was operated by small and professional forces. German army reformers, such as Gneissenu and Scharnhorst, immediately imbued Kant and Fichte’s philosophical suggestions to the modern military re-organization.

Political and military reforms in modern era were mutually inclusive. These required modern mechanisms to redefine the relationship between the state, society, and the army. Disseminating the idea of *Volkskrieg* (people’s war) against the enemy, yet monopolizing the use of violence by the state, not only demanded but also recreated popular support. Without popular support, and creating an “imagined community” that shared common

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<sup>183</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1997), p. 22. Originally written in German, in 1832, only one section of Clausewitz’s book was translated into Ottoman-Turkish in 1898. See Cizal Klavzoviç, *İdare-i Harbe Dair Kavaid-i Esasiye*, translated by Ahmed Refik (Konstantiniye: Kitabhane-i İslam ve Askerî, 1316/1898).

<sup>184</sup> Thomas Hippler, *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies. Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 149-62.

ideals and enemies, modern warfare could not be achieved.<sup>185</sup> Here, the “imagined community” not only referred to a nation, but also to the army, with which the soldiers identified themselves. It was a process of cultivation to reproduce individuals according to an exclusive social group with certain rules.

On the other hand, the army and army related issues should be of general concern to a well-defined degree for the public. The public must be alerted against a military threat and should support the political and military decisions of the state dealing with the threat. The public must be mobilized according to the decisions of the state. War literature helps us to identify with the dynamics of that relationship. Modern military reforms required a mobilized society, and a mobilized society required modern disciplinary measures. Bureaucracy and education prepared society to the transformation program. Accordingly, military and political reforms were interdependent in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Policy of universal military conscription coincided with the on-going Tanzimat reforms, which required popular support for political motivations. The ideology of Ottomanism, dynastic claim, and public visibility of the political power were presented to society for popular support, which determined the outcome of the reform projects. War literature helped to introduce the reforms to the public and to mobilize society according to modern regulations.

This chapter addresses war literature as an instrument of socialized military discipline during the Ottoman modernization. It aims to investigate the ideas about the Ottoman army and thereby social order, by analyzing commentaries in Ottoman language

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<sup>185</sup> Ulrich Bröckling, *Disiplin*, p. 10.

produced in the nineteenth century. The relationship between literary texts that constitute the ideological background of the process of militarization and mobilization of society, and administrative documents is significant to understand the general social agenda of the Tanzimat reforms. Various sources, including penal codes, reports, court documents, regulations, biographies of famous military characters, and commentaries constitute a grand plan to enlarge military rearrangements to whole Ottoman society. This chapter evaluates military commentaries, which particularly dealt with the political means of warfare, military rules, discipline, and obedience.

The first part of the chapter is a brief summary of military reforms, especially after the Janissary corps was disbanded in 1826. Military reforms required popular support, political will, and a well-established bureaucratic system. Although it met challenges, the Ottoman state managed to re-new its military organization during that process.

Second part demonstrates the legal efforts to maintain military discipline in the new Ottoman army. Separating military law from public law, authorities did not only aim to create a domain for specifically military issues, but also defined a privileged class that was expected to set an example for the other casts of Ottoman society. This exemplary class was formed by military penal codes to set an archetype for the rest of society. In general, they targeted to design disciplined citizens, who disregard their own benefits for the well-being of the nation.

Third part of this chapter is based on the relationship between modern soldiers, their comrades, nation, and sovereign. Ottoman commentaries were indecisive in addressing soldiers who or what to obey. While supporters of the regime proposed the sultan as the



sole role model to follow, Abdülhamid's opponents insisted on loyalty to the *patrie*.

Intimately correlated with political power, war literature became increasingly engaged with the Hamidian social policies, especially through the end of the nineteenth century.

Modern warfare demanded the mobilization of armed forces along with civilians. It required a program according to which, every member of society was educated for his/her responsibilities during the war or peace. The fourth part of this chapter evaluates the ideas on military reforms conducted by Abdülhamid II in relation to the idea of total war, which was the key of the Prussian victory over France in 1871. Even though the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 created heroes, such as Gazi Osman Paşa, who resisted the Russian forces at Danube, the disastrous defeat both on the Balkans and the Caucasian front revealed the fact that the Ottoman army was not yet mobilized. In the meantime, the Ottoman state invited German high officers, to educate young members of the Ottoman military. These German officers were raised with modern Prussian military ideas based on the idea of total mobilization of national forces. In *fin de siècle*, Ottoman society at all levels increasingly became involved with the concepts of warfare, and surrounded by military representations in all spheres of everyday life. The next part deals with the military reforms in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire in order to draw a frame for the scope of the contemporary Ottoman military commentaries.

## 4.1. Regulation of the Ottoman Army

In 1792, following a series of defeats in Russo-Ottoman Wars of 1768–1774 and 1787–1792, and Austro-Ottoman War of 1787–1791, Selim III (r. 1789–1807) ordered the formation of a new army according to the modern methods applied in modernized European states. One of the oldest institutions in the Ottoman history, modern developments challenged the janissary army not only in terms of military tactics but also in terms of its traditional position as an influential political actor. The new army demonstrated its superiority to the janissary corps by successfully suppressing the rural revolts in some parts of the country.<sup>186</sup> The newly organized army also found a chance to test its ability overseas under the command of Cezzar Ahmed Pasha (d. 1804). The pasha was titled as ghazi after the battle against Napoleon's naval forces sailing for Egypt. *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers "were sent by sea to Gaza, where they performed important services...against the advancing French army led by Napoleon Bonaparte."<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, the new regiments were short-lived. Selim III's attempts to modernize the army encountered strong resistance from janissaries, who were afraid of losing their position in the state and society.<sup>188</sup>

Leaving aside the traditional comments by historians on janissary resistance to military reforms to protect status quo and their traditional position, there are some different

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<sup>186</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-ı Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 (September 1965), p. 299.

<sup>187</sup> Shaw, "The Origins," p. 302.

<sup>188</sup> Avigdor Levy, "Military Reform and the Problem of Centralization in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Jul., 1982), p. 240; Shaw, "The Origins," p. 291.

explanations for the janissary dissent. The new regiments based in Istanbul, were lacking discipline and were unfamiliar with the urban daily life practices, whereas janissaries established themselves as a significant longstanding actor in urban life. According to Stanford Shaw:

...most of the new men enrolled after 1796 came from the villages and tribal areas of Anatolia. By 1900, 90 per cent of the enlisted men in the army were Turkish peasants and tribesmen from Anatolia...resistant to the discipline and unaccustomed to the kind of life required by the corps, they became increasingly turbulent and disorderly, often coming down from Levend Çiftlik to ravage the villages along Bosphorus, with Tarabya, Yeni Köy, and Beşiktaş suffering most.<sup>189</sup>

At the beginning, the military administrators of the new regiments had to deal with undisciplined soldiers, who also damaging the daily life in the villages nearby their barracks. Compared to these soldiers, janissaries were more accustomed to the urban life.

By the end of the eighteenth century, janissaries appeared as a well-established actor in urban daily life, involved in economic activities in the cities such as Istanbul and Edirne. In Cemal Kafadar's words, they became a *lumpenesnaf*, forcing the guilds of Istanbul to transform their traditional rules on urban economic activities.<sup>190</sup> It was necessary to involve in economic activities to survive in Istanbul at that period, when the Ottoman military investment was in decline. Regularly paid *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers, recruited

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<sup>189</sup> Shaw, "The Origins," p. 301.

<sup>190</sup> Cemal Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels Without a Cause?" in Baki Tezcan & Karl K. Barbir (eds.) *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World. A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (Madison, Wis.: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 125.

mostly from Anatolia only for the military activities, might have been considered as threat to the urban economic life. This might have disturbed the urban actors.

Second, a new treasury was organized for the need of the new army. The main source of income for the new army was fiefs held by the imperial treasury. In order to increase funding for the new army, all unattended or misused revenue items, which were devoted to military expenses “were to be seized for the new treasury and administered by it.”<sup>191</sup>

The old establishment was in danger of losing its privileges as tax farmers. Longstanding provisionist economic policies were in perils. “Confiscating abandoned tax farms or military fiefs,” Selim III created a considerable surplus to finance the new army.<sup>192</sup>

Increasing production by revitalizing idle units also affected the relations among economic actors. In modern era, re-organization in an institution requires and triggers reform in another field. The army, education, land, law are all related to each other.

Third, military reforms of Selim III were basically based on creating a controllable army, exclusively obedient to the Ottoman sovereign. The significant role of the janissary corps in history, especially in the Ottoman golden era, repeatedly emphasized:

D’Après les status du sage Sultan Suleyman, les Casernes seules de la Capitale offroient un Corps de cent mille Janissaries, qui travailloient continuellement à se former dans l’art de la Guerre... Sultan Selim plein de respect pour les anciens statuts des Janissaires, a voulu les rétablir dans leur entiere.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Shaw, “The Origins,” p. 296.

<sup>192</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “The Ottoman Military and State Transformation in a Globalizing World,” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, p. 261.

<sup>193</sup> Mahmoud Rayf Efendi, *Tableau des Nouveaux Reglements de l’Empire Ottoman* (Constantinople: 1798), pp. 16-7.

Nevertheless, they were politely accused of belonging to an ancient style of order and discipline: “les Janissaires s’ étoient reaches de leur ancienne discipline. Une reforme étoit devenue indispensable et l’ on faisoit des vœux pour la naissance d’ un Prince qui daignât s’ en occuper.”<sup>194</sup>

Janissaries fulfilled their mission in the history of the Empire. In terms of tactics and discipline, they overmatched European armies until the early modern era. However, to cope with modern European armies, Ottomans should make military reforms.

Throughout his reign, Selim III had demanded his bureaucrats to write proposals to guide military reforms. Many of these bureaucrats, such as Tatarcıkzâde Abdullah (d. 1797) and Abdullah Birrî Efendi (d. 1798), took part in wars and peace negotiations with Russian and Austria throughout their career.<sup>195</sup> There were also observations of Ottoman bureaucrats on military modernization attempts. One of these was Küçük Seyid Mustafa, an instructor in newly found engineering school in Istanbul, who pointed out that the wars cannot be won without scientific advancement.<sup>196</sup> On the other hand, there were proposals to interpret military reforms as part of a modern program of social discipline. Çelebi Mustafa Reşid Paşa, who was appointed to make arrangements in the army as the

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<sup>194</sup> Mahmoud Rayf Efendi, *Tableau*, p. 16.

<sup>195</sup> For a list of these proposals, see Ahmet Öğreten, *Nizam-ı Cedide Dair Layihalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014).

<sup>196</sup> Berrak Burçak, “Modernization, Science and Engineering in the Early Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), p. 74.

treasurer of Tuna Province, wrote a treatise to emphasize on the modern terms of discipline and order, which he observed in contemporary European armies.<sup>197</sup>

Çelebi drew attention to the troubles the Ottoman government experienced in the hands of undisciplined janissary units. According to Çelebi, a Russian agent once tried to convince Catherine II to the invasion of Constantinople by saying that “none of all the Ottoman troops are now ready to take the field: those of Anatolia are employed in cultivating the land, and smoking their pipes; those who inhabit Constantinople are either busied in carrying on various trades, or at least are not subject to any good discipline.”<sup>198</sup>

Çelebi suggested that:

the new levied troops, instead of engaging in trade, should remain day and night in their quarters, applying themselves daily to military exercises, and keeping their arms, cannon, muskets, and warlike implements of every description necessary for immediate service; thus practicing a discipline suitable to their appellation of soldiers of the new regulation.<sup>199</sup>

The new army should be re-organized according to modern military methods and to the traditional philosophy of the Ottoman State and Islam. In the end:

this institution of regular soldiers, proceeding from the habitation of the great Spirit which rules over our faith and Empire, will perpetuate the duration of the

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<sup>197</sup> Mehmed Süreyya, “Reşid Mustafa Efendi,” *Sicill-i Osmani*, Vol. 5 (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), p. 1385.

<sup>198</sup> Mustafa Reshid Celebi Effendi, “An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid,” p. 229; for an analysis of Çelebi’s arguments on modern armies according to Foucauldian interpretation of modern disciplinary strategies, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 36-8.

<sup>199</sup> Mustafa Reshid, “An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid,” pp. 236-37.

Sublime Government even to the end of the world, and will give us victory over all our enemies.<sup>200</sup>

Modern armies were based on military technology, professionalism, discipline, uniformity, precision, division of work, and obedience. Comparing the Nizam-ı Cedid troops to the janissaries, Çelebi also emphasized the advantages of uniformity during combat. For him:

the new troops remain drawn up in line as though they were at prayers, the rear ranks being exactly parallel with the front, and consisting of the same number of companies, neither more nor less, so that, when it is necessary, they turn with as much precision as a watch.<sup>201</sup>

Therefore, these units can adapt the instant decisions of the commanders during the combat and continue the fight with minimum damage.

According to Çelebi's arguments, the new army was expected to be formed by disciplined soldiers, as the guardians of the new regulation. He announced the Ottoman army as the foremost arena and the protector of Ottoman. The ability of leaders and soldiers to adopt modern conditions of active and passive warfare determined the terms and formation on which modern Ottoman army handled its duties.

For instance, the new regiments rivaled janissaries, who were accused of lacking discipline, in terms of adopting modern military order. Unlike the expectations,

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<sup>200</sup> Mustafa Reshid, "An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid," p. 238.

<sup>201</sup> Mustafa Reshid, "An Explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid," p. 268.

the officers of the corps found it increasingly difficult to train such men in European tactics and organization. Many of the men fled from the camps shortly after they received their uniforms and weapons, complaining that the work was too hard, the discipline too severe, and the pay too low.<sup>202</sup>

To conclude, in a short period of time, the new army caused a series of changes in economic and social order, and could not offer the expected results.

The main reason for the abandonment of military modernization in 1807 was that the new military establishment was not supported by a modern social order. The position of the janissaries was more than military. The janissary organization emerged as a social, economic and political actor long before the emergence of a new army.<sup>203</sup> Unless wide-ranging reforms were introduced, their social basis was far from being undermined. These reforms were to wait until the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826.

Critiques of the new order and Selim III's reform attempts managed to seize the rule and depose the sultan in 1807. They disbanded the new regiments and suspended the reformers from the government. For their part, the defenders of modernization efforts were united under the leadership of Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, the provincial notable of Rusçuk (today's Rousse in Bulgaria). Alemdar seized the throne but could not come to the help of Selim III, before his assassination. The reformers instead proclaimed Mahmud II (r. 1808–39), whom they trusted to continue the reforms.

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<sup>202</sup> Shaw, "The Origins," p. 301.

<sup>203</sup> For an analysis of urban functions of janissaries in the early nineteenth century Istanbul, see Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: a Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807–1826*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (State University of New York, Binghamton, 2006).



Depending on the experiences from the reign of Selim III, Mahmud II was cautious to install the reforms. According to Shaw, the new sultan believed that the reform program must be more extensive than some changes in the army. Second, Mahmud II believed that to prevent the resistance to the reforms, old institutions should be destroyed.<sup>204</sup>

However, the new sultan also encountered many difficulties during his reform attempts. The first challenge was to create a budget for reforms. The sultan faced reactions from different social groups as he confiscated the lands of deceased officials and waqfs of the ulema.<sup>205</sup> Mahmud II organized a new army and destroyed brutally the janissaries in their barracks in 1826. Even though, the reaction that followed the abolition of the janissary regiments reached a peak due to failure of the new army in Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829, the sultan managed to suppress the dissent using his espionage system.<sup>206</sup> This was because he successfully demonized janissaries by representing them to the public as rebellious, useless, restless, evil, and finally infidel.<sup>207</sup>

*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Trained Victorious Soldiers of Muhammed) was founded in 1826. The new army was free from “converts; suspect Muslim heterodoxies; Greeks; Albanians; Kurds; Bosnians; and Arabs.”<sup>208</sup> It mainly consisted of Turks, “who

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<sup>204</sup> Stanford J. Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>205</sup> Aksan, “The Ottoman Military,” p. 262; Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript,” *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Nov., 1994), pp. 179-80.

<sup>206</sup> Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>207</sup> Aksan, “The Ottoman Military,” p. 264.

<sup>208</sup> Aksan, “The Ottoman Military,” p. 267.

Ottoman commanders increasingly saw as the most reliable.”<sup>209</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, a Prussian commander who served Sultan Mahmud II in his reform project from 1835 until the death of the sultan in 1839, confirmed that even though the new army was a patchwork of methods borrowed from modern European armies, it consisted of obedient servants.<sup>210</sup>

The *Asakir* regiments were first established in the capital. In a short notice governors were ordered to build new regiments in the provinces.<sup>211</sup> Nadir Özbek interpreted the establishment of late nineteenth century gendarme organization and its conscription policies in the provinces as “colonization” of the countryside. According to modern requirements and using the modern methods, the Ottoman state was penetrating to its territories as it never had before with “military conscription, arbitration of disputes, and registration of lands and revenues.”<sup>212</sup> In that sense, the *Asakir* organization was a preliminary attempt of the state to monopolize its human resources.

The Tanzimat Prescript, which was immediately announced after the enthronement of Abdülmecid I in 1838, designated the blueprint of military arrangements among other reforms. The Prescript promised to regularize the system for levying troops and the duration of their service. Reformation of the Ottoman army was already under construction for a long time, and a new standing army was already installed. The decree

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<sup>209</sup> Aksan, “The Ottoman Military,” *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Aksan, “The Ottoman Military,” pp. 266-267.

<sup>211</sup> Veysel Şimşek, *Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit: 1826–1853*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University, 2005, p. 33.

<sup>212</sup> Nadir Özbek, “Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Ottoman Empire (1876–1908),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Feb., 2008), p. 49.

avowed the systematic of that reformation according to modern necessities, regarding a military conscription system that embraces duration of service, budget and manpower. The most important attempt of the cadre via the document was to contextualize the identity of Ottoman society. For the very first time in its history, the Ottoman state, similar to the other *ancien régime* empires in the nineteenth century Europe, attempted to define and construct a nation, a supranational body out of the multiethnic/multireligious gist of the empire.

Altering the traditional *dhimmi* agreement between non-Islamic elements and the Muslim ruler and abolishing the extra liabilities of the non-Muslims in the Empire, Tanzimat bureaucrats tried to incorporate these elements into its modern projections. The Ottoman social cohesion had been the center of the various debates on the Ottoman modernization. Although the other economic or military measures had varied a lot in time, the insistence on the creation of an Ottoman Nation proceeded for a long time, until when the Empire's population structure was altered due to Russian advance and nationalist movements in the Balkans.

In order to implement the universal recruitment plan for a modern army, a census was needed, which was held in 1831. After the census, the first conscription regulations manual was published. It assigned the duration of military service for the conscripts. During the Crimean War, the number of the Ottoman soldiers in the Balkan front reached from 145.000 to 178.000.<sup>213</sup> The general formation of the army was proclaimed in 1869,

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<sup>213</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853–1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 103-04.

which determined the three major parts in the army as regulars, reserves and guards. A set of rules within the army were accepted in 1871. These set of rules decided:

general ground rules for the conscription; reasons for exemption from military service; treatment of those who dodge the draft or intend to use tricks to escape from military service; execution of the draft; measures to be executed after the draft; conditions for the acceptance of volunteers in the army; and conditions pertaining to the people who send replacements or pay the exemption tax.<sup>214</sup>

Therefore, the Ottoman army was equipped with a coherent legal framework, in terms of recruitment policies.

Military conscription policies in the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire targeted male subjects of the Empire regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief. However, in practice the exemption from taxation prevented non-Muslims to enter military ranks. The Ottoman officials were to wait until the WWI for such an army consisted of conscripts from different backgrounds. Members of the bureaucracy, such as ulema, kadıs, and naibs, and religious services, such as imams and müezzins were also exempt from military conscription.<sup>215</sup> In 1892, medrese students were also became exempt from military duty, which led to “negative attitudes toward the medreses and the ulema in broad circles within the military and civil bureaucracy.”<sup>216</sup> The exemption of the medrese students from the military service might have led to antagonism against the medrese class in the late Ottoman and early republican eras.

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<sup>214</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918,” *International Review of Social History* 43, 1998, p. 441.

<sup>215</sup> Şimşek, *Ottoman Military Recruitment*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>216</sup> Amit Bein, “Politics, Military Conscription, and Religious Education in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (May, 2006), p. 284.

Furthermore, the supranational claim of the Empire was not entirely supported by military conscription policies on the field. In a short notice, non-Muslim citizens became exempt from the duty by paying tax. Until 1909, non-Muslims paid an exemption tax (*bedel-i askerî*).<sup>217</sup> The burden was once again on Muslim citizens, but this time from a wider spectrum.

The supra-national idea of Ottomanism was one of the main reasons behind the so-called failure of Ottoman modernization. For Zürcher, “the idea of Ottoman nation-building always was limited to a small, mostly Muslim, elite.”<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, universal conscription does not only aim to unify the citizens according to the needs of official sovereignty. Universal conscription was the ultimate way of spreading military discipline to every segment of society according to modern set up.

Modern reorganization of the army in the nineteenth-century world reflected contemporary industrial developments. Military machine became compatible with the modern technological devices. A mid-nineteenth century artillery required 10 soldiers to operate on the battlefield. Division and terms of work were vital. Each soldier was demanded a performance that would unify himself with the weapon, with his team, with his battalion, and at the end with his army. Modern technological devices required mental and physical reorganization. New military devices were only operable by the soldiers, who were educated through modern disciplining practices.

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<sup>217</sup> Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System,” pp. 446-47.

<sup>218</sup> Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System,” p. 446.

*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* Army, military schools, military hospitals, military courts, ministry of war, factories to provide supplies to the army, newly formed garrisons, fortresses, foreign instructors and many other modern developments signified a complex network that exceeded the boundaries of classical warfare.

Although, modern warfare demanded an organized, skilled and disciplined society, parts of that network might not function as they meant to be. There might be inconsistencies within the system, political will might change at heart in time, and individuals might not answer the demands from the top. The Ottoman military modernization was a complicated process consisted of successes and failures of indoctrination, education, mobilization, and disciplining. On the other hand, the Ottoman state was a multi-ethnic empire and there might be clashes between the units within the army based on ethnic origins or religious beliefs. Resistance to military conscription or cases of desertion might be seen. One of the models for other modern European armies, the Napoleonic army could never accomplish to levy one third of the eligible candidates.<sup>219</sup> The next part looks at the military commentaries that focused on the disciplinary measures and the new set of rules, which aimed to overall control the modern Ottoman army by the central administration.

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<sup>219</sup> H. D. Blanton, "Conscription in France in the Era of Napoleon," in *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era. A Revolution in Military Affairs?*, Stoker, Schneid, Blanton (eds) (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 16.

## 4.2. Discipline and Punishment

Following the defeat in Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, an extensive investigation was put into practice against the Ottoman officers who handed over the fortresses in East Anatolia to Russians. Hasan Sabri Paşa, the commander of the Ardahan defense during the war was one of those who were tried in front of the supreme military court. The pasha was tried “on behalf of the state and the nation for failing to fulfill his duty.”<sup>220</sup>

Fortunately, charges against him were dismissed at the end of the trial. Military court decided that the pasha was appointed shortly before the declaration of war and therefore did not have sufficient time to prepare his troops. What is more was that the other commanders on the Caucasian front witnessed his favorable efforts.<sup>221</sup>

Handing over the stronghold, surrendering to the enemy had always been a reason for punishment throughout the Ottoman history. Ottoman commanders, regardless of their popularity, at times were even executed for withdrawal from the frontiers or lifting the siege. In this nineteenth-century case, the responsible pasha was tried according to new written military codes in a modern court and was found innocent based on the accounts of witnesses. The new codes addressed a military organization fully obedient to the political power in general. The new code can also be seen as a legal agreement between the army members and the state in particular.

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<sup>220</sup> *Ardahan Kalesinin Düşmana Tesliminden Dolayı Haklarında İkamet-i Dava Olunup Anadolu Divan-ı Harbi Tarafından İstintak ve Muhakemeleri İcra Kılınan Ümera ve Zabitanın Derece-i Töhmət ve Mahkumiyetlerini Mübeyyin Tertib Olunan Mazbata Suretidir* (Dersaadet: Ceride-i Askeriye Matbaası, 1295/1879), p. 9.

<sup>221</sup> *Ardahan Kalesinin*, pp. 83-4.

In 1870, a comprehensive manual, *Düstur-u Askeri*, was published bringing all rules together dealing with the military service. The new *Asakir* army had already replaced the janissaries, who had been criticized for their disorderliness and disobedience for ages. Nevertheless, the problems within the military system did not cease. The new conscription system that aimed to confront the need for military personnel led to certain challenges. The conscripted soldiers were from different backgrounds and even did not speak the same language. The Ottoman bureaucrats and legal authorities had to prepare a formal and legal basis for the army at war or peace. Even though the Ottomans successfully executed the replacement of such a traditional organization, the modern history of the Ottoman army is the history of control and resistance.

Based on the irregularities in the Janissary army, the manual consisted of modern regulations. *Düstur-u Askerî* defined the rules of conscription, conditions of exemption from military service, the basic rules of promotion, appointment, and reward during the service. The manual also defined the structure of military court, the terms of inspection, reporting and intelligence, and the terms of conduct and punishment when suspicion, illegality, and misconduct occurred. It explained the expectations from the members of the army, the ground rules of recruitment, the decision-making process, and the system of surveillance.

Classification of the interfaces of military system represented a modern institution that did not allow objection or doubt regarding its decisions. Moreover, the military institution indicated the distinctiveness of its members not only before the process of recruitment but also during service. By identifying those suitable or not for the military service, the



army elevated itself to be the union of unprecedented individuals, who were selected according to specific rules and were expected to operate under strictly defined rules.

Examining the matters that were listed in the *Düstur-u Askerî*, a judgment could be formed regarding the problems that modern army institution encountered in its initial stage. The modern state exercised the monopoly of the right to use violence in its territories. For a state apparatus to use violence, the modern army should be under firm control depending on a well-defined command and obedience hierarchy in times of war as well as peace. Establishing a balance when applying these mechanisms was highly critical in terms of maintaining and protecting social order.<sup>222</sup>

The problem of deserters had been significant since the formation of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* army of Selim III. Authorities had seriously been threatened by deserters holding weapons and trying to maintain a livelihood by terrorizing civilians. The *Düstur-u Askerî* devoted quite a large space to the problem of desertion. Deserters were defined as those who abandon their battalion, violate Ottoman borders, and did not answer the call for reserves. Deserters were mainly from the lower echelons of the army; however, in some rare cases the deserters were from among the high officers.<sup>223</sup> Those who encouraged desertion or escaped with the army stuff were to face extra punishment. Ottoman archives host abundant materials about the stories of deserters with army weapons to rob merchants on highways, especially in the Balkans. Gyving, imprisonment and dismissal

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<sup>222</sup> Bröckling, *Disiplin*, ibid., p. 78.

<sup>223</sup> Ahmed Vehbi Efendi, the clerk of a Royal Soldiers (*Asakir-i Şahane*) regiment, was reported for desertion on 29 November 1864. BOA A. MKT. MHM. 316/46.

were decided as the case might suggest.<sup>224</sup> In most of the cases, the deserters were subjected to forced labor in galleys.

Another problem that emerged in this era was disobedience in the army ranks. Opposition to military authorities and to superior officers was repeatedly referred as a problem in the nineteenth century Ottoman sources. Rebellion in an army, considering the ability of rebels to access ammunition, required specific measures. In 1849, an uprising erupted within the Prussian army in Baden, which was suppressed by Prince Wilhelm. That event increased the fame as a soldier of young prince, later Kaiser Wilhelm I. In the long run, the measures taken to suppress the revolt set an example for the reorganization of the Prussian army.<sup>225</sup> After the event, the army was considered as the pilot organization within which the concepts of fatherland, the enemy, and the social mobilization and discipline were defined in Prussia. The reorganized powerful army destroyed the mighty French army in 1871 taking revenge of the Napoleonic invasion.

On the similar line, Ottoman military manual *Düstur-u Askerî* offered measures to be adopted against the rebels. First, the manual defined who are to be considered rebels. *Düstur-u Askerî* defined the rebels as those who refrain from attacking the enemy lines or obeying the commands of their seniors, who oppose the sentry, who draw a weapon to their seniors, and who resist governmental officers. Surrendering a fortress to the enemy, agreeing with the enemy at the battlefield, leaving the sentry post unattended, sleeping at

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<sup>224</sup> *Düstur-u Askerî* (Istanbul: Mekteb-i Fünun-u Harbiye-i Şahane Matbaası, 1286/1870), pp. 255-61.

<sup>225</sup> *Düstur-u Askerî*, p, 198.

the sentry post, breaking away from the place of service and not attending to a call from military court were also among the matters that *Düstur-u Askerî* listed.<sup>226</sup>

Third, irregularities that were faced during call of duty were named as plunder, theft, misconduct, bribery, espionage and treason. Among these misconducts were attacking the subjects of an ally or a neutral state, stealing ammunition, weaponry, money, provisions or supplies owned by the state or third parties, wearing undeserved heraldry or false uniform.<sup>227</sup> Authorities aimed to protect the civilians on the route or near the camp of the regiments in times of war. Crimes of the army members against civilians were threatening not only the image of the army but also the image of the state in the eyes of the public. The modern army was representing the state. Preventing these irregularities, the Ottoman state aimed to maintain a legal ground for the state authorities and the subjects, based on duties and responsibilities against each other.

Fourth, problems that were generally encountered with during time of peace were named as matters related to morality, rape, abduction, raping, having a carnal relation with a minor, younger than 11 years old, abduction, detaining someone by force, gambling, and drinking. These were described as immoral behaviors that were hostile to military honor. For doctors, surgeons and pharmacists linked to military institutions, performing abortion by giving drugs with or without the consent of a pregnant woman were also strictly

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<sup>226</sup> *Düstur-u Askerî*, pp. 240-44.

<sup>227</sup> *Düstur-u Askerî*, p. 251; 263; 267; 273.

prohibited.<sup>228</sup> The Ottoman soldiers should have a moral high-ground and be respected within society.

Modernizers came up with references and archetypes to encourage or discourage, inspire, and guide the members of the military organization in particular and society in general. Former military organization in the Ottoman Empire was not defined as a distinct body within society. Its members were part of the urban everyday life. They were both soldiers and civilians. Crimes they commit in everyday life as civilians had been executed according to sharia law. However, they had not been objected to written military codes but they had strong codes of conducts. On the other hand, the modern army was to set a moral example for the rest of society. Prestige of the state gradually became almost identical with the prestige of its army. The new army, therefore, was depending on an extensive educational and discipline program. In time, it became an archetype for modern citizens of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic. The next part focuses on the military commentaries that addressed the main source of loyalty for the modern Ottoman army, especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II. These commentaries emphasized that the modern army should only be loyal to the central administration and the Ottoman sovereign.

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<sup>228</sup> *Düstur-u Askerî*, pp. 358-71.

### 4.3. Obedience to the Sultan

By the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II, military service in Turkey had already elevated to be an honored career path within Ottoman society. Members of the military class were raised in the best educational facilities available in the Empire. Military schools were organized according to contemporary institutions of military education in Europe.

European officers, especially Prussian, guided the transformation in the Ottoman military education. The curriculum of the war academy in 1902 was consisted of military courses and discussion sections. The program aimed to inform military students about military tactics, topography, gunnery, fortification, horsemanship, weaponry, military organizations and institutions of foreign states, duties of the general staff, communications, and courses in foreign languages such as Russian and French, and famous battles and commanders in military history.<sup>229</sup>

Raised under military discipline through an intense and strictly defined educational program, young soldiers became part of the military machine. Even though they were limited with the categories of professional military organization, modern soldiers were encouraged to take initiatives to a certain extent. Through war literature, machine-like soldiers became the guardians of the fatherland, who achieved an advanced level of moral values, intelligence, self-determination, and love of the compatriots.

In order to connect the soldiers with the political establishment and to supply them with the ideological preferences of the state, political rule gradually started to utilize modern

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<sup>229</sup> Muharrem Mazlum İskora, *Harp Akademileri Tarihçesi 1846–1965* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1966), p. 35.

tools of indoctrination. From this perspective, modern war literature therefore aimed to transform military obligation into civic or patriotic duty.<sup>230</sup> Ottoman soldiers, who were directly exposed to this literature through textbooks at military schools, became more and more involved with the contemporary politics. As a result, modern military profession involved certain obligations and duties for soldiers to demonstrate towards their sovereign.

*Fezail-i Mücahidin*, written by a significant author of Ottoman war literature in *fin de siècle*, is a noteworthy source to understand the relationship between military obligation and civic and patriotic duties in the late Ottoman context. *Fezail-i Mücahidin* separated the military service from any other profession and other sources of livelihood, by elevating it to a sacred occupation, which was “different from commerce.”<sup>231</sup>

Commercial activities had been subjected to suspicion during the Tanzimat period. Non-Muslim bourgeoisie dominated the commercial activities in the Empire. The centre started to question their loyalty to the state, due to their close relations with European states. Moreover increasing wealth of the commercial class, Muslim or not, in the periphery was threatening the power of the center.<sup>232</sup> In the heyday of war literature, military class was depicted as the antagonist of the commercial class. Among many examples, in *Prusya’da Askerlik Alemi*, originally *Das Soldatenleben im Frieden*, the

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<sup>230</sup> Hippler, *Citizens*, p. 6.

<sup>231</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin* (İstanbul: Kitabhane-i İslam ve Askeri, 1320/1902), p. 25.

<sup>232</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 41.

main character regretted his position as a merchant instead of a soldier.<sup>233</sup> Through the end of the nineteenth century, military profession gradually became isolated from everyday civil activities, and the Ottoman military class was redefined as a distinct social group with a moral high ground.

*Fezail-i Mücahidin* described military service as combination of love of duty, loyalty, sacrifice, bravery, obedience, and controlling one's natural desires. It reminded the fact that the time of peace was as important as the time of war. In times of peace, barracks were supposed to function as organizations for cultivation and education. Depending on the ideas of Frederick the Great of Prussia and Marquis de Chambray, a prominent commander in Napoleon Bonaparte's army, *Fezail-i Mücahidin* proposed maintaining public order and security during the peace time as a major duty for the Ottoman army.<sup>234</sup>

Therefore, the army became not only isolated from the rest of society in terms of its daily obligations and higher moral standards, but also through its modern assignment to discipline and educate the rest of Ottoman society. Military class gradually internalized their new social role, which was also acknowledged by society. The elevated position of the army in society maintained the higher status of the military class in the late Ottoman Empire and later in Turkish Republic.

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<sup>233</sup> Friedrich W. Hackländer, *Prusya'da Askerlik Alemi*, translated by Mehmed Tevfik (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i Arakel, 1298/1880), p. 3. Hackländer visited the Ottoman Empire once. He stayed in Beirut in 1840–41, and travelled to Baalbek, Damascus, and Jerusalem. In 1875, he published his notes from this voyage. Other than that, he did not have any relation with the Ottoman world. How did *Das Soldatenleben im Frieden* appealed to Mehmed Tevfik is unknown. See Hans-Jürgen & Jutta Kornrumpf, *Fremde im Osmanischen Reich 1826–1912/3: Bio-bibliographisches Register*, (Stutensee, 1998), p. 150.

<sup>234</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 1.

Another major theme in the book is loyalty to *kumandan-ı azm-ı umumi*, the highest commander in charge, the sultan. Without second thoughts, an Ottoman soldier, regardless of his rank, was expected to obey the orders of *ulu'l emr*, the sublime ruler. Those unfaithful to the sublime monarch and the Sublime Porte were considered as the enemy.<sup>235</sup> Military commanders, those who were considered as representatives of the sultan, represent the authority of the ruler at military schools, in barracks, in garrisons, and at the battlefield.

Sacrifice and bravery were other themes that Osman Senai referred to in the book. *Fezail-i Mücahidin* described military sacrifice as “dedicating a life that can be lived in amusement or in delights of family life to military service.”<sup>236</sup> Bravery was categorized in *Fezail-i Mücahidin* as an outcome of brotherhood and of solitary life. The theme of bravery was of the essence. According to the author, “bravery was the power that brought the Ottomans to the gates of Vienna and Tabriz. It accompanied the Ottoman sanjak since the born of our nation.”<sup>237</sup> Therefore, an Ottoman soldier was natural-born brave. For *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, indoctrinating bravery to the Ottoman army was unnecessary. What required bravery for a soldier was, obedience, perseverance, submission, and suppressing one’s desires.<sup>238</sup> The concept of bravery was not limited to the battlefield. It was a lifestyle, an expression of self-discipline.

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<sup>235</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, pp. 15-6.

<sup>236</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 23.

<sup>237</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>238</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 32.



Fourth theme in the book was the notion of obedience. Similar to bravery, obedience “was the basis of conquests which adorned Ottoman history.”<sup>239</sup> It was very vital that any kind of hesitation to obey to superior officers may bring disastrous results. For the author, “sometimes obedience means accepting the death knowingly.”<sup>240</sup> The last theme was suppressing one’s natural, personal desires. According to *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, a true soldier must be unattached from his civil life during his service. It was necessary “to belong not only physically but also mentally to the army.”<sup>241</sup> Therefore, the soldiers could serve with full physical as well as mental capacity and without any distraction derived from the developments at home. The next part looks at the military commentaries that addressed the political and social role of the modern Ottoman military officers, as an elite group, which was educated in the newly established military schools during the Hamidian Era. These commentaries emphasized the patronage of Abdülhamid II over the military organization and the sultan’s leading role in the military modernization process. These commentaries also encouraged young officers to take initiative in political matters. The growing role of the army in politics would cause trouble through the very end of the Hamidian Era, which will be dealt with in chapter VIII.

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<sup>239</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 41.

<sup>240</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 42.

<sup>241</sup> Osman Senai, *Fezail-i Mücahidin*, p. 48.

#### 4.4. “A Nation in Arms”

The catastrophic defeat in Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 inspired another reform wave in the army. Starting from the 1880s, German commanders of high ranks had served in the Ottoman army intermittently until the end of the First World War. Success of the Prussian army against the allegedly undefeatable French army in 1871, its ability in mobilization, logistics, and discipline were among the major reasons behind the election of Prussian officers by the Ottoman officials. This modern Prussian military model was based on the concept of total war, which meant mobilizing every available source, including the population in the hinterland, for the sake of victory. After his coronation in Königsberg in 1866, Wilhelm I announced the military modernization policy in Germany.<sup>242</sup> Concerns in other European countries were justified when German army defeated a large French army, taking revenge of the several defeats at the hands of the French army during the Napoleonic wars.

The victory over France in 1871 popularized the Prussian army and Kaiser Wilhelm among the Ottoman public. German military commentaries were translated into Ottoman Turkish, and German history books were published. Ebuzziya’s biography of Wilhelm started with Kaiser’s childhood memories of the nation under the “unclean feet of the enemy.”<sup>243</sup> According to the biography, following Napoleon’s invasion of Germany, Wilhelm’s mother asked the young prince to take revenge of the fatherland and spill the

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<sup>242</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *İmparator Wilhelm* (Konstantiniye: Kitabhane-i Ebuzziya, 1305/1887), p. 16.

<sup>243</sup> Ebuzziya, *İmparator Wilhelm*, p. 9.

blood of the enemy.<sup>244</sup> Although introducing the German model into a large country, such as the Ottoman Empire, which was lacking educated soldiers and military officers, missing a competent bureaucratic system and organization to recruit troops, and was deprived of sufficient transportation network was questionable,<sup>245</sup> recent German success was interpreted as a source of inspiration for the Ottomans.

Before the 1880s, the Ottomans generally preferred French officers to serve in the Empire, not as part of a formal agreement but as free contractors.<sup>246</sup> In 1881, Abdülhamid II sent an envoy to Berlin to request military advisers from Germany as part of a military alliance. The sultan formally asked Kaiser Wilhelm II to assign German military officers for the modernization of the Ottoman army.<sup>247</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz (1843–1916) served in the Ottoman army between 1883 and 1895, and later during the WWI. He was one of the few German officers who were able to contribute to the military modernization in the Ottoman Empire.

Having fought in the Belgian front in 1870, Goltz became famous in Europe not only for his military skills but also for his writings on modern warfare. His *The Nation in Arms*, originally *Das Volk in Waffen* (1883), was immediately translated into several languages including the Ottoman-Turkish. *The Nation in Arms* described the conduct of war

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<sup>244</sup> Ebuzziya, *İmparator Wilhelm*, pp. 10-1.

<sup>245</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İkinci Abdülhamit Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1981), p. 61.

<sup>246</sup> Loubna Lamrhari, “L’Obsession Allemande dans la Production du Savoir Militaire Français sur l’armée Ottomane et Turque (1883–1933),” in Işıksel & Szurek (eds.), *Turcs et Français: Une Histoire Culturelle, 1860–1960* (Paris: PUR, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>247</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*, p. 5.

preferably in a European country by an army constructed upon universal conscript system. The recruiting system, for him, was so vital that brought the soldier and the sovereign into an agreement, a contract.<sup>248</sup> Thus, he did not interpret modern military service as full sacrifice of the soldier to his sovereign. In general, he increased the significance and gravity of the members of the military class in politics and society. He defined the modern military class as part of fragmented political leadership. For a healthy relationship between the parties, the quality of political leadership was significant. For Goltz, Turks at the time, an honorable, proud, brave and deeply religious people were deprived of the leadership of upper classes.<sup>249</sup>

The rise of the military class to challenge the autocratic rule was on the one hand a democratic development, but on the other a threat to civil politics. In the Ottoman context, Goltz's ideas were alarming, at least for the sovereign. The Prussian general played a significant role in educating young officers and preparing textbooks for military schools.<sup>250</sup>

Recent studies emphasized Goltz's role in educating a generation of military officers, who managed to take political initiative in the future as the elite cadres of the Empire, especially after Abdülhamid II's reign. Nezir-Akmeşe called this group of future leaders, who were raised according to the ideas of the Prussian general, as "generation Goltz."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Goltz, *Millet-i Müsellaha*, p. 24.

<sup>249</sup> Goltz, *The Nation in Arms*, p. 22. These comments are censored in *Millet-i Müsellaha*.

<sup>250</sup> Jehuda Lothar Wallach, *Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi: Türkiye'de Prusya-Alman Askeri Heyetleri 1835-1919* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1985), p. 37.

<sup>251</sup> Handan Nezir-Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 23.

According to Şükrü Hanioglu, redefining the role of the army in social sphere, Goltz encouraged the Ottoman officers to appeal for a more influential position in governmental policies.<sup>252</sup> Furthermore, the new generation of Ottoman officers, who were familiar with Goltz's ideas, dominated and formed central political power, increasingly after the Young Turk revolution in 1908. Nevertheless, the parts that address the enhanced position of the army in the civil area and the leadership of the military class in society were censored in the Ottoman-Turkish edition of *The Nation in Arms, Millet-i Müsellaha*. Although Hanioglu's interpretation regarding the impact of the book on the young officers needs further evidence, political developments through the end of the Hamidian Era ran parallel to Goltz's comments.

The concept of law was directly related to discipline, a repeatedly mentioned prerequisite of modern armies. Goltz quoted the famous words of the leader of the Prussian Army during the Napoleonic Wars, Scharnhorst (1755–1813), regarding the requirement of the military law: “The power of the passions cannot be restrained without the help of law.”<sup>253</sup> Echoing Darwin, Goltz said that “the superiority which disciplined soldiers show over undisciplined masses is primarily the consequence of the confidence which each has in his comrades.”<sup>254</sup> Modern armies could not only depend on vague concepts such as solidarity and love of the comrades. The soldiers must rely on military codes to organize soldiers' relation with others and their full commitment to superiors and legal authorities.

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<sup>252</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, “Civil-Military Relations in the Second Constitutional Period, 1908–1918,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 180-81.

<sup>253</sup> Goltz, *Millet-i Müsellaha*, p. 189.

<sup>254</sup> Goltz, *The Nation in Arms*, p. 91. These comments were censored in *Millet-i Müsellaha*.

Moreover, Goltz wrote two separate books specifically on the Ottoman military modernization, condition, and performance. Written immediately after the Ottoman victory in 1897 over the Greek army, *Devlet-i Aliyenin Zaaf ve Kuvveti* was one of the main sources describing the strategic military condition of the Empire in *fin de siècle*. Goltz explained his aim in writing the book as “showing possibility of restoration and freeing young officers from pessimism.”<sup>255</sup> For him, Turks maintained certain martial characteristics derived from “religious conviction, imperial pride, patriarchal social relations, and a hard, rural way of life.”<sup>256</sup> The Ottoman officials should utilize the martial characteristic of the Ottoman nation.

After summarizing the history of early Ottoman state and emphasizing the importance of the concept of *fütühat*, the conquests, Goltz proposed solutions for an Ottoman recovery. In the following parts of *Devlet-i Aliyyenin Zaaf ve Kuvveti*, he suggested that obedience, resistance and ability should be cultivated for the Ottomans as sources of inspiration, based on the Kantian argument that addressed the necessity of spiritual essentials for the foundation of modern nations.

Goltz argued that, the first condition for an Ottoman military victory was nation’s response to call of duty without exception.<sup>257</sup> Effective mobilization required a mighty government. For him, the current condition, under the rule of Abdülhamid II, was better than it was at the time of Mahmud II’s death, when half of the country was in

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<sup>255</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Devlet-i Aliyenin Zaaf ve Kuvveti*, translated by Zaimzade Hasan Fehmi (Mısır: Matbaa’ül Fütuh, 1324/1906), p. 61.

<sup>256</sup> Nezir-Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, p. 27.

<sup>257</sup> Goltz, *Devlet-i Aliyyenin*, p. 8.

rebellion.<sup>258</sup> He cites that, due to the national quality of resistance, so-called sick man of Europe survived the disastrous Russian war of 1877–78.<sup>259</sup> Goltz admits that the Ottoman Empire, with a developing military system, proved its strength in Greek war of 1897.<sup>260</sup> If the Empire could maintain political leadership, and rely on the national spirit and moral qualities, which can be found in its early history, it may survive.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the transformation of the military system was the most extensive field of the Ottoman modernization. The changes in the military system affected socio-political structures in the Empire. Reformers aimed to replace the old Janissary organization with a disciplined and loyal army. To that end, Ottoman reformers tried to install a universal conscription system, a well-defined legal framework, and modern educational facilities.

War literature in the Ottoman Empire addressed the new members of that reformed system to internalize not only the new military codes but also the elevated status of the army in politics and society. Writers of epic literature emphasized the modern relationship between the army and the political power based on obedience and loyalty as well as the distinguished and exemplary position of the members of military class in Ottoman society.

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<sup>258</sup> Goltz, *Devlet-i Aliyyenin*, p. 45.

<sup>259</sup> Goltz, *Devlet-i Aliyyenin*, p. 56.

<sup>260</sup> Goltz, *Devlet-i Aliyyenin*, pp. 56-7.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had a well-established military organization, based on a modern legal framework. New military schools with modern curricula which aimed to educate young military officers as loyal servants of the state and the sultan were opened. Throughout military reforms, the Ottoman army became capable of resisting foreign aggression and to suppress inner revolts to a certain extent. The generation of modern young officers, as an elite cadre, managed to acquire political leadership of the country after the Hamidian Era. This cadre led the Empire during the Balkan Wars and the World War I. The leaders of the young Turkish Republic were among the members of these officers, who were educated in Hamidian military schools.



## CHAPTER V

### LATE OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE EARLY OTTOMAN GHAZA

“O Macedonians and Grecian allies stand firm! Glorious are the deeds of those who undergo labour and the risk of danger; and it is delightful to live a life of valour and to die leaving behind immortal glory.”<sup>261</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to understand the ways in which the Ottoman students of the Ottoman past perceive the on-going military modernization process, design public opinion, and represent ideological agendas through writing military history. An analysis of the nineteenth century Ottoman historical perspective is critical to identify with the intellectual milieu vis-à-vis the modernization process. Second, it seeks to illuminate the relationship between traditional mentalities and modern academic activity. Third, it offers a great deal of knowledge as regards the sources of late Ottoman history writers. Late Ottoman war literature on history does not only represent the relationship between the nineteenth century historiography, epic literature, political legitimacy, and modernization.

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<sup>261</sup> Yorgaki Razi, *Tarih-i İskender bin Filipos* (Kahire: Matbaa-i Bulak, 1254/1838), p. 198. For English translation see Arrian the Nicomedian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, translated by E. J. Hinnock (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), pp. 309-10.

It also may contribute to recent arguments in Ottoman historiography on several issues, such as the foundation era, the concept of ghaza, and the Ottoman warfare.

Epic literature emerges when states encounter legitimacy crisis. It reproduces heroic stories from the past to reintroduce the historical role of the ruling power. This was not different for the Ottomans. Alexander romances appeared when the state suffered from a legitimacy crisis at the beginning of the fifteenth century in the Ottoman context.

Ottoman epic was born with Ahmedi's *İskendername* at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Ottoman capital Bursa was captured by Timur's forces. Ahmedi aimed to legitimize the Ottoman rule by emphasizing the ghazi role of the Ottomans and comparing their spirit to Alexander's.

Alexander romances have widely been used in Islamic literature to express political opinions and political legitimacy. Muslim intellectuals considered Alexander as *Zü'l-Karneyn*, a Quranic figure who was blessed with the earthly kingdom by God and was entrusted with the task of inviting people that he encountered on his campaign to the true faith.<sup>262</sup> The stories of the acts and deeds of Alexander the Great appeared once again in the Ottoman epic genre, when the Empire was competing ideological challenges in the nineteenth century. Symbolizing a classical approach to epic historiography, the most significant ancient source on Alexander, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, was translated into Ottoman Turkish by an Ottoman-Greek intellectual a year before the proclamation of the terms of Ottoman modernization, Tanzimat Prescript. At the time, the most significant symbol of Ottoman military advancement in the classical age, the janissaries, were

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<sup>262</sup> Numan Külekçi, *XI–XX Yüzyıllar El Yazması Metinler ve Özetleriyle Mesnevi Edebiyatı Antolojisi* (Erzurum: Aktif Yayınevi, 1999), p. 407.

recently dismantled; geographical vastness and integrity, as a political symbol of imperial power was at stake; and the Ottoman hegemony on Balkans and North Africa was in perils.

In that course of events, studies on military history yielded various examples to remember and reproduce a glorious past, and became a crucial part of the nineteenth century Ottoman war literature. In that sense, how the Ottoman writers remember and how “Gesellschaften imaginieren, indem sie sich erinnern,”<sup>263</sup> in Jan Assmann’s words, shapes the framework of that chapter. The process of reproducing military history also involved efforts to ignore military losses, which might disturb the gloriousness of the Ottoman military history, “durch Manipulation, Zenzur, Vernichtung, Umschreibung und Ersetzung.”<sup>264</sup> The nineteenth-century accounts of the heroic Ottoman past, therefore, aimed to constitute a coherent past, for the modern Ottomans refer to as they construct historical continuity with the glorious times of their fathers in times of constant change.

The texts that are analyzed throughout this chapter are carefully chosen. They both are sources and outcomes of late Ottoman political discourse. In literary terms, they represent the creation, accumulation and maturation of tools of reproduction of a traditional genre. This chapter argues that in between biographies, novels, theatre plays, epic poems, and textbooks, especially which addressed the students of the new military schools, there is a dialogue. To that end, instead of sources that repeat each other, not to disregard their place in the history of Ottoman press, a sample that consists of the most decisive and the more representative has become apparent.

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<sup>263</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 18.

<sup>264</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 23.

By and large, the analysis does not follow a chronological order and a narrative. Late Ottoman epic corresponded to contemporary developments in the Ottoman press and intellectual milieu. Therefore, the sources are mainly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the number of published works dramatically increased throughout the Empire. Instead of a linear augmentation, late Ottoman war literature will comply with thematic considerations.

In that perspective, first part of the chapter summarizes the late Ottoman concern on the military history of civilization. Mostly didactic and produced to be followed by the students of the military academy, such books on Alexander the Great, Peloponnesian War, Roman conquests were published. Among more recent histories of Frederick the Great and Kaiser Wilhelm I's military expeditions that belong to Napoleon Bonaparte took importance in place within the late Ottoman war literature. In accordance with the global popularity of Napoleon Bonaparte throughout the nineteenth century, Ottomans wrote and translated many books about the acts and deeds of the French Emperor. This interest was mainly derived from the didactic purposes as regards preparing young officers to the means of modern warfare and military maneuvers by reminding them the experiences of the French general on the battlefield. Second, the aim was to set an example for young Ottomans of the modern hero, who succeeded as a soldier and a politician to enhance the position of his nation on the world.

Instead of depending on non-Muslim and non-Ottoman experiences, the second part deals with the heroic accounts of the figures from the history of Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the late Ottoman literature. In order to make military history legible and acceptable for the Ottoman public, epic writers and the leading intellectuals such as Namık Kemal and

Abdulhak Hamid, remembered or reinvented military victories from the Islamic and Ottoman history. The aim was first to alert Ottomans against the threat of decadence and loss of faith by reminding heroes and ideals from the past that they can relate with. Second, by reminding or recreating the political culture that these historic figures emerged in, these intellectuals tried to refer contemporary political debates between constitutionalism and autocracy. They established a connection between military and political heroicism.

Third part is specifically concerned with the late Ottoman epic literature on the Ottoman founding fathers and the emergence of ghazi myth during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These works reserved a significant place in the debates on the emergence of the Ottoman state throughout the twentieth century. Many of the late Ottoman ideas on the rise of the Ottoman state survived until recently. Besides textbooks on the Ottoman history, this part evaluates late Ottoman considerations on early Ottoman ghazis, either from the house of Osman or among Ghazi bands, such as Köse Mihâl of Greek origin.

The last part particularly deals with Ferik Ahmed Muhtar Paşa's *Feth-i Celîl-i Konstantiniye*. Ahmed Muhtar was the foremost military historian, who managed to build the military museum and create a military band in traditional Ottoman manner (mehter) in the late Ottoman Empire. The book was about the conquest of Constantinople. It was designed as a modern conquest account, a *fetihname*. However, instead of heroic themes, the author intended to create a reliable history, an academic account of the conquest.

Throughout the nineteenth century, especially European historians studied the history of the great states. Among them, Hammer, Lamartine, Jonquière, Count Ségure published histories of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed Muhtar aimed to criticize these modern studies in several points. In order to do that, he used the theme of the conquest of Constantinople. According to him, these studies were mainly based on Byzantine sources and failed to compare these chronicles with the Ottoman accounts. He insisted that, many of the Ottoman manuscripts were waiting in the Ottoman libraries to be studied. He managed to construct a modern conquest account, based on the comparisons between the primary sources. After *Feth-i Celil*, military history increasingly got separated from the domains of epic literature and was relocated as a scholarly field.

## **5.1. Heroism**

Besides fictive, epic products of revivalist approach, the nineteenth century Ottoman war literature was a pastiche of contemporary trends in European literature. It extensively consisted of textbooks to be followed in the newly founded military schools or at least targeted the members of lately organized military class in order to supply new institutions with up-to-date references on any issue about warfare, including its war history. In this regard, except the epic texts, which refer to Ottoman and Islamic history, works on the history of warfare were by and large didactic.

Ahmed Cevad Paşa, a leading general in the Ottoman army, who was assigned as vizier following his success as the governor of Crete, defined the history of warfare as “the essence of military sciences on which a military officer should be an expert. It teaches

military sciences as if one is instructed by the commanders, who succeeded on the battlefield due to their superior maneuvers.”<sup>265</sup> A military commander should have knowledge on military history.

Ahmed Cevad narrated the development in the organization and tactics of warfare from ancient Greece to modernity by creating flashbacks and occasionally anachronistic relations. Historical military advancements follow the patterns that are designed by contemporary debates on modernization. For instance, the introduction of universal conscription and reserve army in ancient Greece is expected to remind us modern recruitment system. Or else, armies in history are compared unevenly, such as the dominance of nobility in the ancient Greek army brings back the structure of Friedrich the Great’s (reigned 1740–1786) Prussian army.<sup>266</sup> Or modern Britain naval power is equated with its Athenian counterpart.<sup>267</sup>

The relationship between political and military career is painted via the stories of great men. Hence, figures such as Epaminondas, the Theban general who broke Spartan dominance in Greek politics, is especially emphasized to expose the characteristics of a civilized hero, besides well known historical actors such as Alexander. Historical repertoire of the Ottoman reader, mostly young military officers, is accentuated with a potpourri of the stories and actors of the past.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1291/1875), (İstanbul: Kitapçı Arakel, 1311/1893), pp. 5-6.

<sup>266</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 43.

<sup>268</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, pp. 33-34.

Another value of *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası* is derived from its interpretation of history of history and its indication of the effects of ancient historians on modern warfare. Ahmed Cevad addresses Thucydides, who observed and interpreted social and political environment of Peloponnesian Wars, as one of the main historical sources that can inspire modern students of warfare.<sup>269</sup> He calls attention to Napoleon's analysis and admiration of Alexander the Great's military enterprise and his knowledge on the writings of ancient historians, such as Thucydides and Xenophon.<sup>270</sup> He also gives detailed information about Greek or Roman historians, as Polybius, Tacitus and Julius Caesar.<sup>271</sup> For him, Napoleon and his decisions on the battlefield should be evaluated according to Polybius' remark that learning the character of enemy is vital.

*Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası* is one of the earliest examples of military history books in Ottoman language that categorically separate historiographical analysis from ordinary narrative of past events. Nevertheless, throughout new approaches on historiography and didactic considerations shaped by ongoing reforms on military education, the main focus of the book is on sacrifice and heroism. On sacrifice, Ahmed Cevad reminds the story of Hannibal, who joined the army when he was nine as he lost his father on Carthaginian Expedition to Spain. Ahmed Cevad dramatizes the story by saying that "his toy was warfare; he used to sleep on the battlefields."<sup>272</sup> Hannibal did not have an ordinary childhood and he was a hero by birth.

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<sup>269</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 46.

<sup>270</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 50.

<sup>271</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 51.

<sup>272</sup> Ahmed Cevad Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri Hülasası*, p. 60.



Before the creation of national heroes, heroism was built upon great men in the history of civilization in modern Ottoman war literature, either via translations from western languages or original interpretations of a limited military cadre. In addition, these works in the Ottoman perspective emerge from an insight of history as a common product of humanity without second thoughts and in its nature. They do not identify with modern nationalist ideology and its literary harvest at the time. Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte or Frederick the Great are portrayed not through a national or religious dressing. They are valued for their heroic roles in history either as reformists in political matters and great warriors on the battlefield or as role models, who were raised to be heroes and took over responsibility when the world and people around them was in trouble. Their common characteristic is not only that they are war heroes, but also that they lead significant changes in the history of civilization and their own nation. Besides, all of those great men fight against a strong enemy that threatens the world order.

Perception of the history of great men, who represent universal values and legible to every member of the humankind, provided Ottoman writers with a scheme to create or memorize heroes. In that sense, Napoleon Bonaparte offered the Ottoman writer a fountainhead to experience modern epic. Napoleon's political and symbolical value for modern age provoked writers with diverse opinions to write on the French emperor.

The autobiography of Napoleon, which he wrote on Saint Helena in exile, was published in Ottoman Turkish in 1861. An effort to justify the causes of the emperor, the Ottoman copy is significant to appreciate the Ottoman attempt to understand an old enemy, who damaged close relationship between the Empire and France by invading Egypt. Not to

forget, his apologetic words on the invasion are highlighted by the translator: “I did not aim to, God forbid, dethrone the Ottoman emperor or to acquire the title of pasha.”<sup>273</sup> All of a sudden, Napoleon became sympathetic in modern Ottoman epic literature.

According to the autobiography, Napoleon, as a reformist, seized power in France and conducted expansionist policies for just causes. His strategic military decisions vigorously follow a political pattern. Responsibility and influence of soldiers on political mechanisms are frequently reiterated. According to the text, Napoleon, as a promising young general, realized that the French army was halted by the Alpine barrier. For him, physical obstacles cannot be used as an excuse, especially when revolutionary ideals, such as unification of Europe under a just leadership, are at stake. There is no rival in the continent to object that expansionist and imperialist paradigm. However, the French army was not favorable for such great objectives. For Napoleon, who expected to fulfill the ideals of revolution, French army was infected by indiscipline.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, the initiative for military decisions was held by the parliament, not by the general staff in the army. Division of labor, as a prerequisite of a modern army, was not well-defined and there were occasional conflicts between political and military leadership.

Obstacles and threats that French army was expected to deal with are regularly repeated throughout the autobiography. French nation is portrayed as under constant threat of

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<sup>273</sup> *Tezkire-i Napolyon* (İstanbul: Ceridehane, 1277/1861), p. 11.

<sup>274</sup> *Tezkire-i Napolyon*, p. 4.

disorder and unrest, *fesad u ihtilal*.<sup>275</sup> For this part, Napoleon endeavors to reform the ancient regime and to found ideals of equality in the motherland or elsewhere.

Napoleon emphasizes that practices of *ancien régime* were still operative in French Republic. Republic, per se, was not a proper system for France.<sup>276</sup> National will was suppressed by the leading members of the parliament. Militarily and politically, Napoleon's policies require national will, the will of the mass. Mobilization of national forces is not limited to policies referring to the motherland. France is expected to be the ultimate power to lead European civilization to its established position in global issues. In this fashion, after the invasion of Italy, Napoleon declared France as not the conqueror but the protector of Italy.<sup>277</sup>

When the autobiography was printed in Istanbul, France and the Ottoman Empire recently became allies in the Crimean War in 1856 against Russia. The nephew and heir of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III, and Abdulaziz became close, and the conflict over Egypt was forgotten or at least tried to be worked out. Besides, political developments in France, which led to the restoration of the imperial system and fall of the republic, became favorable for the Ottomans. Contemporary French intellectuals celebrated the restoration of the empire as the restoration of peace and order.<sup>278</sup> Nevertheless, works on

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<sup>275</sup> *Tezkire-i Napolyon*, p. 7.

<sup>276</sup> *Tezkire-i Napolyon*, p. 23.

<sup>277</sup> *Tezkire-i Napolyon*, p. 10.

<sup>278</sup> Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon: Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 2.

Napoleon Bonaparte and his time in the Ottoman language did not follow a traditional course of analysis. These considerations involved diverse political ideals.

Ebuzziya Tevfik, then an admirer of Young Ottoman ideals even though sustaining his significant role in the Ottoman Press during Hamidian Era, wrote a biography of Napoleon I in 1881. The text starts by reminding that Napoleon was the commander in chief as a preliminary member of the advisory council. Ebuzziya deliberately translate the term consulate as *encümen-i daniş* to emphasize that Napoleon, as a modern hero, was raised in a bureaucratic, parliamentary system akin to the political ideals of the Young Ottomans.<sup>279</sup> In the course of events, due to the unpopular directory regime, French parliament, which Ebuzziya resembles to the ancient Roman senate, gained a new Julius Caesar.<sup>280</sup> The aim allegedly was protecting the parliamentary order. The new system was built on that political mechanism. A fresh nobility class appears as protectors, among which Napoleon becomes the ultimate protector. Epic verses on Napoleon I were produced to have public school students learn by heart.<sup>281</sup> According to Ebuzziya Tevfik, Napoleon represents the youth and bravery of Alexander the Great, policies and wisdom of Kaiser Wilhelm I, and merit and rule of Frederick the Great.<sup>282</sup> This appraisal aims to expose the role of Napoleon I as a general and a statesman in the history of civilization according to a linear narrative. Heroism, of which Napoleon Bonaparte is the most

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<sup>279</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Napolyon* (Konstantiniye: Matbaa-i Ebuzziya, 1299/1881), p. 15.

<sup>280</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Napolyon*, p. 18.

<sup>281</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Napolyon*, p. 28.

<sup>282</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Napolyon*, p. 36.

important example in modern ages, is a principal trope in the nineteenth century history writing in the Ottoman Empire.

## 5.2. History and Ideology

Tribute to heroism was not only derived from the Western sources. Following the introduction of generic works on Ottoman and Islamic history in the Ottoman language, significant pieces of modern Ottoman literature appeared on the acts and deeds of heroes from the Ottoman or the Islamic past. The aim was to bring back the epic stories of Ottoman or Muslim heroes, with whom the Ottoman reader may empathize. Legible to the common Ottomans, these sources meant either to inspire or to accompany with the on-going military modernization and education process.

Modern Ottoman epic subjected heroic figures from the golden age of Islam. Besides the local political agenda behind their production, they were produced to speak back to the rising orientalist discourse in Europe. There were many critiques of the western academy's biased illustrations on the history of Islam. Nevertheless, one of their criticisms did not lead to a coherent and holistic interpretation. Ottoman writers preferred to criticize orientalist analysis, either on the Islamic religion or the Ottoman regime, by writing apologias, *müdaafaaname*. Yet, every *müdaafaaname* dealt with a specific orientalist comment, and therefore failed to address a general picture of the relationship between orientalism and western political aggression.

An answer to Michaud's *Histoire des Croisades* (1812–22), Namık Kemal's biography of Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (d. 1193), *Saladin* (1872) was one of the earliest and momentous examples of a literary endeavor to criticize modern European academy.<sup>283</sup> In *Saladin*, Namık Kemal tried to refute the barbarian image of the Muslim commander in Michaud's *Histoire des Croisades*. Instead, he portrayed Renaud de Chatillon, a very popular chivalric figure within the crusaders, as a plunderer and a thief, who attacked a Muslim caravan travelling between Cairo and Damascus and ravaged Muslim villages.<sup>284</sup> Richard the Lionheart was "a lionheart but with grudges", who executed Muslim captives, for Namık Kemal.<sup>285</sup> On the other hand, Saladin, not a member of nobility, was represented as one of the most significant figures in the history of Islam due to his military and political merits. According to Namık Kemal, in Saladin's time, Syria, Egypt and Palestine were in disintegration and mischief, following the centuries of depression under Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Maghrebis, and Turks.<sup>286</sup> Saladin prevented the collapse of the region in the hands of crusaders and managed to recover the Muslim world from decadence.

In 1864, Ziya Paşa published his *Endülüs Tarihi* to recall not only the military successes but also the developments of science and culture in the early Islamic and Arab world.<sup>287</sup>

One of the earliest examples on the history of Islam in Tanzimat Era, *Endülüs Tarihi*

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<sup>283</sup> Namık Kemal, "Selahaddin," İskender Pala (ed.), *Namık Kemal'in Tarihi Biyografileri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), p. 23.

<sup>284</sup> Namık Kemal, "Selahaddin," p. 41.

<sup>285</sup> Namık Kemal, "Selahaddin," p. 51.

<sup>286</sup> Namık Kemal, "Selahaddin," p. 57.

<sup>287</sup> Ziya Paşa, *Endülüs Tarihi*, p. 5.

inspired the emergence of themes from Islamic history to be used in modern literature. *Endülüs Tarihi* evidently gave birth to Abdülhak Hamid's epic theater play, *Tarık*. It was one of the finest examples to picture the dialogue between texts in the nineteenth century Ottoman context. Besides, it evidently reflected the ways in which history-writing contributed an Ottoman writer to propagate his political ideas.

In the preface of *Tarık*, Abdülhak Hamid pointed out the political significance of the moment, in particular for the Ottomans and in general for Muslims, that he wrote the book. He emphasized that, he wrote the book in Paris, which did not belong to Muslims, and when Gazi Osman Paşa was in Plevne and Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa was in Gedikler fighting against Russians.<sup>288</sup> When he wrote, the Ottoman world was crumbling. That was exactly why Abdülhak Hamid chose to narrate the heroic accounts of early Muslims in Iberia. During the Arab conquests in Iberia, the Christian world was crumbling.

Describing the conquests of Tarık bin Ziyad in Iberia, Abdülhak Hamid referred to the contemporary debates in the Ottoman Empire. Role of Muslim women in the rise of Islam was used as a theme to support emancipation of women, a significant subject in Tanzimat literature. He portrayed Muslim army in Iberia as a union of men and women. These women were not only ghazis, who were after religious cause and glory, but also were women of letters.<sup>289</sup> Every Muslim women character in the novel was represented as literate and as brave as men. They did not refrain from expressing their ideas among men. He praised Muslim women for pouring enemy blood for religious cause, comparing them

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<sup>288</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. ix.

<sup>289</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 9.

with their counterparts in the Christian world, who poured wine, a symbol of moral inferiority and decay.<sup>290</sup>

Based on the contrast between Christian decadent life and Muslim enthusiasm and morality, Muslim conquests were portrayed as efforts to rehabilitate the decadent world. For Abdülhak Hamid, “the lands under suppressors are meant to be conquered.”<sup>291</sup> Due to the fact that the Muslim army was under great discipline to sustain manners and avoid cruelty, it was able to seize the heartland of Christian world.<sup>292</sup> The blockades around the Christian castles in Iberia last long, because Muslims believed that avoiding atrocities and pouring blood was a service to humanity.<sup>293</sup> One of the women ghazis in Muslim army defines jihad as “an obligation if it gives a lesson to the disobedient.” For her, it was beneficial “because potential disobedient nations become obedient by seeing another nation obeys through jihad, without pouring blood. If it is to spread religion, jihad is acceptable. Because, when a religion spreads, war and hostility, lust and animosity, potential dangers of clashes between religions and sects disappear, an eternal peace in the universe prevails.”<sup>294</sup> Therefore, Muslim agenda was justified. However, maintaining such a power first needed complete unification of forces. For the writer, “setting aside castles, not even mountains can resist a unified community.”<sup>295</sup> Second, it needs heroes

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<sup>290</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 36.

<sup>291</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 87.

<sup>292</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>293</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 93.

<sup>294</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 99-100.

<sup>295</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 90.



such as Tarık bin Ziyad, “who was not an army, a castle, but a nation.”<sup>296</sup> Third, unification of forces requires consultation, *meşveret*.

Young Ottomans exploited the *Meşveret* concept to make their political ideas legible among society. In order to propagate modern western political ideas as regards the source of government, Namık Kemal referred to *umma*, the community of Islam. The community elects the government and the government realizes the will of the community on its behalf.<sup>297</sup> *Meşveret* stands for representative government pertaining to *ijma*, consensus.<sup>298</sup> Late Ottoman literature, *per se*, reflected the revival of old political concepts. These concepts were employed not only explicitly but also as literary tropes. In historiography, *meşveret* represented social contract among political actors in the golden age. Every auspicious event results from an agreement between parties. Political and military decisions of the Ottoman golden age were taken under consensus.

Namık Kemal reinvented Islamic concepts to match political developments in the west. Furthermore, he invented a history for these concepts. The nineteenth century historiography invented many tropes to create the past for the community and Namık Kemal’s endeavor to write history part and parcel derives from a similar inspiration. First published in 1880, *Cezmi*, the first historical novel in Ottoman Turkish, resulted from a nostalgic yearn for the Ottoman golden age, when harmony between the just government and society was imagined to be at its finest. It drew a literary panorama of the sixteenth

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<sup>296</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Tarık*, p. 13.

<sup>297</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 294.

<sup>298</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, p. 309.

century Ottoman Empire in the eyes of its Crimean subjects through Persian Wars. The main source the author used to trespass the border between history and fiction was *Peçevi Tarihi*, which is still one of the main sources for students of the long sixteenth century of the Ottoman Empire.

For Namık Kemal, within this extraordinary century, Selim I, “created a suitable environment for heroism, which excited Alexander the Great, Cengiz and Timur, with Islamic fervor,” Suleiman the Great “waved our flag at Vienna, Tabriz, Spain, and India like a crescent born by the dawn,” Barbarossa “painted the horizons with cannon smokes, transformed the Mediterranean into a Turkish lake.”<sup>299</sup> This was the golden age in Ottoman history in Namık Kemal’s eyes.

*Cezmi* portrayed the Ottoman golden age as was directly related to military performance of the state. Furthermore, the end of that era came with the political clash between the idealist bureaucrat Sokullu Mehmed Paşa and the decadent sultans.<sup>300</sup> After Suleiman I, the leadership became questionable. Selim II and Murad III were impotent to protect the heritage of their ancestors. Taking his political ideals into consideration, Namık Kemal remembered the legacy of Sokullu and reinvented it into the story of a Muslim bureaucrat, protector of the state in times of turmoil. Very loyal to the house of Osman, the night before his death, Sokullu read the story of the assassination of Murad I on the battlefield and cries.<sup>301</sup> Besides nostalgia and anachronistic substitution of themes

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<sup>299</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi, Tarihe Müstenid Hikaye* (İstanbul: 1305/1888), pp. 3-4.

<sup>300</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, pp. 194-5.

<sup>301</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, p. 195.

between historical periods, *Cezmi* aimed to deliver a revivalist message, which was accentuated by heroism, to the modern Ottoman public.

The main character of the book, Cezmi, witnessed the decay of the Ottoman system as a young Ottoman at the end of the sixteenth century. He was a soldier by birth.<sup>302</sup> His master skills in javelin drew attention of pashas, one of which took him to his service.<sup>303</sup> This young hero was a poet, such as the author. Namık Kemal gave examples of association of warfare, blood, and poetry from the history of Islam and the Ottoman Empire. Ebu Muslim, Ebu Tamam, Ebu Filas, Mehmed II, Selim I, Suleiman I were not only war heroes but also poets.<sup>304</sup> War and poetry were similar operations that belong to the domain of aesthetics. On one occasion, Cezmi said that “the pen in my hand seems more stubborn than the dark horse that I ride.”<sup>305</sup> Namık Kemal’s analogy demonstrates the intimate relationship between literature and war.

A second hero of the book was created to express the Ottoman political legitimacy. According to Adil Giray, brother of the Crimean khan, even though Crimeans were from Cengiz’s blood they were loyal not to Mongols but to Ottomans, due to the fact that the Ottomans fought for the Islamic cause. They were true ghazis. Moreover, the post of caliphacy belonged to the Ottomans.<sup>306</sup> In *Cezmi*, Persia was not Islam. Superiority of

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<sup>302</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>303</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, pp. 43-4.

<sup>304</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, p. 53.

<sup>305</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, p. 53.

<sup>306</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, p. 101; 125.

Sunni ideology was regularly declared. Ottoman Empire was a result of divine cause and its ghazi identity was its trademark. For Namık Kemal:

“Ottomans declared war to their enemies  
Those who called themselves brave were invited to the field  
The center of heroism was transferred to the back of a horse.”

“Harb açdı ‘adüvviyye âl-i Osman  
Merdim diyene göründü meydan  
At sırtına nakl merkez üş-şân.”<sup>307</sup>

### 5.3. Early Ottoman Ghazis

The nineteenth century Ottoman historians could not find better sources than the Ottoman founding fathers, when searching for figures, who opposed the situation that their nation was in, and accomplished political unification of his nation. The ghazi myth was created in terms of paternalistic, dynastic and sultanic manner, or a union of ghazi bands. It mainly followed current political developments. Therefore, the main course of the late Ottoman considerations as regards the rise of Ottomans either aimed to sustain the legitimacy of the house of Osman, or to propagate constitutionalism by diversifying the early Ottoman heroes. In that period, old gazanames, such as *Gazavat-ı Seyyid Battal* (1871, 1880, and 1881) and *Ahval-i Gazavat der Diyar-ı Bosna* (1877), were re-printed several times.

Written in 1888, a history textbook for military academy students was one of the best examples to realize the fact that most of our contemporary judgments regarding the age

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<sup>307</sup> Namık Kemal, *Cezmi*, p. 156.

of Ottoman ghazis are belonged to the nineteenth century history books. It started with a narrative of the pre-Ottoman Turkish history in order to connect Ottoman ghazis to heroic Inner Asian Turkish figures. Oğuz Kağan, father of the Turks that migrated to the west, especially to Anatolia, was accepted as the source of the Ottoman blood. Born with bloody hands, he was depicted as a hero by birth.<sup>308</sup>

The first part of the book belonged to the rise of the Ottomans from 1299 to the battle of Ankara in 1402. High school textbooks in Turkey still faithfully separate the periods of Ottoman history in exactly the same manner. According to the book, Ottoman state was among other principalities that claimed independence after the Mongols dethroned Alaeddin in Konya.<sup>309</sup> That was the period of anxiety across the whole region. The Ottoman capital became Yenişehir in Bithynia, and the Ottoman lands were distributed among the ghazis.<sup>310</sup> Narratives that we have seen in the third chapter, such as the wedding in Bilecik and the maiden in Aydos castle was used to paint the history of the first Ottoman ghazas. Not to forget, the author kept aloof about such myths in order to secure his historical objectivity. For him, these were “among the strange and poetic stories that decorated the history of the foundation of our state.”<sup>311</sup> He also mentioned the efforts of military reorganization and the foundation of janissary corps, all of which were done in consensus according to the procedure of meşveret.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Mekatib-i Askeriyeye Mahsus Târih-i Osmanî* (İstanbul: Ebuzziya Matbaası, 1305/1888), p. 6.

<sup>309</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>310</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 22.

<sup>311</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 28.

<sup>312</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 29-30.

In the course of Ottoman advance, “Suleyman Paşa approached into Thrace in a more heroic manner than Tarik bin Ziyad, who passed Gibraltar.”<sup>313</sup> At that time the Ottoman motto was “either ghaza or martyrdom.”<sup>314</sup> After the conquest of Edirne, a letter was sent to Persia declaring that the conquest was entirely for the cause of Islam.<sup>315</sup> The Christian world was enjoying a decadent life. Witnessing the frightful Ottoman military machine, Hungarian king built a church to seek protection from heavens, when he turned back home after a defeat in the hands of Ottomans in the gruesome Sırpsındığı War.<sup>316</sup> The author did not forget to mention the situation at the Balkans at the time. For him, “without political leadership, Greeks accepted Ottoman rule.”<sup>317</sup> An agreement with the Venetians was stamped by the symbol of Oğuz claw, referring to the inner Asian roots of the Ottomans.<sup>318</sup> At that point, Timurtaş Paşa founded the tımar units due to the fact that the conscripts were not enough to match the need of manpower.<sup>319</sup>

Jihad was so bountiful for the ghazi leaders that Gazi Evrenos was able to give many adorable gifts at the wedding of Bayezid I.<sup>320</sup> According to the author, jihad was a “divine order on the shoulders of the Ottomans.”<sup>321</sup> Ghaza was an aesthetic operation. For

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<sup>313</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 33.

<sup>314</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 34.

<sup>315</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 37.

<sup>316</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 38.

<sup>317</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 52.

<sup>318</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*.

<sup>319</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 41.

<sup>320</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 40.

<sup>321</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 41.

the author, “the heroism of Ottoman ghazis, who spent their lives at fight, and Serbian soldiers with heavy armors that Ottomans had never witnessed, rendered the battlefield fearsome but also delightful.”<sup>322</sup> The unification of Anatolia under Ottoman rule was also referred in the textbook. The Ottomans attacked, especially Karaman Principality, in a legitimate manner. According to the author, “even in state of hunger, Yıldırım would never touch the field crops of Karaman.”<sup>323</sup> The Ottoman aggression against other Muslim powers depended on legitimate reasons and the Ottomans avoided an act to damage that legitimacy.

For the author, “Yıldırım Bayezid was one of the heroes that cannot be rivaled throughout the history of Islam.”<sup>324</sup> He elaborately defined the battle between Yıldırım and Timur, comparing Yıldırım’s army to the Spartans that resisted the great Persian army.<sup>325</sup> Timur was portrayed as a vagabond, who painted the region with blood and ravaged Seljukid architectural heritage.<sup>326</sup> Timur renewed Cengiz’s destruction in Baghdad and robbed wealthy Syria and Egypt. For the author, “Tatars, who were raised in sackcloth, had never seen such richness.”<sup>327</sup> When two armies came face to face, the Ottomans were hundred and thirty thousand, and the Mongols were seven or eight hundred thousand.<sup>328</sup> The author appraised Yıldırım as, “cannot be erased from history as

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<sup>322</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 43.

<sup>323</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 47.

<sup>324</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 50.

<sup>325</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 52.

<sup>326</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>327</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 55-6.

he heroically fought instead of fleeing” in such unfavorable circumstances.<sup>329</sup> After his victory, Timur, who was disrespectful to Islam and civilization, laced his horses the mosques and medreses of Bursa.<sup>330</sup>

The author succeeded to profit the Hamidian regime via the stories of sacrifices of the Ottoman founding fathers. The first four sultans embody the Ottoman foundation era. For the author, seeing these sacrifices, the readers should realize how much service they owe to Abdülhamid II, as the current head of the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>331</sup> The Ottoman sultans were the first among the ghazis. Deciding to retreat at the battle of Varna, Karacapaşa, the Anatolian governor, warned Murad II by saying that, “my Sultan! You are the soul of the army; your body is the source of patience that guarantees the victory of the soldiers.”<sup>332</sup> Following these words, the sultan destroyed the enemy, and drums and enemy heads celebrated this victory.<sup>333</sup>

When the great Ottoman commander Mehmed II came to the throne, the Janissaries cut his road, demanding awards. That was the first time, when the Janissaries provoked an incident in Ottoman history. Mehmed II became upset, feeling that the order and loyalty within the army was the prerequisite of his future plans, the greater of which would be

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<sup>328</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 57.

<sup>329</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>330</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>331</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 58.

<sup>332</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 83.

<sup>333</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*.



the conquest of Constantinople.<sup>334</sup> He believed the city before the Ottoman conquest was the house of lewdness. Its history was full of tainted stories.<sup>335</sup> The conquest was achieved due to Ottoman heroism and innovativeness. The ships were transferred over the land and the ditches surrounding the city were surpassed by filling them with the bodies of Ottoman martyrs.<sup>336</sup> Mehmed II's army was not only based on manpower. Its success derived from technological experience and advance. Besides heavy artillery, magnitude, fear effects, including visual and audible, exaggerated rituals of *akıncıs* were used in the Ottoman military advance during the reign of Mehmed II.<sup>337</sup>

The conqueror was not just a soldier. He was a true Renaissance man. He knew six or seven languages, valued science, was engaged in painting and literature. He was the one, who transformed the political mechanism, revitalized Constantinople, adorned the city as the center of education and politics, and founded several medreses.<sup>338</sup> Mehmed Tevfik displayed Mehmed II as an enlightened monarch.

Besides general narratives, history of the acts and deeds of the Ottoman founding fathers were produced in diverse genres. Often epic in character, theatre plays constituted a remarkable part in the endeavor to reproduce the Ottoman past for modern political aspirations. Namık Kemal and Abdülhak Hamid wrote many plays that interpret diverse themes from the Ottoman or Islamic history. Namık Kemal's *Vatan yahud Silistre* (1873),

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<sup>334</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 87.

<sup>335</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 89.

<sup>336</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 92.

<sup>337</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 104.

<sup>338</sup> Mehmed Tevfik Paşa, *Târih-i Osmanî*, p. 106.

*Celaleddin Harzemşah* (1885); and Abdülhak Hamid's *Eşber* (1880), *İbn Musa* (1880) were among the most successful plays of such sort.

Ottoman history became a source of miscellaneous premises and inferences. Written by Aleksandr İstamadyadi, an Ottoman Greek, *Gazi Osman* (1877) exposes us to the intricacies of nineteenth century Ottoman historiography. While Namık Kemal published his *Osmanlı Tarihi* to demonstrate the role of Ottomans in the history of civilization, responding to Western orientalist scholars, at the same time Ottoman minority groups studied, interpreted, and recreated Ottoman history, in order to be articulated within the Ottoman past. *Gazi Osman* is part of the late Ottoman historiographical cornucopia. It is also significant to reconsider the project of supranationalism following the Tanzimat policies. The idea of Ottomanism as an official policy seems convoluted by diverse objectives from diverse intellectual groups. *Gazi Osman* depicted the ways in which a nineteenth century Ottoman-Greek intellectual evaluated early Ottoman ghaza.

The theatre started with the scene of a divan meeting at the Seljukid capital of Konya. Alaeddin, who had respect for *meşveret*, summoned the notables around the region, such as Osman, Şeyh Edebali, Abdurrahman (commander-in-chief), Köse Mihal, Hasan (bey of Karahisar), Ömer (aide de camp for Alaeddin), sheiks from the region, and military officers.<sup>339</sup>

During the meeting Alaeddin asked Osman about his dreams. Osman depicted a dream that he saw during jihad: “when we were dreaming with Mal Hatun (depicted as Osman’s girlfriend), a crescent and a star emerged from her chest, reached the skies and stuck into

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<sup>339</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman* (İstanbul: 1294/1877), p. 19.

my chest, where a plane tree appeared. The branches of the tree spread everywhere. The wind blew and turned the branches into swords. One of the swords fell onto the city that holds the lock both of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. A bird told me that the house of my breed is there.”<sup>340</sup> Hearing those words, Alaeddin decorated him with the official sword. As such, the Ottoman state was founded.

The second scene was mostly about the five year old Orhan. The author tried to show that Orhan was born into the Ottoman ghaza and was a warrior by birth. Orhan’s mother tried to convince the little kid not to ghaza but could not successful. For Orhan, ghaza “is a liability to the sultan and the motherland. Ghaza is the source of glory for a man.” Turning to his father, he continued, “let me come with you father. The courage in my heart and the ghazi blood that is circling in my veins urges me to the field of jihad.”<sup>341</sup> Orhan’s mother complained about the young ghazi to his father: “Osman! This kid does not play with kids of his age. He listens to the stories of ghaza from the elderly, and practices on the backyard with his pike.”<sup>342</sup>

The next scene was about the friendship between Osman and Köse Mihal, a ghazi of Greek origin. The invitation from the governor of Bilecik for the wedding of his daughter aroused Mihal’s suspicions. Mihal tried to convince Osman not to bring his harem to the wedding. Osman, who trusted the governor of Bilecik, finally agreed to Mihal by saying: “O Rum! As you see your friendship prevails.” Mihal answered: “God willing! I will

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<sup>340</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>341</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, p. 32.

<sup>342</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, p. 33.

prove you the worth of the friendship of Rum.”<sup>343</sup> After Osman witnessed the ambush, he asked how he should pay back to Mihal. The latter said that, “for Rum, prosperity of a friend is the biggest prize.”<sup>344</sup> İstamadyadi’s aim was to portray Mihal, as a Rum, as the guide and protector of the Ottomans during their early ghazas.

The last scene pictured the advance of the powerful Mongol army into inner Anatolia. Waiting for the Mongols, Alaeddin saw himself in a dream, watching the enemy wiping out the Seljukid army. From far away, Osman appeared but could not save Alaeddin but his crown, as Alaeddin fell down into abyss.<sup>345</sup> That dream became real. The Mongol army invaded the Seljukid capital. The last hope of the nation, Osman summoned what was left for an army. Addressing his army, Osman said, “this jihad is not for conquest... Time of death is going to come for all of us. But history immortalizes the names of those, who sacrifice their lives for the religion and the nation. Either glory or death!”<sup>346</sup> With that speech, Osman became the leader of ghaza in Anatolia following the destruction of Seljuks by Mongols.

Ghazi Mihal was among the few Greek characters taking part in Ottoman historiography. In general, the quest for Greek contribution in Ottoman advancement unwittingly depended on epic stories of military comradeship, or ghazi brotherhood. Nevertheless, the late Ottoman stories on Mihal characterized Osman’s fellow ghazi as also a statesmen and a diplomat, who founded *akıncı* bands as a military reformist, and/or convincing the

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<sup>343</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, p. 48.

<sup>344</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, p. 61.

<sup>345</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, pp. 65-6.

<sup>346</sup> Aleksandr İstamadyadi, *Gazi Osman*, pp. 72-3.

governor of Bursa to surrender, thanks to his diplomatic skills. Mihal and his sons also were portrayed in these works as benevolent Muslims, who constructed *imarets*.

One of these works, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, was completely dedicated to the hero. It narrated the acts and deeds of Mihal and his sons. The book was a eulogy for Mihal and his family's six hundred years of service to the Ottoman throne. The author, Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, was one of the last members of Mihaloğulları. A high bureaucrat in the Hamidian administration, he wrote his family history by using berats, fermans, ahidnames and vakfiyyes. Ottoman genealogy was one of the most significant tasks of the historians throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Writing the legends of Mihals, Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa aimed to create a parallel narrative. The book exposed that in every decisive moment of the Ottoman history, one of the members of the Mihal family took a vital role.

The book started with Osman trying to convince the Muslim ghazis that Mihal was a reliable ally by telling that, "his only mistake is his religion."<sup>347</sup> Ghazi Mihal served as a guide for the Ottoman conquests in the lands that were unknown to Muslim ghazis.<sup>348</sup> His diplomatic skills were also vital as he convinced the governor of Bursa to surrender and achieve a peaceful conquest.<sup>349</sup> Ghazi Mihal was also held responsible for the foundation of the *akıncı* units, who enlarged the Ottoman lands around Asia, Africa, and Europe, by shedding blood.<sup>350</sup> Referring to Hammer's Ottoman history, Mehmed Nüzhet claimed

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<sup>347</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal* (İstanbul: Yovanaki Panayoditis Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 13.

<sup>348</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>349</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>350</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, p. 83.

that the *akıncı* units were commanded by Mihal family for two centuries and a half, when the Ottoman ghaza was at its peak.<sup>351</sup> He raised his four sons Ghazi Hızır, Mehmed, Mahmud, and Yahşi to serve to the Ottoman throne.<sup>352</sup> He was such a hero that seventy years of his hundred and twenty years of life was spent in the service of the Ottomans. Receiving many timars and booty for that service, he built a mosque and a bridge in Edirne. For five centuries, the poor benefitted from his pious foundations.<sup>353</sup> His son Hızır fought with Mehmed I against Musa Çelebi in his run for the leadership.<sup>354</sup> Mehmed Bey fought with Murad II against the forces of false Mustafa to protect the throne.<sup>355</sup> Ali Bey protected the Ottoman sultan from Vlad Tepeş.<sup>356</sup>

In *fin de siècle*, the popular historian Ahmed Refik wrote *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları* to commemorate the Ottoman ghazis. He portrayed most of the ghazis as heroes by birth and were raised listening to the stories of their ghazi ancestors. Suleiman Paşa, the elder son of Orhan, was one of these early Ottoman ghazis. Ahmed Refik narrated his heroic deeds by referring to diverse mythical references from ancient history. Suleiman first captured Aydıncık, around Bandırma. This place for Ahmed Refik was said to host the palace of Belkıs, the wife of another Suleiman, the prophet.<sup>357</sup> Suleiman Paşa's next stop

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<sup>351</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*,

<sup>352</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, p. 36.

<sup>353</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>354</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>355</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>356</sup> Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahval-i Gazi Mihal*, p. 57.

<sup>357</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları* (İstanbul: Kitaphane-i İslam ve Askeri, 1318/1901), p. 32.

was Lapseki, where Alexander the Great approached the Persian army, according to the author.<sup>358</sup> From Lapseki, Suleiman Paşa laid his prayer rug on the sea and passed to Gelibolu on it.<sup>359</sup>

With this allegorical tale, Suleiman himself became a mythological figure. His death came on the route to Edirne. He passed away, but his enemy could not handle with his ghost.<sup>360</sup> He left heroic scenes to the Ottoman ghazis to come. Some later ghazis even continued fighting after removing the arrow from their eye. The Ottoman ghaza spirit proceeded until the end of the Ottoman golden age. *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları* ended with the story of Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa, who fought against the Persian army at night, when the torches illuminated the sky.<sup>361</sup>

Not all of the ghazis were narrated on the battlefield. Some of them were also portrayed as statesmen. For instance, according to Ahmed Refik, Timurtaş Paşa, who attended Ottoman ghazas around Balkans during the reigns of Murad I and Bayezid I, made various military reforms. He established standing cavalry units and the system of military estates for timar.<sup>362</sup> Ahmed Refik tried to inspire young generations of the Ottoman military officers and bureaucrats by reminding the early Ottoman ghazis' success in military matters and the matters of the state. Such innovativeness and dedication could revitalize the state, which was built by the ghaza spirit.

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<sup>358</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları*, p. 35.

<sup>359</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları*, p. 42.

<sup>360</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları*, p. 51.

<sup>361</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları*, p. 117.

<sup>362</sup> Ahmed Refik, *Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları*, p. 71.

*Meşhur Osmanlı Kumandanları* is an example of epic accounts, which use historical sources to entertain the audience. Around *fin de siècle*, we also encounter military history books with a scientific concern. The next section deals with Ahmed Muhtar Paşa's *Feth-i Celil-i Kostantiniyye*, as an example of military history books inspired by Ranke's scientific-historiographical approach.

#### **5.4. Separation of Military History from Epic Literature**

On January 1, 1872, the board of the Ottoman-Greek society *Ellinikos Filologykos Sillogos* (Hellenic Society of Philology) gathered in Pera to discuss its agenda. The meeting eventually turned into a historical debate about how Mehmed II managed to transfer his vessels from Bosphorus to the Golden Horn by land. According to Vernardakis, a historian who presented his report on the subject to the board, transferring ships by land was an ancient Greek practice. Mehmed, who came to know that Sorvolo of Crete had applied that method fourteen years ago, decided to trespass the Byzantine defense by driving his vessels through Galata.<sup>363</sup>

Nineteenth-century Ottoman historiography was one of the political symptoms of the Empire's ongoing legitimacy crisis. The aim of *Sillogos* that emphasized the connection between a very remarkable event in the Ottoman history and an ancient Greek practice is significant to understand the multifaceted character of the late nineteenth century

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<sup>363</sup> Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni Arşivi, GN 6. As part of the preparations for the celebration of the fifth centennial of the conquest, the document was translated from the related issue of *Sillogos* in 1946. The original issue is missing.



Ottoman historiography. Historians were casting about for an ideological characteristic from the Ottoman past to legitimize the Ottoman rule in modern era. Modern accounts of the early Ottoman rise reinterpreted the ghaza as a spiritual basis that led the emirate to quickly become an empire. With the demise of the Ottoman domination in Balkans, Istanbul was the only and most valuable product of the Ottoman ghaza. Its conquest was narrated in two epic works that were written at the end of the fifteenth century. Tacizâde Cafer Çelebi's (1452–1515) *Mahrûse-i İstanbul Fetihnâmesi* and Kıvamî's (?) *Fetihnâme-i Sultan Mehmed* has been the most important sources for the conquest. Even though Istanbul and its pleasures had been a major concern in classical Ottoman literature, Mehmed's conquest had been ignored for centuries. Muslim historians had been less interested on the accounts of the conquest than the Ottoman-Greek editors of *Silogos*.

Contemporary urban culture of cosmopolitan Istanbul became a major theme in the late nineteenth century Ottoman literature. Popular writers, such as Ahmed Midhat and Ahmed Rasim, contributed to public interest in Istanbul's daily life especially during the 1890s. Nevertheless, the conquest of Istanbul had never been a popular theme in modern Ottoman epic until Ferik Ahmed Muhtar Paşa (1861–1926), the founder of the military museum, *Müze-i Askerî-i Osmanî*, published *Feth-i Celil-i Kostantiniyye* in 1899.

Ferik Ahmed Muhtar Paşa was one of the actors to exploit Ottoman history to counteract the Empire's latest legitimacy crisis. He served as an instructor in modern military schools, such as *Mekteb-i Fünûn-i Harbiyye*, *Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümayun*, and *Mekteb-i Mülkiyye-i Şâhâne*. Other than *Feth-i Celil*, published *Saint Gotthard'da Osmanlı Ordusu* (1888), *Asr-ı Güzîn-i Hazret-i Pâdişâhî'de Terakkiyat-ı Askeriyye* (?),

*Muharebât-ı Meşhûre-i Osmaniyye* (1907). He also established the military museum in 1908 and revitalized the military band, *Mehter Takımı*.

*Feth-i Celîl* differed from the classical form of Ottoman ghaza accounts from various aspects. First, it aimed historical accuracy. Ahmed Muhtar built his account of the conquest exclusively on Hammer's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, which was recently translated into French. While meticulously describing the urban landscape of the Byzantine or the Ottoman city, he referred to various books and articles of famous nineteenth century orientalist Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann, Alphonse de Lamartine's *Histoire de la Turquie* (1854), and Ottoman military officer Ali Cevad's *Memalik-i Osmaniyyenin Tarih ve Coğrafya Lügatı* (1895).

Second, the book aspired to respond to Greek and European accounts, which interpreted the conquest not as an Ottoman success but as a Byzantine failure. These were exaggerating the difference between the military figures of the rivals and creating heroic stories about the Byzantine soldiers. For Ahmed Muhtar, Turkish researchers should resist the Greek and European conquest accounts by studying the Ottoman manuscripts that had been ignored for a long time. He lists some of these mostly anonymous works as: *Haber-i Sahih*, *Gülşen-i Maarif*, *Fezleke-i Tarih-i Osmanî*, *Solakzade Tarihi*, *Tac'üt-Tevarih*, *Tarih-i Sultan Mehmed ve Beyazıd Han*, *Tarih-i Âl-i Osman*, and *Cihannümâ*.<sup>364</sup>

Third, although it aimed an objective historical interpretation, the book's main concern was to remind the contemporary dwellers of the capital about the beginning of the

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<sup>364</sup> Ferik Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Osmanlılığın Avrupada Tarz-ı Tesisi yahud Feth-i Celîl-i Kostantiniyye* (Kostantiniyye: Malumat Kitabhanesi, 1316/1899), pp. 159-60.

presence of Ottomans in Istanbul. It not only elaborated on the historical presence of the Ottomans in Istanbul, but also invited its audience to realize the ways in which the identity of the city as an Ottoman capital was designed by the conqueror at first.

Fourth, Ahmed Muhtar emphasized the history of the city before and after the conquest by giving detailed as regards about the urban patterns that made the city Byzantine and/or Ottoman. In that sense, besides the topographical features of the city, historical monuments, buildings, and artifacts in the urban landscape were often referred to portray the scenery of the siege and the conquest. *Feth-i Celil* is a unique example to transfer medieval metropolis into a ghaza field. Every historical or sanctuary site of Constantinople became to signify certain moments of the seven-week siege. On the other hand, certain moments of the siege created further urban artifacts, many of which were standing to be recognized by the readers, the modern dwellers of the city in their everyday life.

Fifth, although *Feth-i Celil* aimed to manifest a modern interpretation of the conquest, it exposed the Byzantine past of Constantinople not only by summarizing Byzantine history but also by detailing the Byzantine spatial imprints on the city. According to the modern, specifically Rankean, rules of history writing in the nineteenth century, Ahmed Muhtar tried to show how the city actually was when the Ottoman siege began.

*Feth-i Celil* starts with the prophecies of Christian saints and astrologers about the fall of Constantinople. As rumors circulated, both the government and the city dwellers got anxious. They were waiting for the apocalypse in the hands of barbarians. According to the prophecy, the invading tribe would enter the city from Circo Porta, one of the many

other gates of the city. The gate was immediately walled when the Ottoman forces appeared.<sup>365</sup>

On the Muslims' side, there were religious as well as political motives addressing the conquest. According to Ahmed Muhtar, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammed celebrating the conqueror of Constantinople was well known to the Ottomans. The young sultan was anxious to be the emir in the hadith: "Verily you shall conquer Constantinople. What a wonderful leader will he be, and what a wonderful army will that army be!"<sup>366</sup> The Ottomans believed that Constantinople was sacred and taking it from the infidel would serve Islam. Moreover, by conquering the city, the Ottoman rule would seal their leading role as ghazis in the Muslim world. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Timur destroyed Ottoman hopes to be the leader of ghaza in the Muslim world. In the middle of the century, the Ottomans were facing the challenge of capturing Eastern Rome and terminating the Byzantine Empire.

Before narrating the siege, Ahmed Muhtar focused on describing the daily life as well as the topographical features of the city. For him, on the eve of the Ottoman siege, Constantinople encompassed seven hills, was divided into fourteen districts, and had a rich architectural environment. Many palaces, monuments, churches, schools, monasteries, kiosques, squares, a hippodrome, baths, fountains, cisterns, aqueducts, obelisks, and sculptures enriched the urban environment.<sup>367</sup> These were accompanied by ceremonial practices that emphasized the prosperity of the ruling dynasty and the

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<sup>365</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p.18.

<sup>366</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 15.

<sup>367</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, pp. 19-22.

empire, in general. Emperors wore Alexander's crown and toured the city back on their horses on a weekly basis. Constantinople was a ceremonial city, as well as known for the pomp of its carnivals. According to Ahmed Muhtar, this Byzantine interest for pompousness partly passed to the Ottomans after the conquest and was noticeable in German and Russian courts for a while.<sup>368</sup>

Ahmed Muhtar also enlisted the remaining Byzantine buildings and artifacts. The nineteenth century dwellers of Istanbul could encounter some of the Byzantine works still standing, such as the city walls, aqueducts, cisterns, obelisks, a circus (Ayvansaray), Galata Tower, Yedikule Palace that had been used as prison by the Ottomans for a long time, Kızkulesi, churches that were converted to mosques (Hagia Sofia, Kariye, Fethiye, Zeyrek, Gül), and Saint Irene Church that was currently used as military storehouse.<sup>369</sup>

The city, full of the architectural wealth of the Eastern Roman Empire, was encircled with the strongest walls of the medieval world. It had been a dynamic political concern among the Byzantines. Anxiety of the occupation since the crusades had determined the public debate among the dwellers of the city for a long time. One of the major gates of the city, Circo Porta, according to the rumors, from which Frederick I of Holy Roman Empire would enter the city, was closed.<sup>370</sup>

The second part of Ahmed Muhtar's modern *Fetihnâme* started with describing the walls of Constantinople before the conquest. He used the image of unreachable walls to

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<sup>368</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 22.

<sup>369</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, pp. 22-3. Later, Ahmed Muhtar was given permission by Abdülhamid II to convert the storehouse into a military museum.

<sup>370</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 31.

indicate the value of the city as well as to emphasize the significance of the Ottoman conquest. The walls were symbolizing the border between Constantinople, the eastern capital of the western civilization, and its hinterland. Therefore, Mehmed II did not only capture the wealthy Byzantine capital, but also introduced the Ottoman and the Muslim world into the center of the western civilization. From that point on, the Ottoman state would lead ghaza and be a major actor in western politics.

Constantinople had been on defense for centuries, first against Muslim Arabs, then the Latin crusades, and later the Turks. It already had a history with the Muslims. Ahmed Muhtar listed Muslim *mujaheds*, who fell around the walls of the city attacking the infidel, such as Abu Ayyub al-Ansarî, Ebu Şeybe't-el Hîdrî, Halid, and Muhammed el-Ensârî. After the conquest of Constantinople, the tomb of Eyüp Sultan, the Muslim saint and companion of the Prophet Muhammad named Abu Ayyub al-Ansarî, was built by Sultan Mehmed II. It was a major sanctuary representing how the Ottomans related themselves to the older Byzantine capital, as here Mehmed refashioned an ancient sanctuary by building a tomb and a mosque in order to recall the significance of the city in Islamic history.<sup>371</sup>

Only after reframing the city spatially and historically, Ahmed Muhtar started to narrate the Ottoman conquest. Entering the city from one of its gates was not enough. At the beginning of the reign of Heraclius (r. 610–641), Persian army managed to enter the city,

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<sup>371</sup> For the discovery of the grave of Ayyub al-Ansari and the construction of the monumental tomb on the sanctuary by Mehmed II, see Çiğdem Kafesçioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), pp.45-52.

but fortunately, “Virgin Mary repelled them all.”<sup>372</sup> The dwellers of Constantinople believed that the city, which had besieged several times in history by great armies, was unconquerable. It had been protected by God. However, the Turks were determined. The core force of the Ottoman army was the Janissaries. Mehmed II gathered the army in Adrianople and started his march toward the castle of Constantinople. According to Ahmed Muhtar, the atmosphere among the troops was delightful. For him, “the Ottoman soldiers were going to the battle as if they were going to a wedding. They were playing drums and chanting heroic songs.”<sup>373</sup> On April 2, 21 years old Mehmed II encamped across the walls. The governor of the city sent an envoy to Mehmed II to ask him to give away the castle in return of a tribute. Mehmed replied, “Either the sword or Islam (*imme’s-seyf ve imme’l-İslam*).”<sup>374</sup> In order to destroy the great walls, the Ottoman sultan placed cannons, ballistae, and catapults to the most strategic points. Ahmed Muhtar also used the works of Byzantine historians, such as Kristovoulos and Ducas, and Latin historians, such as Niccola Barbaro and Zorzi Dolfín, a, to create a more objective historical account, as regards the military precautions taken both by the Ottomans and the Byzantines.

On April 2, the same day that the Ottomans encamped a mile away the Theodosian Wall, the Byzantines enchained the Golden Horn. Constantinople was one of the most successfully fortified cities of the medieval era. However, according to Ahmed Muhtar,

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<sup>372</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 83.

<sup>373</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 103.

<sup>374</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 105.

the Ottomans were spiritually superior to the Byzantines.<sup>375</sup> For him, “in the Ottoman army, there were nearly seventy holy person, such as Akşemseddin, Sivaslı Kara Şemseddin, Molla Gürânî, Emir Buharî, Molla Fenarî, Cebe Ali, Ensar Dede.”<sup>376</sup> Second, Constantinople was already a sanctuary city for the Muslims. The Ottoman soldiers were eager to rescue and refashion the graves of many pioneers of Muslim ghaza, including a considerable number of *ashâb-ı kiram* (the companions of the prophet), who fell down within the premises of the Byzantine capital during the Umayyad attacks. Many of these graves were found or invented after the conquest and became important religious sites for Muslims to visit even today.

On the eve of the conquest, the main subject of the public discussion among the Byzantines was the unification of Eastern and Western churches. Defenders of the unification believed that it would provide European support against Turkish advance. However, especially the patriarchate was against the idea. For them, “it was better to protect the practices of the Orthodox sect under the Ottoman rule, than change these practices to repel the Ottomans.”<sup>377</sup> Ahmed Muhtar tried to express that the patriarchate in Constantinople was certain of the Ottoman tolerance.

On 6 April, after the Friday prayer, the great cannons manufactured by Orban of Hungary started hitting the walls. Fourteen battalions of cannon were accompanied by catapults and archers. Meanwhile, a bewildering war machine appeared. These were called

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<sup>375</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 132.

<sup>376</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 133.

<sup>377</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 139.



*epepoilin* in Greek, meaning “a soldier that opens castles.”<sup>378</sup> Walking towers had been used in castle fights by the offenders throughout the history. But the walls were strong and cannons and other new weapons outdated these towers. The only impact of Mehmed II’s towers was psychological. It proved determination of the Ottomans.

The siege was not restricted only to land. The Ottomans managed to transport a fleet of 400 hundred galleys to Bosphorus. The Byzantine naval power was on defense behind the great chain that separated the Golden Horn from the strait. Meanwhile, two European ships managed to out-maneuver the Ottoman galleys and managed to transport logistics and soldiers into the Golden Horn. Sisyphean efforts of Mehmed II on land and on the sea troubled the Ottomans. Sadrazam Çandarlı Halil Paşa asked the sultan to withdraw, but the war party, Akşemseddin and Zağanos Paşa, convinced Mehmed II to continue the siege. This was when the sultan decided transport the Ottoman galleys by land into the Golden Horn. Ahmed Muhtar accepted that Mehmed II might take the idea from earlier examples, as we have seen in the *Silogos* meeting. However, for the author that does not lessen Mehmed II’s success. For his historical knowledge, the sultan deserved appreciation.<sup>379</sup>

The Ottoman galleys reached the Golden Horn. This was the deathblow for the Byzantines. Mehmed II sent Isfendiyaroğlu as an envoy to the Byzantine Emperor to ask him to surrender. Thus, the city would be saved from plunder. Also, the emperor would be pardoned and be given Morea region. The emperor rejected the offer. Learning about

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<sup>378</sup> Ahmed Muhtar described these machines in *Tarih-i Esliha*.

<sup>379</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, pp. 162-63.

this response, Mehmed II said that, “In God’s name, I swear that Constantinople will be my capital.”<sup>380</sup> He immediately ordered a general attack on May 24.

During the preparations for a general attack, “Fatih, in a lion-like garment that Alexander the Great would envy, was touring around the castle on his horse, encouraging his soldiers with gifts. Moreover, sheikhs and dervishes in the army were praying God for the conquest.”<sup>381</sup> The night before the attack there was a light fest. “The Ottomans lit candles and torches around the Bosphorus, around the walls, on the hills across the city, in their tents, on their ships. That night, Constantinople was surrounded by a sea of light.”<sup>382</sup> At that last night, the Ottoman sultan addressed his soldiers as: “I leave all the wealth and richness of this great land that is in heresy and decadence; only the imperial throne and the official buildings will be enough for me. Those who manage to climb over the walls will be promoted and finally make themselves into the heaven.”<sup>383</sup> The conquest was a religious duty.

The Byzantines were increasingly becoming superstitious. The monks on the streets were trying to calm the worried public by saying on the streets that:

the Ottomans will enter the city from the gate of Saint-Romain (Topkapı); they will march through the Hippodrome Square. But, there will appear an angel bringing a troublesome sword to the old man sitting on the pedestal of the obelisque standing there. It order the old man to repel the Ottomans from the city,

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<sup>380</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 179.

<sup>381</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 180.

<sup>382</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 181.

<sup>383</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 182.

from Europe, even from Asia to the Persian border. The capital will be the queen of the world again!<sup>384</sup>

As the monks said, the Ottomans managed to enter the city next day, on 29 May, 1453. The Janissaries bravely came forward. Ahmed Muhtar criticized Hammer and Lamartine's astonishment about the courage of the Ottoman soldiers. According to him, "for Muslims, especially for the Ottomans, the leaders of the mujahed class, the most important source of happiness for a person to imagine was to reach the rank of ghazi or martyr in the name of God." He continues as:

for those who drink the rosy sherbet of martyrdom in the war for his religion, his state, and the caliph, the protector of the faith, Islam has prepared such felicities, one of which is the eternal salvation by reaching the rank of those who sees God.<sup>385</sup>

For Ahmed Muhtar, the European histories on the conquest were biased. They were only using Greek chronicles and ignoring the Ottoman accounts. Nevertheless, Ahmed Muhtar also pointed out that the Ottoman *fethnames* were also biased, due to the fact that they were written in epic form. Rhetorical speech and tropes reduce the value of these Ottoman chronicles as primary sources. Specifically for his quest for historical accuracy, Ahmed Muhtar withdrew to write the story of the conquest after the Ottomans entered the city.

Ahmed Muhtar's hesitation not only to use European histories but also the Ottoman epic accounts indicated the separation of history as a craft from the epic as a literary genre.

*Feth-i Celil* was consisted of many epic accounts, full of literary tropes, from various

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<sup>384</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, p. 190.

<sup>385</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Feth-i Celil*, pp. 208-09.

sources for several moments of the conquest of Constantinople. However, its main aim was to reach the historical truth, instead of entertaining the audience. After *Feth-i Celil*, the Ottoman historical studies gradually drifted apart from the field of literary arts.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman writers of epic literature were concerned with great commanders, in history such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Kaiser Wilhelm I, as well as to educate and inspire the military students. Besides these European examples, the writers of epic literature remembered or reinvented military victories from the Islamic and Ottoman history to make heroicism more legible for the Ottoman readers. By reminding the Ottoman founding fathers, these writers were responsible for the re-emergence of ghazi myth during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the difference between literature and history became more apparent. As such, Ottoman military history increasingly became a professional field, inspired by Rankean approach of history writing, which focused on showing “what actually happened.”

## CHAPTER VI

### BETWEEN TWO WARS (1876–1897)

“Oh gracious sultan,  
Thanks to you, glorious days are seen,  
You are the shadow of God for us,  
You protected your children.”<sup>386</sup>

This chapter focuses on the period between the defeat against Russia in 1878 and the victory against Greece in 1897. It aims to explore the ways in which epic literature contributed to the resuscitation of the Ottoman pride according to Hamidian social and political norms after the loss against Russia in 1878. It argues that the Hamidian epic literature tried to re-unite and re-mobilize the Ottoman public in between two wars by utilizing literary methods for political ends. In the Hamidian Era, under governmental supervision, Ottoman newspapers were strictly controlled. Epic literature was the only popular genre which would talk about politics, which was limited by the priorities of the regime and its military reorganization. during the reign of Abdülhamid II.

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<sup>386</sup> “Ey pâdişâh-ı mekârim âver / Sayende görüldü şanlı günler / Hakdan bize sensin işte sâye / Evlâdını eyledin himâye,” Mehmed Celal, “Yenişehir Fethi,” Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 42.

The chapter demonstrates how epic literature echoed Hamidian modernization projects, not only military but also in terms of infrastructure and communication, which brought victory to the Ottoman army against Greece in 1897. The Ottoman army was represented to reclaim justice, order and peace in Thessaly and Morea, for Muslim, Jewish, and Greek residents. On the other hand, Ottoman war accounts on the victory generally started with detailed information about the reasons of the Ottoman military intervention. According to these literary or military accounts, Greeks were responsible for the war after they illegitimately embarked military forces on Crete, which was under the Ottoman rule, and trespass the Ottoman border in Northern Thessaly. The Ottoman state, as the legitimate protector of the island and its residents, intervened, first diplomatically and then militarily, according to the international law. It was the first time that Ottoman epic writers discovered and used international vocabulary. Reacted to the developments in Crete, these writers emphasized on the internationally acknowledged rights of sovereignty of the Ottoman state over an Ottoman territory.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part depicts the war literature on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, which has been called *93 Harbi* (the War of 93) in Turkey, according to the Hijri-Islamic calendar. Chronologically marking the beginning of the reign of Abdülhamid II, the catastrophic results of the war against Russia was quite responsible for the emergence of the Hamidian epic. Although the Ottomans lost the war at both Caucasian and Balkan fronts, the production of the Ottoman epic literature dramatically increased the potential of recovery from the gloomy atmosphere among the public and the mobilization of the discouraged Ottomans. Due to the successful defense of field marshal Osman Paşa, modern Ottoman epic gained a modern David and Goliath

story. The main themes evolved around the personality of Osman Paşa; sacrifice for the religion and the state; and service to the Ottoman sultan. These themes were interchangeably used and had traditional connotations.

Following the Ottoman victory against Greece in 1897, Hamidian epic reached its golden age. The second part aims to analyze that phase of modern Ottoman epic in terms of creating popular opinion, notion of martyrdom, loyalty to the sultan and his regime, and use of visual material in epic accounts.

Historians have synchronized the fall of empires to the emergence of modern movements, primarily nationalism, in the second half of the nineteenth century. They have seen imperial crisis as a symptom of the imperial organization's failure to encounter modern challenges. Therefore, history of the empires in the modern era has been interpreted as accounts of decadence, dissolution, and finally collapse. Historians neglected or undervalued the study of imperial methods to compete with the crises. According to the historical trends, historians have believed that the modern ideas and ideologies should have surpassed the imperial rules.<sup>387</sup> However, empires had employed very creative methods to deal with the challenges of modern movements and ideologies.

The nineteenth century history of modernism coincided with the history of high imperialism. Parallel to modernism, imperialism was made of failures and contradictions besides its various achievements. For instance, Britain already advanced as a modern state in 1880s, at the climax of high imperialism. The crises that are identified with the

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<sup>387</sup> For an example of declinist approach, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

challenges of imperialism, such as the Indian Mutiny (1857), the Boer Wars (1880–1881; 1899–1902), and the Boxer Rebellion (1898–1900) occurred around the era of high imperialism. These events might have damaged the overwhelming image of the empires for a while, but at the end they contributed to the imperial rules to develop modern tools to overcome obstacles in front of centralization efforts. In *fin de siècle*, Germany was about to establish a colonial network; Russia became the leading actor in the Balkans; and the Habsburg king was travelling around Bosnia, Serbia, and Hungary to refresh his image and to expose his royal power to the public under his rule.

Similarly, the predicaments either in the center or in the periphery of the late Ottoman Empire have been evaluated as symptoms of the collapse of the state in historiography. Historians used to consider the crises such as the nineteenth-century Balkan uprisings, the 1860 Mount Lebanon civil war, Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, and economic dire straits as the glimpses of the weakening of the Ottoman central administration, the beginning of the age of nationalism, and the rise of Turkish modernization.<sup>388</sup> Historians have interpreted the center's responses to these problems as palliative and superficial solutions, which only delayed the doom of the Empire.

However, especially during the period following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, the dichotomy between empire and nation became ambiguous in the Ottoman context. At that time, as the Empire lost several territories, which were mainly inhabited by its

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<sup>388</sup> Roderic Davison, "Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response," Willim W. Haddad & William Ochsenwald (eds.), *Nationalism in a Non-National State. The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1977), pp. 25-56.



Christian subjects, it started to address a much larger geography, in which the majority of the population was Muslim, by re-inventing traditions, mainly the notion of caliphacy.

Scholars of Ottoman history only recently became interested in late Ottoman techniques to compete with the crises of modernism and its social and political discontents. It is promising to consider that imperialism was the first sign of the modern age and its failure and success grew parallel to the contradictions of modernism. The history of mental recovery of the Ottoman state and society after the catastrophic war with Russians in 1877–1878 was closely related to the modern ideological methodology and its intellectual apparatus.

Modern Ottoman epic created the legacy of Gazi Osman Paşa immediately after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and it reached a peak during the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897. Anthems, ballads, poems, sagas, chronicles, and posters were produced to create public awareness for the Ottoman military campaigns. During that period, modern epic literature played a crucial role in creating, educating, and mobilizing public awareness through agitation and popular propaganda. These communicative tools employed modern or traditional themes, such as heroism, patriotism, and martyrdom, to create a unified public perception around the idea of the Ottomanness and the persona of the Sultan and Caliph Abdülhamid II. Following the victory, epic accounts sealed the indissoluble connection between the Ottoman state and society, and on the other hand between the army and the sultan.

Furthermore, visual materials started to accompany modern literary tropes. Ottoman citizens became more involved with the idea of Empire and the imperial cause through

the portraits, appeared on the print media, of the Ottoman commanders who defend their rights on the battlefields; the representations of the wars that are being fought; the Ottoman soldiers on the battlefield; photos of the modern military equipment of modern Ottoman army; or the pictures of the Ottoman lands that are previously unknown to them. Thus, vision and visuality helped the Ottoman epic to be more realistic, convincing, emphatic, influential, popular, and therefore modern.

My sources on this chapter are İbrahim Edhem's *Sebat ve Gayret Kıyametten bir Alamet*, Osman Senai's *Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa*, and Hikmet's *Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa Şanıdadır* to demonstrate the re-emergence of epic accounts following the legendary defense at Plevna against the Russian Army. In the second part, in order to show the variety and richness of epic literature based on the victory against the Greek army in 1897, I use Mehmed Behcet & Hüseyin Nesimi's *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli yahud Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi*, Selanikli Tevfik's<sup>389</sup> *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye* and *Bir Şehidin Vasiyeti*, Ali Muzaffer's *Muharebenin Sebebi ve Osmanlıların Galibiyeti*, Müstecabizade İsmet's<sup>390</sup> *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye*, and Ahmed Rasim's *Asker Oğlu*.

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<sup>389</sup> Assistant of Ahmed Midhat at daily *Tercümân-ı Hakikat*, Süleyman Tevfik is mostly known for his translations. See Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: Yaylacık Matbaası, 1972), p. 371; Ayşe Banu Karadağ, "Türk Çeviri Tarihimizde 'Mütercim' Selanikli Tevfik," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (2013).

<sup>390</sup> Müstecâbizâde İsmet (d. 1917) worked as a scribe at the War Minister's spying office between 1897 and 1901. In 1901, he was sent to exile in Lesbos, due to his ongoing contact with the former Young Ottoman, Ebuzziyâ Tevfik (d. 1913), who was also in exile in Konya. See Ahmet Ali Gazel, "Müstecâbizâde İsmet Bey'in Midilli Sürgünü ve Sürgünden Kurtulma Girişimleri," *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi (TAED)*, No. 47 (2012).

## 6.1. Plevna Narratives

In 1870, an Islamist Young Ottoman, Ali Suavi, published the Ottoman-Turkish translation of *Le Testament de Pierre le Grand* in the newspaper *Ulum* (Sciences) newspaper, renamed as *Moskof Tevratı*, the Testament of Moscow. In his own words, he aimed to discuss, “whether Moscow could be our friend.”<sup>391</sup> Exemplifying chapters from the testament that concerned the Ottoman Empire, he emphasized that the Ottoman existence was conflicting with the Russian *raison d’être*. The chapters of the testament were first pointing out the strategic importance of Constantinople as it was on the route to the colonial possessions. Second, these chapters proposed an alliance with Austria to expel the Turks from Europe. Third, these chapters addressed the unification of Slavs under the leadership of Russia.<sup>392</sup>

*Le Testament de Pierre le Grand* was a forged document invented by Napoleon Bonaparte to justify his Russian campaign.<sup>393</sup> The testament had been the main source of Western suspicion against Russia throughout the nineteenth century. In 1877, during the Russo-Ottoman War, Alexander II personally assured British Ambassador that Russia had no intentions to invade Constantinople and the document was totally fabricated.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Ali Suavi, “Moskof Tevratı,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Müşterilerine*, Lyon, 25 Teşrinievvel 1870, p. 65. Ali Suavi had to stop publishing *Ulum* following Prussian blockade of Paris. Moved to Lyon, he started publishing the newspaper *Muvakkaten Ulum Müşterilerine* (*Temporarily For Ulum Readers*).

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>393</sup> Raymond T. McNally, “The Origins of Russophobia in France: 1812–1830,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, April 1958, p. 173.

<sup>394</sup> L. R. Lewriter, “The Apocryphal Testament of Peter the Great,” *The Polish Review*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Summer 1961, p. 27.

British concern for a Russian invasion of Constantinople during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, *93 Harbi* in Turkish, had some reasonable grounds. In both the Caucasian and the Balkan fronts, the Ottoman army experienced absolute defeats. Russians were left unchecked for a possible march to the Ottoman capital, except a relentless defense of a battalion in Plevna near Danube. While Persia was the only route for Russian land forces to threaten British colonies, mainly India, the Bosphorus was the only route for Russian naval forces to blockade British access to these colonies.

On the Ottoman side, despite the great military losses against Russia, the epic story of Plevna and its commander Osman Nuri Paşa (1832–1900) immediately gained popularity as an example of bravery, patience, and patriotism. Osman Nuri Paşa, who gained the title *gazi* after the War of 93, was one of the first graduates of *Erkan-ı Harbiye*, the Ottoman Military College, which was founded in 1848 as part of the military modernization efforts (The heroes of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923) and the founding fathers of Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, and Kazım Karabekir were among the later graduates of the school). Gazi Osman Paşa's career developed parallel to the Tanzimat modernization. Learning the latest military techniques, regarding the use of modern weaponry, the methods of trench fight or night rallies, at the military school, the pasha first attended as a lieutenant to the Crimean War in 1856, which was the first serious challenge for the modern Ottoman army units. İbrahim Edhem Paşa (1844–1909), who graduated from the same school two years after Gazi Osman Paşa, explained the Crimean War as a game changer in the history of warfare. Modern warfare required rapid mobilization of military units, creation of a

reserve army, and well-educated military officers. Russia was defeated because it lacked these modern military methods.

Edhem Paşa emphasized the ways in which Russia installed its military modernization projects, “*tensikat-ı askeriye*,”<sup>395</sup> after the defeat in the Crimean War. For him, due to these reforms, the Russian army managed to be one of the most fearsome armies in Europe in a short period of time.<sup>396</sup> The Ottoman army had to accomplish reforms, in terms of conscription, mobilization, and education, and cope with the ongoing wars at the same time.

Young Ottoman officers were responsive to the contemporary political developments. Most of them served on an immense geography, experience modern military techniques, and try to suppress the rebellions against Tanzimat reforms from Lebanon to the Balkans, while they had also to defend the Empire from the Russian threat, throughout their career. Before confronting Russians at Plevna, Osman Paşa served in Crimea, İstanbul, Larissa, Mount Lebanon, Crete, Yemen, Manastır (today’s Bitola in Macedonia), Novi Pazar (Bulgaria), Scutari (Albania), Bosnia, Niş (Serbia), Vidin (Bulgaria), and the Serbian border.<sup>397</sup> By all means, this was the impressive career of a high military officer of a still large empire. First, the variety of the places that the officers served shows the fact that local uprisings had deeply challenged the Empire throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. As a high ranking officer, Osman Paşa was generally assigned to

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<sup>395</sup> İbrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret Kıyametten bir Alamet* (İstanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1296/1879), p. 4.

<sup>396</sup> İbrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret Kıyametten bir Alamet*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>397</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa* (İstanbul: Feridiye Matbaası, 1317/1900), pp. 5-9; Hikmet (birinci ordu-yu humayun başkatibi), *Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa Şanıdadır* (İstanbul: Basiret Matbaası, 1294/1878), p. 20.

suppress the revolts and keep order at every corner of the Empire. Second, the map exposes that the Balkan provinces were the most disturbed parts of the Empire at that period. The region was crowded with Ottoman military garrisons, barracks and outposts.

Ottoman war literature pictured Gazi Osman Paşa not only as a talented military officer but also as a true representative of the Ottoman state and the sultan. He was constantly portrayed as a father figure for the lower-rank soldiers. In his battalion, he was called by his soldiers as “our ghazi father.”<sup>398</sup> Gazi Osman Paşa was perceived as a father by younger soldiers, as was the sultan by his subjects. In order to relieve the soldiers under heavy cannon fire in Plevna, he was touring around the trenches saying that “the enemy storms because it fears.”<sup>399</sup> At lunchtimes, he ate with his soldiers.<sup>400</sup> Thanks to his leadership, soldiers were assured that the state, the principal paternalistic body, accompanied them in times of turmoil against all odds. Therefore, love for and loyalty to Gazi Osman Paşa was described as love for and loyalty to the sultan, the highest protector of the Ottoman people and the state.

Furthermore, Osman Paşa was an example of honesty, piety, modesty, and bravery. He left a big chunk of his salary to the state treasury.<sup>401</sup> He fought alcohol drinking among his soldiers by telling that “there is no need for drinking on *dar’ül harb-i İslam*.”<sup>402</sup> As for his modesty, he denied taking credit for his achievements by saying that “I did not do

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<sup>398</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 8.

<sup>399</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 9.

<sup>400</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, pp. 11-2.

<sup>401</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 13.

<sup>402</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 17.

anything important.”<sup>403</sup> According to Osman Senai, “he walked through the flames as a phoenix, exalted the Ottoman bravery to the heavens.”<sup>404</sup> Thanks to late Ottoman war literature, the paşa’s legacy survived through decades. Osman Paşa’s name was given to several lately inhabited districts in modern Turkish cities. An anthem that was created by public during the Hamidian era in his name is still popular in modern Turkey:

“Osman Paşa vurdu taşa  
Taş yarıldı baştan başa  
Şanı büyük Osman Paşa  
Askerinle binler yaşa.”<sup>405</sup>

“Osman Pasha hit a rock,  
Which broke into two,  
O glorious Osman Pasha,  
May you live long with your soldiers.”

The legacy of Gazi Osman Paşa also included the themes of ghaza, patriotism, and the love for the sultan. His ghazi identity was more popular among the Ottoman-Muslim public. Whenever he appeared in public, people prayed for him.<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, Gazi Osman Paşa himself seemed to emphasize the notion of ghaza as a religious phenomenon. According to his secretary Hikmet, sometime after the war the pasha said at Plevna that, “we made a ghaza that pleased the Prophet.”<sup>407</sup> The early Islamic ghaza

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<sup>403</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 23.

<sup>404</sup> “Anka gibi ateşler içinde yüzmüş, celadet-i Osmaniye-yi arş-ı alaya kadar yükseltmiştir”, Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>405</sup> A long version of the anthem can be found in Sadri Sema, *Eski İstanbul Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2008), pp. 309-11.

<sup>406</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, pp. 17-8.

<sup>407</sup> “Bir gaza ettik ki hoşnut ettik peygamberi,” Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 37. This line may be derived from Nefî’s line, which reads “Bir gazâ etdin ki hoşnûd eyledin Peygamberi” in *Kasîde-i Âli’l-Âl der*

spirit, upon which Mehmed II launched his army's enthusiasm at the gates of Constantinople in 1453, was re-vitalized after the "victorious defeat" of the Ottoman army in the Balkans, in 1878. Hamidian epic was not only represented the modern Ottoman army as the heir of the early Ottoman ghaza spirit, but also the legitimate performer of the Prophet's will in modern era.

None of the religious references in modern Ottoman epic suggested a categorical difference or hierarchy among ghaza, as a religious category, patriotism, in terms of Tanzimat's ideology of Ottomanism, and the love of the sultan, in terms of traditional patrimonial source of legitimacy. Patriotism was framed and embellished with Islamic references. Connecting the religious cause with patriotic fervor, Osman Paşa said that:

"Allah dedik kılıncına dayandık  
vatan için al kanlara boyandık."<sup>408</sup>

"we said Allah and hold our swords,  
We got painted in red blood for the fatherland."

The cause of Islam had always been very significant for Ottoman warfare. Ottoman modernization process did not neglect or outdistanced itself from the Islamic source of inspiration for battle. Famous works of the Ottoman ulema on jihad, ghaza, and martyrdom were published or re-published several times throughout the nineteenth century. Similar to the epic literature, religious books on ghaza and jihad became very popular with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. One of the important examples was

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*Ta'rif-i Cihâd-ı Sultân Osman*. See Metin Akkuş (ed.), *Nef'î Dîvânı* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1993), p. 90.

<sup>408</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 38.



Kureyşizade Mehmed Fevzi Efendi's (1826–1900) *Seyf'ül Cihâd fi Nasr il-İbâd*, which was published during the War of 93 to remind the soldiers that ghaza has its gains in the afterlife. During the War of 93, Mehmed Salim Mirzazade's (d. 1743) *Neylü'r Reşâd fi Emr'il Cihâd* was republished. This book brought up sha'ri framework of jihad by using the Qur'an and the main hadith sources, such as Buharî's Sahîh. This eighteenth century source was significant for explaining the circumstances, in which jihad was justified and obligatory for all Muslim men.<sup>409</sup>

Among the ulema that addressed the Islamic duty of ghaza, Nakshibandi Sheikh Ahmed Ziyaüddin Gümüşhanevi (1813–1893) was a significant example. He was a prominent figure among the nineteenth century Ottoman ulema that referred to ghaza. When he was 63, the sheikh personally fought at the War of 93 against the Russians on the Caucasus front. His *Kitâbü'l-Âbir fi'l-Ensâr ve'l-Muhâcir ve'l-Cihâd ve'l-Gazv ve'-ş-Şühedâ* (1860) was published several times, especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II, with whom the sheikh had close relations.<sup>410</sup>

When the news of declaration of war against Russia arrived to the Ottoman forces in Vidin on April 1877, the prayers were performed and the soldiers were reminded the rewards of jihad.<sup>411</sup> Religion was the leading source of motivation. Nevertheless, modern secular procedures accompanied the religious atmosphere at the front. First, the imperial decree, which announced the war against Russia, was publicly read to the soldiers. A

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<sup>409</sup> Mehmed Salim Mirzazade, *Neylü'r Reşâd fi Emr'il Cihâd* (İstanbul: Ali Bey Matbaası, 1877), pp. 9-10.

<sup>410</sup> Rüya Kılıç, "Osmanlı Devletinde Yönetim-Nakşibendi İlişkisine Farklı Bir Bakış," *Tasavvuf: İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, Vol. 7, No. 17 (2006), p. 114.

<sup>411</sup> İbrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, pp. 13-4.

procession was made and the document from the capital that honored Osman Paşa as ghazi was publicly read. Osman Senai did not forget to remind the readers that “ghazi is the greatest title for a soldier that works, at the risk of his life, for his beloved sultan and the fatherland.”<sup>412</sup> Soldiers cried, “long live the sultan!” three times. Osman Paşa addressed his soldiers similar to what we have seen in every epic narrative of great commanders from Alexander the Great to Napoleon Bonaparte. He said, “we have heard from our mothers the stories of little armies bringing great armies to heel; we would sacrifice a thousand heads to every inch of our fatherland’s soil that was molded by the blood of our fathers and not let enemy feet to step on it.”<sup>413</sup> Following the processions, the Ottoman army, headed by Osman Paşa, started its march from Vidin along Danube to the east. The main plan was to unite with the Ottoman troops in eastern Danube and to face the main Russian forces in Nikopol.

Few months later, the pasha and his soldiers were the only division of the Ottoman army continuing to resist the Russia’s besiege in a small stronghold near Nikopol, Plevna. Under blockade, a Russian officer with his seven Cossack soldiers brought a letter to Osman Paşa from the head of the Russian forces, Nicholas, the brother of King Alexander II. Nicholas was asking the Pasha to surrender or to be blamed for those who would die in the battle. Osman Paşa replied: “until now we shed our blood for the religion and the fatherland in the name of our beloved sultan, we will not surrender but continue to fight with you.”<sup>414</sup> Another general, Edhem Paşa, who fought at the Russo-

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<sup>412</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>413</sup> Hikmet, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 34.

<sup>414</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 36.

Ottoman War of 1877–1878, explained the mentality of that generation of Ottoman military officers later as “Abandoning weapons is in opposition to the religion and the state.”<sup>415</sup> War literature, accompanied by the disciplinary policies, aimed to motivate commanders not to surrender without fighting.

Running out of provisions, Osman Paşa’s besieged little forces encountered the threat of hunger. Instead of laying arms, Osman Paşa decided to break the Russian blockade and exit from the Plevna castle. However, fearing from retaliation and atrocities, Muslim minority in Plevna did not want the Ottoman army to leave Muslim dwellers to their Slavic neighbors and the Russian army.

The war itself was an outcome of the Empire’s struggle to suppress the nationalist uprisings in the Balkans. Austria-Hungary and Russia were interested on the Ottoman soil in Balkans. According to the Reichstadt Agreement of 1876, Austria-Hungary was given Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia was to re-gain its Black Sea port in Bessarabia, which it lost after the Crimean War, and Bulgaria was to be autonomous.<sup>416</sup> On the other hand, Ottoman State’s severe suppression of the revolts in Herzegovina and Bulgaria in 1876 created an anti-Ottoman public opinion in Europe. Explaining the background and reasons of *93 Harbi*, Edhem Paşa stated that:

the Ottoman state established dialogue with the rebels in the Balkans and installed reforms, but those mountain people made massacres, barbecued the children. Europeans did not notice blood thirsty Montenegrin, Serbian bandits, and child

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<sup>415</sup> İbrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 49.

<sup>416</sup> George Hoover Rupp, “The Reichstadt Agreement,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Apr., 1925), pp. 503-10.

murderer Bulgarians. Furthermore, Gladstone took bribe from Russia. As these uprisings extended, Turks became provoked.<sup>417</sup>

As a typical example of the Ottoman population policies, Plevna was given as a waqf (religious endowment) to a ghazi family, this time Mihaloğulları, after its conquest during the early Ottoman conquests in the Balkans. After the destruction of the town during the Battle of Varna in 1444, Mihaloğulları re-populated the city with the ghazi bands, unregistered non-Muslim peasants from around the region, and Jews of Central Europe.<sup>418</sup>

Ethnic conflicts were becoming widespread before Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire on 24 April 1877. In Plevna, the situation was not different. At the beginning of the war, actually it was the Russian army that Bulgarian dwellers expected to see first and were prepared to greet. When Osman Paşa and his troops arrived at Plevna, to defend the eastern Danube, faster than the Russian troops, Bulgarian dwellers of the city were disappointed.<sup>419</sup> Bulgarians ducked into their homes. It was Muslim dwellers' time to celebrate.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, pp. 6-7. Edhem was referring to one of the most important figures in nineteenth-century British history. Gladstone, liberal leader, was known for his disgust of the Turks, as he stated that "(Turks) were from the first black they entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them, and as far as their dominion reached, civilization vanished from view." See William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: J. Murray, 1876), p. 31.

<sup>418</sup> Orlin Sabev, "Osmanlı Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler," *OTAM*, No. 33 (Spring 2013), pp. 232-39.

<sup>419</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, pp. 17-8.

<sup>420</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, pp. 19-20.

Gazi Osman Paşa, with a force of thirty six thousand men, encamped at Plevna and managed to halt Russian advance during the summer and fall of 1877. Russian forces were unable to defeat the Ottomans but succeeded to encircle the town and cut the supply lines of the Ottoman army.<sup>421</sup> Running out of provisions, Osman Paşa had to make a decision and try to survive his troops as well as the dwellers of Plevna.

At the end of the resistance that took more than five months, Osman Paşa decided to escape Plevna, taking Muslim civilians with him. Muslims of Plevna were ready to leave their centuries-old homeland, instead of living under the Russian flag. Only the wounded and the old were abandoned by the Ottoman forces. Osman Paşa believed that the Russians would mercy the abandoned. According to him, “the Russian emperor is noble hearted.”<sup>422</sup> He gathered the priests and Bulgarian dignitaries in town. He reminded them the favors that the Ottomans did throughout their six centuries rule in the Balkans. He asked them not to tyrannize the abandoned Muslims. He made them swear on Bible.<sup>423</sup>

The exit operation (*huruc harekâtı*) of the castle failed. The Ottoman forces could not break the Russian blockade and had to surrender. Osman Paşa was wounded and was taken to a ruined cabin. A white flag was hanged on to the cabin and in Osman Senai’s words turned the cabin into “a lion’s bed.”<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), p. 20.

<sup>422</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 47.

<sup>423</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 48; İbrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 44.

<sup>424</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 74.

According to Edhem Paşa, after he surrendered, “Osman Paşa followed the ethics, but Russians did not. They hit the civilians, the wounded, even ambulances and the doctors.”<sup>425</sup> Russian soldiers were hungry. They stole the surrendered Ottoman soldiers’ food supplies. One third of the Ottomans died in one week from hunger and cold.<sup>426</sup> The wounded Ottomans were not treated. Bulgarian dwellers of Plevna tyrannized their Muslim neighbors. For Edhem Paşa, “even the Russians regretted having helped the Bulgarians.”<sup>427</sup> Muslim population in both the Balkan and the Caucasus regions suffered mass killings in the hands of Russians, Cossacks, and Bulgarians. Muslims who survived had to mass migrate into inner Anatolia.<sup>428</sup> The Treaty of Berlin, which was held after the war in summer of 1878, drew a map for the Balkans depending on ethnic and religious differences. Due to the unrealistic boundaries imposed upon the Balkan nations, violence in the region continued.<sup>429</sup>

Especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, the right of sovereignty was depending on a state’s ability to maintain a peaceful and secure environment for diverse ethnic and religious groups within its borders. A civilized government had to observe the rights of all its subjects, regardless of faith and ethnicity. The respect for civilization was

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<sup>425</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 50.

<sup>426</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>427</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 53.

<sup>428</sup> Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire* (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 48.

<sup>429</sup> Justin McCarthy, “Ignoring the People: the Effects of the Congress of Berlin,” M. Hakan Yavuz & Peter Sluglett (ed.), *War & Diplomacy: the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011), pp. 433-38.

“the fundamental marker of the sovereignty.”<sup>430</sup> Against western criticism, late nineteenth century Ottoman writers tried to represent the Ottoman rule as more civilized, therefore more acceptable, than its Bulgarian and Russian counterparts. The emphasis on Bulgarian savagery and the Ottoman respect for ethics unlike the Russians aimed to influence the European public opinion towards the Ottoman regime and by assuring the Ottoman public that the Ottoman state’s cause was just.

Besides the emphasis on war ethics, nineteenth-century Ottoman war accounts, especially those on the battle of Plevna, differed from the early Ottoman epic in terms of depicting violence. While war scenes in the early epic aimed to entertain the audience with graphic scenes, modern accounts criticized the unnecessary violent behavior during the fight and aimed to create sensitivity among the audience against brutality toward civilians in either side. Every war narrative pointed out the horrors of the battle at Plevna. Osman Senai claimed that even the Russian emperor had turned pale as he watched the fight with his binoculars.<sup>431</sup> Atrocities went so far as Russians and Cossacks killed even those who surrendered or wounded.<sup>432</sup> Due to heavy cannon fire, the dwellers were praying to god all the time. For Edhem, the “Allah, Allah” cries of the soldiers drew tears even from those who were in their mothers’ womb.”<sup>433</sup> He compared the situation in Plevna with that of Battle of Karbala, in which the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and his

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<sup>430</sup> Anna M. Mirkova, “Population Politics at the End of Empire: Migration and Sovereignty in Ottoman Eastern Rumelia, 1877–1886,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2013, p. 956.

<sup>431</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 57.

<sup>432</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 29.

<sup>433</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 32.

supporters were butchered by the Umayyad forces.<sup>434</sup> Therefore, the aim of the Ottoman state, the army, and the sultan was to prevent such horrific scenes of war, to protect the Ottoman subjects, regardless of race and faith, and to re-establish justice under its domains.

Furthermore, these narratives also mentioned the relations between the Ottoman and the Russian trenches, during the battle. Apparently, there were many Turkish-speaking or Muslim soldiers in the Russian army. Ottoman soldiers chatted and sang Turkish songs, especially with the Romanian and Moldavian soldiers in the Russian trenches, the Ottoman sources indicate.<sup>435</sup> Ottoman soldiers even helped their enemies to collect the bodies of Russian soldiers, who died during the fight.<sup>436</sup>

Besides new military methods, modern weaponry, and medical treatment, the *93 Harbi* witnessed modern tactics to communicate with the enemy. After the fall of Caucasus, to inform Osman Paşa about the latest news and to convince him to surrender, Russian commander sent English newspapers, like Times and Daily News, to the Ottoman encampment.<sup>437</sup> Upon pasha's rejection, they secretly delivered propaganda pamphlets to the Ottoman soldiers, telling that "your pasha is going to let you destroyed."<sup>438</sup> Russians did not hesitate to use propaganda tools to dispirit the Ottoman soldiers.

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<sup>434</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 55.

<sup>435</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 39; Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 39.

<sup>436</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 36.

<sup>437</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, p. 41.

<sup>438</sup> Ibrahim Edhem, *Sebat ve Gayret*, p. 40.



Years after Plevna, Goltz Paşa, a military advisor in the Ottoman Empire and also a hero of the Prussian victory over France in 1871, interpreted the condition of the army and the lessons that can be learned from the *93 Harbi*. For him, modern wars, especially in the nineteenth century perspective of warfare, could not be won without certain common spirit. Napoleon Bonaparte and Kaiser Wilhelm, he asserted, gained great military successes by depending on such spirit.<sup>439</sup> Goltz Paşa complained that the escapees in the Ottoman army were huge in number. The army was mostly consisted of reserves, guards, and volunteers. However, these soldiers were quite successful under difficult circumstances, like night rallies and trench fights.<sup>440</sup> The endurance of the Turkish soldiers surprised the Russian generals in the *93 Harbi*.<sup>441</sup> Therefore, the human quality in the Ottoman army was surprisingly good, but the Ottomans still needed a common ideal to follow.

After Osman Paşa surrendered to the Russians, he was taken to Chisinau and then Kharkiv as a prisoner of war. Following the Treaty of San Stefano in 3 March 1878, an Ottoman envoy brought him to the Ottoman capital from his last residence in Russia, St. Petersburg.<sup>442</sup>

Istanbul welcomed Osman Paşa with great ceremonies on 12 March 1878. The next day, the sultan appointed him as the head of Royal Regiments (Hassa Alayları Müşiri). He

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<sup>439</sup> Handan Nezir-Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>440</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Plevne: Tarih-i Harbden Asakir-i Redife dair Tedkikat*, translated from German by Mehmed Tahir (Dersaadet: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1316/1898), p. 26.

<sup>441</sup> Osman Senai, *Plevne Kahramanı*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>442</sup> Bahaeddin Yediyıldız, "Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1983), p. 55.

served as *sadrâzam* for three nonconsecutive terms between 1878 and 1885. He was appointed as a military inspector during the Greco-Ottoman War in 1897. After he died in 1900, the war hero was buried next to the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmed II.

Abdülhamid II had appointed many members of the first generation of military college graduates, including Gazi Osman Paşa, to the higher echelons of modern Ottoman bureaucracy. Military success and loyalty to the state and the sultan guaranteed a successful bureaucratic career. At the turn of the century, many of the upper bureaucrats in the Ottoman state were from the military cadre.

For his soldiers to take lessons from the military defeat at *93 Harbi*, Abdülhamid II installed a series of reforms to modernize his country, especially the army. During the Hamidian Era (1876–1908), the number of military officers rose dramatically. The Empire became a significant customer of the military industry in Europe, ordering heavy artillery, modern *Mauser* rifles, and military ships. Foreign advisors, like Goltz, of Franco-Prussian War in 1871, were invited to reform the curriculum of the military college, and educate the future generations of staff officers. Railroad projects were developed to mobilize the army in times of need. Telegraph lines were extended to carry the orders from the capital to the battlefield and many corners of the Empire.

Topographical maps were prepared to guide military operations. Several military hospitals were built. The Empire was ready to exhibit its modern military power through *fin de siècle*. The growing tension in semi-autonomous Crete and the intervention of the Greek army invited the Ottomans to test its modern military power two decades after the catastrophic loss against the Russians. The next section looks at the epic accounts of the Greco-Ottoman War in 1897.

## 6.2. Thessaly Narratives

The tension in the Balkans continued after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. The last assignment of the first generation of the Ottoman officers in the nineteenth century, who were trained at modern military schools, was in Thessaly against the Greek army in 1897. Between two wars, *93 Harbi* and Greco-Ottoman War in 1897, the number of press houses had rapidly increased. Under the Hamidian censorship, debarred from discussing current political affairs in any meaningful way, the newspapers and periodicals filled their pages with encyclopedic articles about science, geography, history, technology, and serialized fiction. As an agent of the political rule to promote the official claims instead of criticizing them, modern Ottoman epic therefore enjoyed official support and popularity during the Hamidian Era.

Intellectuals gradually acquired the power of controlling public opinion and emotion by producing epic literature. With the help of modern literary or material techniques, urban dwellers became more sensitive to the political developments around them. Increasing number of photographs on printed material, on the books, as well as on posters, altered the modes of visual perception of the readers. Abdülhamid II, himself, was known for his interest in photography. First, he employed photography to ameliorate his image in the west. The Ottoman sultan sent albums to Library of Congress and British Museum to be the most reliable evidence for the users of these libraries that the Ottoman Empire is doing fine and the domain of “evil autocrat,” as was claimed by some in Europe, was far from what the western public was told. Second, as a non-public figure, he used images to

acquire knowledge to verify that his domains were well-protected. There is a striking statement, which has been attributed to Abdülhamid II:

Every picture is an idea - a picture can inspire political and emotional meanings cannot be conveyed by an article of a hundred pages: therefore I benefit greatly from photographs rather than written records.<sup>443</sup>

Similar to the sultan, in a more limited manner, Ottoman readers acquired knowledge of the Empire through the photographs that have appeared on the newspapers and books. The war against the Greeks can be interpreted as the first significant event through which public opinion was tried to be shaped by using images. *Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi* was a very precise example of the modern use of image or imagery to create public concern. Appeared before the war, it aimed to arouse public reaction to the Greek suppression of Muslim minority in Crete. Throughout the book, the Greek islanders were portrayed as barbarians, savages, and terrorists. They “split the bellies of pregnant women, butchered babies in their cradles.”<sup>444</sup> In order to free the island from Muslims, Greeks started a fire and burned down Muslim properties.<sup>445</sup> Greek rebels surrounded the Ottoman fortress. According to the book, the commander of the fortress did not surrender. Similar to Osman Gazi, he got wounded trying to break the blockade and was

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<sup>443</sup> Carney E. S. Gavin (ed.), *Imperial Self-Portrait: the Ottoman Empire as Revealed in the Sultan Abdul-Hamid II's Photographic Albums* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1989), p. 7.

<sup>444</sup> Mehmed Behcet & Hüseyin Nesimi, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli yahud Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi* (Hanya: Yusuf Kenan Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 4.

<sup>445</sup> Mehmed Behcet, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli*, pp. 7-8.

caught by the “barbarians.” Rebels excoriated him and brought his body to the monastery and exhibited it to the public.<sup>446</sup>

The disturbing depictions continued throughout the book, supported by disturbing images. Photos of the wounded and dead were repeatedly shown.<sup>447</sup> Writers admitted that, “a photographer named Kirkor was brought to portray that cruelty.”<sup>448</sup> Writers ensured the Muslim dwellers that their “Turkish friends, Muslim co-religionists, and the Sultan will be there to cover their loss.”<sup>449</sup>

Influenced by such depictions, Ottoman people took action. People started a campaign and sent telegraphs to European newspapers informing the cruelties in Crete.<sup>450</sup> They were aware of the power of public media and the importance of public opinion. The newspapers portrayed the Greeks as barbarians. Instead, according to the media, the Ottoman state paid attention to follow the international law and manners. In one instance, Greek warships did not salute the Ottoman standard in the port of Hanya. Ottomans informed Britain about the Greek behavior. In less than twenty four hours, Greek warships saluted the Ottoman standard in the port.<sup>451</sup> Diplomats of the great powers appreciated the Ottoman protection of the public order in the island.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Mehmed Behcet, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>447</sup> See appendix A-1,2,3 for such photographs.

<sup>448</sup> Mehmed Behcet, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli*, p. 16.

<sup>449</sup> Mehmed Behcet, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli*, p. 19.

<sup>450</sup> Selanikli Tevfik, *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye* (Istanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 4.

<sup>451</sup> Selanikli Tevfik, *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>452</sup> “asayiş ü can ü mal-i umumi,” Selanikli Tevfik, *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye*, p. 6.

Nationalist fervor on the other hand seized Greek public opinion. Greek people demanded to capture Crete. Following the Greek naval expedition to Crete, the great powers blockaded the island according to their interests.<sup>453</sup> Following these steps, Greek forces crossed the Macedonian border and engaged into the Ottoman soil. *Megali Idea*, the nationalist approach to re-cover ancient Greek domains from the Ottoman Empire, emerged.<sup>454</sup> Only then, Abdülhamid II declared war against Greece. Selanikli Tevfik's *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye* emphasized the rightful position of the Ottoman state to declare war according to the international norms. Appropriate to the newly emerged concern in visual material, the book was full of portraits of Ottoman military commanders, panoramas of the cities in Crete, maps, drawings of the war scenes, photos of young Ottoman frigates, and martyrs. Ottoman readers encountered such literary and visual pattern in many other books which described the last Ottoman war in the nineteenth century.

The Cretan problem had been very significant in the modern history of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state sent military force to end clashes between the Christians and the Muslims in Crete. Clashes intensified especially after the Greek Independence in 1821, when Greek population dramatically rose in the island, due to migration from the Greek mainland.<sup>455</sup> Two years before the eruption of the war, the Ottoman state installed reforms and appointed an Ottoman-Greek, Alexander Karatheodori, as governor. However, the tension did not end. For the writer of

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<sup>453</sup> Selanikli Tevfik, *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye*, pp. 8-10; Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi ve Osmanlıların Galibiyeti* (Istanbul: Bab-ı Ali Caddesinde 25. Numaralı Matbaa, 1313/1895?), p. 5

<sup>454</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 6.

<sup>455</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 3.

*Muharebenin Sebebi ve Osmanlıların Galibiyeti*, “as usual, the Christians offended the Muslims. Greek mischief was added. Greek bandits provoked the Christian dwellers of the island.”<sup>456</sup>

Ottoman military modernization intensified after the tragic *93 Harbi*. The success of modern military schools, modern equipments, and modern tactics were tested in the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897. The major reason however of the Ottoman success in the war had been attributed to the newly installed railroads. They transferred more than one hundred thousand soldiers to the front in a very short notice. Ali Muzaffer did not forget to mention that the victory was belonged to Abdülhamid II.<sup>457</sup> On the sea, modern Ottoman fleet destroyed Greek ships that were named after mythological figures, such as Hydra, a many-headed serpent in Greek mythology.<sup>458</sup> According to Ali Muzaffer, “the victory showed Europe that the Ottoman Empire did not die, and the Hamidian way of thinking was very bright.”<sup>459</sup>

Besides its ability on the battlefield, according to Müstecâbizâde İsmet, the Ottoman state was also capable of making and maintaining peace. First to celebrate the Ottoman victory against Greece was the Empire’s most significant enemy Russia, who was pleased to stop the progress of the Ottoman troops to Southern Greece via diplomacy. Ottoman army was able to restore order in places it captured. The pact between the Ottoman Empire and

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<sup>456</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 4.

<sup>457</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 10.

<sup>458</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 13. See appendix A-4,5,6,7,8,9 for the photos of Ottoman cruisers, torpedoes, and boats

<sup>459</sup> Ali Muzaffer, *Muharebenin Sebebi*, p. 14.

Greece was signed in peace.<sup>460</sup> Ottoman army was welcomed in the cities that it occupied, by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian dwellers, including the Orthodox metropolitan bishops. They chanted “long live the sultan!” three times in front of the house of administration, *vilayet*.<sup>461</sup> In 12 May 1897, the Ottoman soldiers came together in *Yenişehir* (Larissa) to perform the prayer of the feast of sacrifice.<sup>462</sup> The violence was halted in the region until a new wave of ethnic conflicts emerged, when rebels demanded the autonomous island to be united with the Greek mainland (the idea of *enosis*) at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Müstecâbizâde İsmet’s *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye* was a record book for the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897. Müstecâbizâde tried to collect everything that was related to the war in his book. It started with an article explaining the reasons of the war. It included official telegraphs, pictures of the conquered lands, and epic poetry.

The significance of the book was that it reminded the registers that the Ottomans traditionally prepared after their conquests. Nevertheless, a modern version of those registers, Müstecâbizâde’s book was very much similar, from a different perspective, to a modern encyclopedia. It gave information about Yenişehir or Larissa, Tırhala or Tricala, Çatalca or Pharsala, Velestino, Volo, Dömeke or Domokos, and Urmiye or Armyo.<sup>463</sup> Their Greek names were given after their Turkish versions. Respectively, the author

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<sup>460</sup> Müstecâbizâde İsmet, *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye*, p. 28. See appendix A-10 for a visual description of signing the armistice.

<sup>461</sup> Müstecâbizâde İsmet, *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>462</sup> See appendix A-11 for an image describing that prayer.

<sup>463</sup> See appendix A-12,13,14,15,16 for the photos of the cities.



described the place of those cities on the map, the number of sanctuaries, governmental offices, factories, workshops, enterprises, population frames by emphasizing that they changed after Muslims were expelled, goods, products, crops, harvests, and communication lines. Furthermore, the information of what Greeks did when they escaped the Ottomans, such as releasing the prisoners, and what did the Ottoman army captured in terms of property, food, and ammunition was recorded by Müstecâbizâde.<sup>464</sup> The author used an image showing Greek soldiers throw their cannons to the sea to prevent Ottomans to seize them.<sup>465</sup> Müstecâbizâde portrayed the Greek army as an irrational mob.

*Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye* included an anthology of epic poems that were written for the war against Greece, including Mehmed Emin Yurdakul's *Cenge Giderken*, (On the Road to War). This was the first Ottoman poem that openly glorified Turkish nation:

Ben bir Türküm cinsim uludur,  
Sinem özüm ateş ile doludur,  
İnsan olan vatanının kuludur,  
Türk oğluyum evde durmaz giderim.

I am a Turk, my essence is great,  
My heart, my nature is full of fire,  
Real man is the servant of his patrie,  
I am a son of a Turk, I cannot stay home, I go.<sup>466</sup>

The Greco–Ottoman War also created its own heroes. Gazi Osman Paşa's deputy at Plevna, Edhem Paşa was the leading commander of the Ottoman army during the war in

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<sup>464</sup> Müstecâbizâde İsmet, *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye*, pp. 10-28.

<sup>465</sup> See appendix A-17.

<sup>466</sup> Mehmed Emin, "Cenge Giderken," in Müstecâbizâde İsmet, *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye*, p. 46.

1897. His portraits appeared in most of the books that were related to the war.<sup>467</sup> However, different from the representations of the *93 Harbi*, the main account was not based on the leading commander. The wounded soldiers and the martyrs grow or appeared to be more of an issue. The story of Abdülezel Paşa, who was killed by the Greeks in Thessaly, became very famous among the stories of martyrs.<sup>468</sup> His life story, his speech to his soldiers, poetry on his acts and deeds, and his portraits took place in many accounts of the war. Unlike Gazi Osman Paşa, Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, or Edhem Paşa, Abdülezel Paşa was not graduated from a military school. He entered the Ottoman ranks as a private, when he was sixteen. During the war in 1897, he was a major general, *mirliva*. He was one of the last high ranking officers, who did not experienced modern military education. His story became part of the epic accounts based on the Greco-Ottoman War in 1897.

Written by Selanikli Tevfik, *Bir Şehidin Vasiyeti* was completely dedicated to the story of Abdülezel Paşa. The writer was proud to tell the story of, “a hero that sacrificed his life for the sake of the state and the religion.”<sup>469</sup> Paşa served at Plevna as major. Due to his success, the stronghold that he led was called after Abdülezel Paşa.<sup>470</sup> Selanikli Tevfik mentioned that the story of Abdülezel Paşa took place in foreign media. The writer quoted a part from London’s *Daily News*: “Abdülezel Paşa was seventy, when he became martyr in Milona. He was in front of the Victorious Soldiers of the Sultan, *Asakir-i*

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<sup>467</sup> See appendix A-18,19, and 20 for the portraits of Ottoman pashas served in the Greek War.

<sup>468</sup> See appendix A-21 for a portrait of Abdülezel Paşa.

<sup>469</sup> Selanikli Tevfik, *Bir Şehidin Vasiyeti* (Dersaadet: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 7

<sup>470</sup> Selanikli Tevfik, *Bir Şehidin Vasiyeti*, p. 8.

*Mansure-i Padişahi*. One of his aide de camps asked him to take of his horse to avoid enemy fire. Paşa ironically said that “I did not take of my horse in Russian War, am I supposed to do so in Greek War?” Meanwhile he took two enemy bullets. He continued his move, but then he fell down. He said to his soldiers that “do not ever stop. Walk over me. If you do not follow the enemy, I will hold you responsible in the afterlife. Another bullet arrived and killed him. Soldiers did exactly what he told.”<sup>471</sup> The Ottoman army captured Thessaly in a short period of time.

Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem portrayed the atmosphere from Abdülezel Paşa’s funeral that combined with the bittersweet joy of the military victory, at the end of his requiem for the pasha as:

Kükretti erleri okunan hutbe-i zafer  
‘aks itti ‘arş-ı azîme gülbank-ı fâtiha.

Oration of the victory roared the soldiers  
Their praying of the Fatiha echoed in the skies.<sup>472</sup>

London based *Daily News*’s interest in Abdülezel Paşa’s story was not a coincidence, but a part of modern relationship between journalism and warfare. With the Crimean War, journalists started to join wars as embedded reporters. Wars became instruments to adjust, synchronize, and unite public opinion. Everyday accounts of ongoing wars appeared in newspapers contributed to the popularity of war literature. The daily news from the battlefield became part of public concern. In line with this, when the war

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<sup>471</sup> Selanikli Tefik, *Bir Şehidin Vasiyeti*, pp. 5-6; a long version of paşa’s speech to his soldiers is in Müstecâbizâde İsmet, *Muvaffâkiyât-ı Osmâniye*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>472</sup> Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, “Şehid-i Ezel,” in *Müstecabizade*, p. 45.

between Greece and the Ottoman Empire erupted in 1897, European journalists appeared on the battlefield to report the details about the war.

One of these journalists was Clive Bigham, the special war correspondent of the *Times*. Bigham obtained sultan's consent, an *irade* letting him to go to the front line, after the telegram traffic between Istanbul and London. He was informed that he was able to go to the front. He complained about his telegrams would be subject to the military censorship and that he must consider himself under military law.<sup>473</sup> Bigham was attached to the troops of the Field-Marshal Edhem Paşa, the general commander of the Ottoman troops. Bigham published *With the Turkish Army in Thessaly* only two months after the armistice. In the preface of his book, the writer thanked to “the courtesy and assistance shown him by the Imperial Army and civil authorities throughout the time he spent in Turkey.”<sup>474</sup> He promised to give “an unprejudiced account of the war,” although as an embedded journalist he was aware that “it is, of course, extremely difficult to avoid sympathizing with the troops one accompanies.”<sup>475</sup> Bigham's views were limited to what the Ottoman officials considered supportive to ameliorate the image of the empire, which was damaged by Gladstone's interpretations during the “Bulgarian Atrocities” in 1876,<sup>476</sup> in the eyes of the readers in England.

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<sup>473</sup> Clive Bigham, *With the Turkish Army in Thessaly* (London & New York: Macmillan, 1897), p. 13. For the Ottoman-Turkish version of Bigham's book, see Clive Bigham, *Teselya'da Osmanlı Ordusuyla*, translated by İkdam Gazetesi muharrirlerinden Cemaleddin (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897). Hereafter, the English version is going to be cited.

<sup>474</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, preface.

<sup>475</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>476</sup> See William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*.

Clive Bigham's appointment as a war correspondent to the battlefield came when he was off duty in London from his position as a British military envoy in Saint Petersburg. In Salonika, a Polish dragoman who apparently spoke several languages joined him. Before taking off for the front on an Imperial torpedo-boat, called *Nusret*, Bigham bought a fez and took much gold in Turkish Lira. The boat landed on the city of Katerina across the Thermaic Gulf, where local governor, *kaimakam*, met Bigham. The journalist was given an escort, a Circassian lieutenant of cavalry, to continue his voyage to Elasona (Alasonya in Turkish), where the Turkish regiments had settled.<sup>477</sup> Under the surveillance of the Ottoman officers, Bigham was ready to report the war.

The book started with describing the reasons of the war. Bigham stated that, against all of the provocations and hostility of the Greek government, the sultan preferred to use diplomatic tools, even if he had a case of *casus belli*.<sup>478</sup> After summarizing political reasons of the war and acclaiming the rightness of the Ottoman side, Bigham described the conditions in the Ottoman camp, where he first stationed with the troops in Salonika. The first thing he mentioned was well-prepared medical facilities and healthiness of the arriving soldiers. In an orientalist manner, he stated that "the general stamina was very sound, due, no doubt, to the remarkably healthy life the peasants lead in the provinces, and perhaps to their abstemiousness, for their physical wants are very small, bread and water -the latter being far from clean- being sufficient to support the majority."<sup>479</sup> For

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<sup>477</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>478</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, p. 2.

<sup>479</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, p. 10. Foreign observers mention stamina and frugality as favorable characteristics of Turkish soldiers, derived from the fact that in general these soldiers were raised in rural areas. For Goltz's similar arguments, see Nezir-Akmeşe, p. 27.

Bigham, besides the well-organized preparations in the Ottoman front, the physically-fit reserve soldiers, who were mainly consisted of Anatolian peasants, increased the chance of an Ottoman victory.

The second remarkable observation that Bigham marked was transportation of the Ottoman troops in a short period of time thanks to the new railroad system, which was built only a year ago. He gave information about the mobilization of the troops, such as the duration of travel from Istanbul to Salonika via Dedeağaç, and about the wagons that carried either forty men or eight horses or four field guns. The Ottomans managed to run five trains a day and transported all of their troops and equipment within a month. For Bigham, “it was a most credible performance, and, like the hospital arrangements, gave one a good first impression of the way operations were to be conducted.”<sup>480</sup>

On the forty-miles-length road from Katerina to Elasona, Bigham met some peasants of Vlach origin that were mainly busy with restoring bridges and roads in the region. Vlach peasants told Bigham that they were content with the Ottoman rule, since the agriculture and trade was improving. Bigham also mentioned about some Greek villages in the region between Katerina and Elasona, “where the inhabitants were more silent and a little frightened, but they seemed to be utterly lacking in any idea or desire of a Hellenic rising.”<sup>481</sup> According to Bigham’s observations, Greek inhabitants of Thessaly did not share the enthusiasm of the Greek nationalists.

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<sup>480</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, pp.11-2.

<sup>481</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, pp. 14-5. Throughout the nineteenth century, Vlachs of Romania dispersed on Balkans. Vlachs in Thessaly is an example of this migration movement. During the population exchange after the War of Turkish Independence, they moved to Anatolia with the Turkish population. See

In Ellassona, Bigham finally met Edhem Paşa, who would be titled “Gazi” and decorated with *imtiyaz* medal, then the most important piece of Ottoman heraldry, by the sultan following the victory. After summarizing the story of pasha’s career, Bigham mentioned the politics between the front and the palace. He noticed that “nearly every movement of troops had to be explained to and authorized from the Palace before it was allowed to take place.” For Bigham, Edhem Paşa had to protect his army, avoid taking pretentious decisions, and pay attention not to be too famous to rival the central authority.<sup>482</sup> Bigham equivocally criticized the Ottoman central administration and the sultan for intercepting and slowing down the activities of the Ottoman officers, especially Edhem Paşa, at the battlefield.

Bigham proceeded to narrate the everyday life at the front and battles between Turkish and Greek troops. He became roommates with Hamilton Weldon, the war correspondent of *Morning Post*. With the help of the military wire, the journalists easily transferred daily news from the front to the military base at Ellassona to be telegrammed to London.<sup>483</sup> Consisted of Bigham’s observations at the Ottoman front, *With the Turkish Army* narrated Bigham’s experience as a journalist at the front. The book represented the disintegration of the border between war literature and journalism. With the help of technology, journalists informed the people of London and other parts of the world about daily events in Thessaly, during the war.

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Çimen Turan, Müfide Tekin, Sefer Güvenç (eds.), *Belleklerdeki Güzellik: Mübadele Türküleri* (İstanbul: Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>482</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, pp. 29-30. Bigham’s comments on the disagreements between the palace and Edhem Paşa were entirely censored in the Turkish translation, *Teselya’da Osmanlı Ordusuyla*.

<sup>483</sup> Bigham, *With the Turkish Army*, p. 40.

The relationship between journalism and war literature was transforming also in the Ottoman Empire. Newspapers became the most significant sources to report the daily developments on the front. Readers could learn how soldiers eat, take bath, and tease each other, or what they sing during the military marches. Society became more involved with military matters and wars through daily news of the reporters from the front.

Due to the new press technology, war literature writers started to use images of the war scenes to increase the reality effect of their accounts in Europe and in the Ottoman Empire. The new press technology enriched the reading experience for the audience of the war literature starting from the end of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire. These images consisted of marches of the troops and visual descriptions of the battles.<sup>484</sup> For curious readers, there were some images depicting sequences from the everyday life of the Ottoman troops on the front. Readers came across the photos of the soldiers waiting for the transfer trains, or soldiers playing music and dancing on the pages of epic books.<sup>485</sup>

Furthermore, developments in journalism and its changing relation with war literature enriched the literary themes. War literature was not limited to war accounts anymore. Besides those who fought on the battlefield, War of 1897 was the first incident that late Ottoman war literature noticed those who were left behind. Ahmed Rasim's *Asker Ođlu* was a prominent example to mention the sentimental atmosphere, and daily life at the homes of ghazis, and at the capital. The developments at the battlefield became a

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<sup>484</sup> See appendix A-22,23,24,25,26,27.

<sup>485</sup> See appendix A-28,29 for some of these photos.



common concern for the Ottomans. Society was held responsible for the well-being of the families of ghazis. Roles of women changed. While men were assigned to protect the country, protection of the home became the utmost duty of women. Her weapons, in this case, for those who wait their loved ones, would be patience and purity.

When the Greek troops took offensive, “the Ottoman public opinion woke up. Red flags appeared everywhere. Accompanied by military bands, battalions were coming from all over Anatolia to Istanbul.”<sup>486</sup> War atmosphere surrounded the capital and the Ottoman community. In the words of Ahmed Rasim, the atmosphere in Istanbul was the following:

this great city lost its tranquility, the works of delight on the Bosphorus collapsed, light beams that leak out the houses diminished, heavenly prayers in the mosques of the city surrounded the skies, words of war appeared in the houses instead of words of humor, the old started to use compassionate words, women started to ask for help, the young developed signs of craziness, children performed mimicking their siblings. The community seemed quite different.<sup>487</sup>

Ahmed Rasim demonstrated the powerful effect of the news from the battlefield arriving to Istanbul. For him, waiting for the good news, the anxiety of the Ottoman public captured the city. War literature was helping to adjust and synchronize the collective emotions of the Ottoman community.

*Asker Oğlu* depicted the story of a soldier, whose father was also a soldier, leaving his house, where he was living with his wife and his mother, to join the army against the Greeks. Upon receiving the call of duty, his first task was to appease the women in the house. He asked, “why have I become a soldier if not to serve the state in times of

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<sup>486</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu* (Konstantiniye: Malumat Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 4.

<sup>487</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu*, pp. 5-6.

trouble? What did my father said when he signed me to the military school? Did not he say to the director of the school that he brought another servant to the sultan?” His mother immediately remembered that her husband told that “these days are days of joy, crying suits to the enemy” when her husband saw that she cried when he was leaving to join another war.<sup>488</sup> The mother relieved and said, “your father should have been alive to see you! God bless his soul, who knows how happy he would have been!”<sup>489</sup> After that, the mother brought a janissary knife and girds his son, engraved with besmele. She put an armband, which was surrounded by verses from Quran related to military conquest, on his son, by saying that “nobody can defeat you while wearing that.” This was when the soldier felt that the soul of his father was with him. Finally, she gave his son some cotton and cloth pieces to wrap his wounds.<sup>490</sup> After that emotional ceremony, the son left his house.

In order to see him again, the mother and the wife joined the official ceremony prepared for sending of the army from Izmit Gulf. Ceremony started with the crowd chanting “long live the sultan!” than the song, “Ey gaziler! Yol göründü yine garip serrime” (Oh ghazis! Time to leave has come again upon poor self) was sung.<sup>491</sup> According to the writer, “the Ottomans (soldiers) would go to war like they would go to wedding.”<sup>492</sup> As the ship carrying soldiers left, prayers were heard from the mosques. While the verse of

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<sup>488</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, pp. 14-5.

<sup>489</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 17.

<sup>490</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>491</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 32.

<sup>492</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 85.

conquest, *sure-i feth*, was read on the ship, the ghazi remembered his mother and his house as the armband squeezed his arm. Ahmed Rasim pointed out that at the same time ghazi's wife was performing her prayer and their souls were prostrated together.<sup>493</sup>

During the war, one day the mother took her daughter-in-law to visit tombs of saints. They visited *Eyup Sultan* and *Zindan Kapısı*.<sup>494</sup> Ahmed Rasim narrated the developments at the war by using letters. Letters from the ghazi informed us of the inner knowledge from the army. Through the letters the writer aimed to emphasize the theme of the love of motherland. In one letter ghazi explained the mental state that he was in. He said that "if there is any consolation for me, it is that I was invited to guard the motherland, which is the most compassionate mother of all of us. I cannot be ungrateful. The love that I have for my mother is derived from the love that I have for my motherland. This love is so influential, so very poignant, that its goals are reason to sacrifice life."<sup>495</sup> The unbreakable bond between a soldier and his mother is significant in that it reproduces the same bond that exists between a soldier and his homeland. Loyalty to the mother became interchangeable with loyalty to the motherland and the nation.

Meanwhile the mother and the wife had many dreams involving the ghazi son. One of the wife's dreams was the most remarkable. In the dream, "the ghazi in green clothes was on the back of a green horse. The Quran was hanged on his neck. He was speaking to a

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<sup>493</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 36.

<sup>494</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 40. Eyüp Sultan is a mosque complex built by Mehmed II on the spot where the Prophet Muhammad's companion Eyüp al-Ansâri is believed to be buried during the siege of Constantinople in 670s. Zindan Kapısı was originally a part of the city walls, which became a tomb for a legendary dervish Baba Câfer after the conquest.

<sup>495</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Ođlu*, p. 43.

hodja in a large square. The ghazi saw his wife and kissed her hands. When he was asked what he brought to them, he answered as the words of the Lord.”<sup>496</sup> Ahmed Rasim interpreted the dream as “the green symbolizes beneficence and sacred; the horse symbolizes a fast journey; the words of the most high is the greatest felicity, the good news; a large square stands for relief.”<sup>497</sup> The dream heralded that the ghazi had God’s protection and his safe return back to home.

Following the Ottoman victory, preparations were made at home. The mother and the wife of the ghazi cleaned the house, made shopping, and did personal care.<sup>498</sup> At the capital, upon the order of the sultan, the military hospital at Gümüşsuyu was renovated. Hospitals and operation rooms were constructed at Yıldız, close to the palace of Abdülhamid II, for the ghazis “to be embraced by the sultan,” the true father of the Ottomans.<sup>499</sup>

The Greco-Ottoman War in 1897 helped the writers of war literature to contemplate on Abdülhamid II’s aim to construct a patrimonial relationship with the army. From the very beginning of the war until the arrival of soldiers to their homes, writers portrayed the sultan as the protector of the ghazis, who were expected to be loyal only to the sultan.

Although the Ottomans saluted the victory in 1897, the Ottoman troops had to leave Thessaly in a short period of time. After a decade, following a series of nationalist

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<sup>496</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu*, p. 91.

<sup>497</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu*, p. 91.

<sup>498</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu*, pp. 91-4.

<sup>499</sup> Ahmed Rasim, *Asker Oğlu*, p. 97. See appendix A-30,31 for photos of the medical facilities at Yıldız.

insurgencies, the Ottoman presence in both Crete and the Balkans ended. Greeks forced the Muslim immigrants of these regions to flee, a mass movement which radically changed the political atmosphere in the Empire. Main centers, such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica, became the centers of new political ideas and committees, which were mostly constituted by immigrants. The Cretan-Muslim immigrants, the violations against whom triggered the war between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, took important role in the Boycott Movement, an economic and political protest movement which originally targeted foreign actors in the Ottoman trade and later aimed to eliminate the economic presence of non-Muslims in the Empire, between 1908 and 1914.<sup>500</sup> The movement emerged after the annexation of Crete to Greece in 1908. It was against the Greek-Ottoman subjects and the first organized incident that signaled the emergence of Turkish nationalism.<sup>501</sup>

Similar to the boost of heroic accounts of Plevna, epic literature worked to display defeats as victories or victories as more successful than they actually were.<sup>502</sup>

Exaggerated praises were part of the Ottoman literary tradition. Neẓî was the pioneer of

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<sup>500</sup> Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and Social Class in the Formation of Modern Turkey* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>501</sup> Pınar Şenışık, “Cretan Muslim Immigrants, Imperial Governance and the Production of Locality in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 2013, p. 102.

<sup>502</sup> In modern Ottoman epic literature, opponents of the current regime used epic literature as well. Nevertheless, unlike the royalists, they used epic verses in a satiric manner to ridicule the government. A member of the Young Ottoman opposition, Ziya Paşa wrote *Zafernâme* in 1867 to satirically celebrate the Ottoman policy in Crete and mock the current government. In *Zafernâme*, Ziya Paşa addressed Âli Paşa (1815–1871), who dealt with the Crete Rebellion in 1867, as “Kimseler olmadı bu feth-i mübine mazhar / Ne Skender, ne Hülâgü, ne Sezar, ne Anibal.” Following a long stagnation during the Hamidian rule, counter-epic genre reappeared only after when the opponents of the regime found a secure basis out of the country, Egypt in the case of Şair Eşref and Neyzen Tevfik, to publish against the Hamidian regime. See Şair Eşref, *Deccal* (1326/1908); Şair Eşref, *İstimdad* (Kahire: 1323/1905), “Kal’a-i âsâr-ı zulme verdim istihkâm-ı tam / Etdim istibdad ile tarihe ibkâ-ı nam,” in “Nutk-ı Humâyun,” Neyzen Tevfik, *Azâb-ı Mukaddes* (İstanbul: Onan Yayınevi, 1949). However, the discussion on Ottoman counter-epic genre is beyond the scope of this thesis.

that rhetoric, as he exaggeratedly celebrated Osman II's (r. 1618–1622) unsuccessful Polish campaign, after which the Ottoman ruler faced a legitimacy crisis.<sup>503</sup> Similar to Nef'î, who aimed to repair the popularity of Osman II, the late Ottoman epic writers tried to re-mobilize the public temper, to safeguard the state, and to refurbish the popularity of the sovereign.

### 6.3. Conclusion

From the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877–78 to the Greco-Ottoman War in 1897, war literature in general and epic in particular regained its significant position in Ottoman literature. Writers produced epic accounts of Gazi Osman Paşa's successful defense against the Russian troops to repair the damaged morale of Ottoman society after great losses in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Until epic literature reached its summit following the victory against the Greek army in 1897, Ottoman writers also produced many other books on different themes, including novels, poems, theatre plays, as well as the books on military history, military techniques, modern weapons, and commentaries on the relationship between the political power and the army.

After the Ottoman victory in 1897, war literature reached a peak in terms of the number of published works. Even though the victory did not bring diplomatic gains, it nevertheless repaired Ottoman pride, which was damaged in the *93 Harbi*, with the help of epic literature. In the midst of positive sentiments the victory created, Abdülhamid II was ready to celebrate his silver jubilee in 1901. The next chapter looks at the books

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<sup>503</sup> See Metin Akkuş (ed.), *Nef'î Dîvânı*.

celebrating the silver jubilee of the sultan around *fin de siècle* by describing the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II during his service.



## CHAPTER VII

### PAX HAMIDIANA (1897–1901)

“May his soldiers be triumphant everywhere as those of Rostam, and his enemies be defeated as those of Achilles.”<sup>504</sup>

This chapter examines the accounts of the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II, which were mainly produced after the victory against the Greeks in 1897 and became very fashionable through the silver jubilee of the sultan in 1901. In that short period of time, literary tributes were paid to celebrate the age of Abdülhamid II. Besides the qasidas, which stands for the traditional Ottoman poetical form to salute the sultan and his reign, new historical works were produced to detail the performance of the reigning sultan. In this period, war literature not only glorified the military successes of the sultan, but also celebrated and promoted administrative and military reforms. Rejuvenation of the office of caliphacy, great construction projects, such as the Hijaz Railway, and architectural

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<sup>504</sup> “Her tarafda leşkeri galib gele Rüstem gibi / düşmanı mağlub ola dâim misâl-i Aşilyüs,” Ali Emîrî, *Levâmi’ül Hamidiyye* (İstanbul: Alem Matbaası, 1312/1895), p. 45.



arrangements with spatial symbols that spread the character of the Hamidian regime all over the Empire indicated a new vigor built around the persona of the sultan.

Mustafa Süleyman was among the reserve soldiers, which made up the most part of the Ottoman troops in Thessaly. He was called to serve in the army, when the tension between Greece and the Ottoman Empire increased in the spring of 1897. He joined other reserves in Istanbul who were waiting for the train to transfer the troops to Salonika.

Mustafa Süleyman got severely injured during the war, and was sent to be treated at the Yıldız Palace Hospital, which was specifically established for the injured soldiers during the Greco-Ottoman War, in May 1897. Mustafa Süleyman was recovered in six months to turn back to his village *Hasan Fakih*, near Adapazarı.

The interesting part of his story began after he turned back to his village as a ghazi and decided to request a mosque for his village from the sultan. After he arrived to his village, he immediately sent a letter to the sultan, requesting the construction of a mosque.

Abdülhamid II accepted the petition, and ordered the construction, expenses of which was to be covered from his personal wealth. The only condition was that the mosque would be called *Ertuğrul Gazi*, after the father of the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>505</sup> The sultan, as the patron ghazi, satisfied the wish of the soldier and built a mosque in a little Anatolian village in the name of the founder of the Ottoman ghaza. A proud ghazi himself, Mustafa

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<sup>505</sup> Sabuncuzade Luis Alberi, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Hal Tercümesi*, Mahir Aydın (ed.) (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 1997), p. 85. See also *Bağdat Vilayeti Salnamesi* (1318/1900), translated in Ebul Faruk Önal & Sabit Bekçi (eds.), *Sultan İkinci Abdülhamid Hân'ın Hayır Eserleri* (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2006), p. 103. According to Aydın Talay, Hasan Fakih Mosque in Adapazarı was built in 1541. Abdülhamid II donated 5000 guruş for the restoration. See Aydın Talay, *Eserleri ve Hizmetleriyle II. Abdülhamid* (İstanbul: Armoni, 2007), p. 510. According to Şevki Duymaz, many of the constructions in Hamidian registers are indeed restorations. See Şevki Duymaz, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi İmar Faaliyetleri (Türkiye Örnekleri)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı (Isparta: 2003), p. 104.

Süleyman became a representative of the center in the periphery. Abdülhamid II, for his part, was trying to revive the old Ottoman concepts and reputation of the Ottoman dynasty.

Hamidian autocracy was consolidated during the period between the victory and the silver jubilee. The central authority embarked on solving the problems that threatened the Empire's integrity. The victory helped the sultan to reinforce his legitimacy in and out of the Empire. Immediately after the victory, Abdülhamid II felt so self-confident to invite the members of the Young Turks movement in Paris, Genève, and Brussels back to the homeland.<sup>506</sup> Referring to the "Armenian Atrocities" between 1895 and 1897, the sultan told the British ambassador in October 1897 that "the Armenian question is finally closed."<sup>507</sup> The victory against Greece also echoed abroad in countries with Muslim populations. Hearing the news from Thessaly, Muslims in Algiers, India, and Turkestan rebelled against western colonizers.<sup>508</sup> Abdülhamid II's policies produced collective mind in the Muslim world to an extent. It was the best of times, more than it was the worst of times. The sultan managed to be the leader of the Muslim world, albeit with minor objections, and bared his teeth to England and France by hosting Kaiser Wilhelm II in the Ottoman capital in 1898. The climate was finally changing towards the positive.

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<sup>506</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Genesis of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies III* (1982), p. 285.

<sup>507</sup> Selim Deringil, "The Armenian Question is Finally Closed: Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (2009), p. 369.

<sup>508</sup> Selim Deringil, "Legitimacy Structures," p. 353.

War literature represented this optimistic atmosphere. Writers of the war literature rushed to document the acts and deeds of the ghazi sultan, Abdülhamid II. Modern Ottoman epic exalted the persona of Abdülhamid II. “Pax Hamidiana” refers to that period, when the Hamidian regime focused on modernization projects, generated alternative ideological discourses against western imperialism, and the relationship between war literature and political authority became very close.

Before the victory against Greece in 1897, the nineteenth-century Ottoman epic literature was consisted of victories of early Ottomans or narrated the battles and the heroic accounts of Ottoman pashas and soldiers on the battlefield, such as the case of Gazi Osman Paşa in Plevna, as was discussed in chapter VI. The victory boosted the popularity of Abdülhamid II. On the eve of the silver jubilee of the sultan, epic writers paid tribute to the reigning sultan and highlighted the modernization projects, which finally brought the military success.

Under titles such as “Hamidian splendors” (*Levâmi-ül Hamidiyye*), “the age of the distinguished” (*Asr-ı Güzin*), or “national felicitations” (*Tebriknâme-i Milli*), authors celebrated military, educational, judicial reforms of the Hamidian reign. While modernization efforts were documented, the religious and the administrative responsibilities of the parties against each other were also reminded. Based on the reproduction of a modern imperial enterprise and its militarized social formation, the chapter analyzes the literary representations of the attempts that aimed to create obedient and mobilized subjects of a modern ghazi sultan.

The first part of the chapter deals with *Tebrikname-i Millî*, which was written to celebrate Abdülhamid II's silver jubilee in 1901. *Tebriknâme* gives a detailed account of achievements of Abdülhamid II until 1901. It further emphasizes the Hamidian precepts on the source of political power. It directly opposed the Young Ottoman quest to support constitutionalism with Islamic and early Ottoman sources. According to *Tebriknâme*, public order could be maintained first and foremost by obeying to the will of the ruling sovereign, who represents the divine power. Second, the order could be prevailed through modern arrangements in administrative and legal fields to reconstruct the relationship between society and the ruler. Third, the book lists construction projects and spatial arrangements, which aimed to increase the visibility of the sovereign in the everyday life of the subjects. Based on the celebratory works that were written to celebrate the sultan's silver jubilee, the second part analyzes the spatial developments during the Hamidian Era until 1901. Changes in the physical environment reflected the transformation of the relationship between society and the sovereign. Modern developments in general and modern administrative arrangements in particular required several types of new official buildings around the Empire. Prisons, schools, provincial government buildings, garrisons, hospitals, train stations, and telegraph houses created a spatial environment in Hamidian style. Moreover, Abdülhamid II's political claims on political sovereignty and religious leadership produced specific spatial symbols, amalgam of Islamic and/or early Ottoman symbols, and modern fragments.

The silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II encouraged epic writers to celebrate the reigning sultan and the Ottoman dynasty by producing eulogies, which represent the continuities and changes in the Ottoman epic literature. Mostly written by the bureaucrats from the

sultan's entourage, these epic poems promoted Hamidian regime to the Ottoman public. They emphasized the legitimacy of the sultan and the Ottoman dynasty, as the legitimate political and religious leader of the Ottoman and the Muslim world. Diverse religious and ethnic groups also produced eulogies that celebrated the silver jubilee. Some Ottoman-Arab writers were grateful for the Hijaz Railroad project, which aimed to unite the Muslim world or to promote the sultan as the protector of Muslims against western imperialism. For their part, Greek and Jewish subjects, on the other hand, wrote eulogies to submit their loyalty to Abdülhamid II. Epic writers from diverse ethnic or religious origins celebrated the reigning sultan for different motivations. Within this framework, the third part deals with the representative role of epic literature that celebrated the silver jubilee in terms of epic literature's role in expressing complex identities and loyalties.

## **7.1. Public Order**

*Tebrikname-i Millî* is one of the most important examples among the accounts of the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II. In 19 April 1901, the sultan ordered the necessary official information to be given to the author for his use during the preparation of the book.

*Tebrikname*, thus represents a specific example of literature sponsored by the sultan to celebrate his reign. The palace also provided the author with the list and information of the sultan's achievements during his rule of twenty-five years.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 41/103 (see appendix B-1).

Specifically dedicated to the silver jubilee of the sultan caliph, the book is consisted of lists and photographs of what was legislated, manufactured, built, restored, protected, and invented during the Hamidian Era. Starting with the explanation of religious, ideological, and historical sources of the sultanic power, it demonstrates the reforms in military, educational, judiciary spheres, and several public services, the attempts to maintain peace and order in the well-protected domains (*memâlik-i mahrûse*), of the Empire.

First, *Tebrikname* echoes the traditional concept of *ulu-l emr*, the legitimate ruler. Mentioned in the Qur'ân, Muslim people are held responsible to obey their legitimate ruler, whether he is the caliph, the sultan, or the army commander. According to *Tebrikname*, “obedience to the sultan is to obey Allah and the Prophet.”<sup>510</sup> In terms of discontent with the authority, Muslims are expected not to rebel but to leave the matter to Allah and the judgment day.<sup>511</sup>

These religious references regarding the source of sultanic power were utilized mainly to gain the full support of the Muslims from the political orbit of the late Ottoman Empire. A memorandum by the former Mufti of Yemen asking the support of local Yemenis for Abdülhamid II is an example of such an endeavor. With a list of hadiths from Buhari, Ebu-Müslim, Tirmizî, and Hanbelî, Ahmed el-Hafzî demanded support for the legitimate caliph, who was also a ghazi, fighting against the infidel. According to the mufti, Abdülhamid II, “may God let his reign to be comparably good as his predecessors’, who enjoys the gardens of heaven,” was:

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<sup>510</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 1.

<sup>511</sup> Qur'ân, Nisâ', 59.

the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, protector of the authentic and solid faith, worthy of the reign following six hundred masters of believers, servant of the Dome of the Rock and the sublime seat, destroyer of the Caesars, smasher of the Sassanid kings, holder of the great Imamate, enlightener sultan, successor of the high Caliphate that passes from the great to greater, conqueror of the east and the west with the help of his victorious soldiers and God almighty...<sup>512</sup>

For the mufti, Abdülhamid II was the caliph, the army commander, and the enlightened monarch. His rule was legitimate as he inherited the leadership of the Muslim world and the Ottoman Empire. His responsibility as the leading ghazi was to protect Muslims from foreign threats.

*Tebrikname*'s motto, the master of the believers and the imam of the Muslims, *Amir al-Muslimîn ve İmam el-Mü'minîn*,<sup>513</sup> was confirmed by the mufti with the help of the Qur'anic verses and several hadiths. Nevertheless, the mufti also referred to the technological and practical innovations within the Ottoman army. Therefore, the Ottoman army can and should maintain to be the protector of the Muslim world. For the mufti, Abdülhamid II is a ghazi:

still attacking the enemy, equipping his soldiers with the most powerful weapons to protect Islam and the Muslims. He tried until the societies of the infidel shall be dissolved and its fire to be extinguished. He conquered their lands and separated their union. He destroyed their buildings with the help of his agile and not-afraid-of-fight armies. His armies march on the back of his enemies. They are like the blazes during the action drills. They are like the buildings attached to each other.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> İhsan Süreyya Sırma, "2. Abdülhamid'in Hilafeti Hakkında Yazılmış bir Risale ve Bununla İlgili Kırk Hadis," in *Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. 33 (1981), p. 379.

<sup>513</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 1.

<sup>514</sup> Sırma, "2. Abdülhamid," p. 380.

Whether a ghazi or a caliph, the Muslim world needed a leader. Muslim immigrants escaping the Russian invasion in 1877–78 left the Balkans and the Caucasia. Afterwards, Ottoman Empire faced English and French challenges in Cyprus, Egypt, and Tunisia. Western colonialism was threatening the Muslim geography. Therefore, Abdülhamid II's victory over Christian Greece in 1897 made a stir among the Muslims around the world.<sup>515</sup> According to Kemal Karpat, threatened by the disturbances in their colonies, westerners deliberately attributed pan-Islamism, which they portrayed as a threat to western civilization and Christianity instead of western colonialism, to Abdülhamid II's policies.<sup>516</sup>

The reign of Abdülhamid II started with the disastrous defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877–78. In fact, the Ottoman army was more advanced in terms of military inventory compared to their Russian rivals. The most important reason behind the defeat was the lack of training and expertise of the military personnel.<sup>517</sup> Realizing the reason behind the failure, the sultan demanded foreign assistance. Due to recent English and French aggression in Cyprus and the North Africa, he requested from German Kaiser military instructors. Goltz was one of those several advisers, who served in the Ottoman Army. Prussian military officers had served in the newly established military schools in the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman-Prussian military collaboration continued until the very end of the World War I.

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<sup>515</sup> Deringil, "Legitimacy Structures," p. 353.

<sup>516</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, pp. 16-7.

<sup>517</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*, pp. 179-80.



With the technical expertise of German generals, the Ottoman army focused on developing combat skills, trainings, and experiments throughout Abdülhamid II's reign.<sup>518</sup> Moreover, during the Hamidian Era, the number of the military personnel tripled, and modern weaponry, including Mauser rifles, Krupp artillery, and destroyer boats enriched military inventory. Fortresses, hospitals, depots, stations were built all around the country for the use of military personnel. Railways and telegraph services were installed and the existing ones were renewed to better serve military operations.

Formerly troublesome Bedouins from Kurdistan, Arabia, Syria and Tripoli were conscripted to form *Hamidiye Alayları* (Hamidian light cavalry regiments) to suppress any restless groups in the eastern region.<sup>519</sup> According to *Tebrikname*, “thanks to the achievements that took place under the great commandership of his highness, requirements of the army were satisfied to the degree that every soldier was fed, dressed, equipped, and every battalion was dispatched efficiently during the war (Greco-Ottoman War of 1897).”<sup>520</sup> During the reign of Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman Army became more equal to its European counterparts.

The relationship between the sultan and his army was also modernized. Loyalty of the army to the ruler was emphasized to frame the sultan and his soldiers as parts of the same body. *Tebrikname* described that reunion as “the Ottoman soldiers are the soldiers of the sultan, and the Ottoman sultan is the commander in chief.” The sultan was “the utmost

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<sup>518</sup> See appendix A-32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 for photos from the practice sessions of Ottoman infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

<sup>519</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 49. See appendix A-38 for a photo of Tripoli Hamidian Regiments.

<sup>520</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, pp. 49-52.

decision-maker, and via his firmans is the greatest and the sacred authority as regards military matters.”<sup>521</sup> Re-invention of Islamic and traditional Turkish doctrines regarding loyalty of the army to the sultan helped the Abdülhamid II to create a more loyal military organization. Second, re-organization and centralization of military education and control of the curricula and the faculty in military schools by the central authority aimed to create a loyal army. War literature demonstrated the terms, according to which the loyalty between the ruler and the army was reconstructed.

Nevertheless, the sultan needed modern methods to guarantee loyalty. This union could not be limited to the relationship between the sultan and his army. Further reforms were needed to spread modern means of loyalty to every sphere of social life throughout the Empire. *Tebrikname* gave a detailed list of schools that were built during the Hamidian era in every corner of the Empire. The central authority’s and officers’ stress on public education derived from the ideological tendencies of the regime. According to Akşin Somel, buildings aside, the significant transformations were seen in the curricula of modern schools. For him, “the political ideal of loyalty toward the sultan, the Ottoman state as well as a kind of a dynastic and Islamic patriotism was promoted.”<sup>522</sup> The Hamidian regime re-organized the educational system and built several schools around the Empire according to its political priorities.

During the Hamidian era, symbols of power representing the Empire and the ruling monarch reached the Ottoman periphery. Tanzimat’s legal reforms, new conscription

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<sup>521</sup> “Osmanlı askeri asker-i padişahî, ve Osmanlı padişahı asker-i şehinşâhîdir,” *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 48.

<sup>522</sup> Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839–1908*, p. 167.

policies, and land reforms caused disturbances in the countryside. However, the same reforms created a legal framework to establish disciplinary mechanisms and modern policing institutions.<sup>523</sup> The legal framework was maintained by newly established security forces. Monopolization of the use of violence by the armed forces of central administration supported the politics of loyalty. Police and gendarmes in the countryside were inclusive of the modern symbols of central power.

Besides legislative and judicial arrangements, symbols of sultanic power became more tangible in every corner of the imperial domains. Ottomans were able to see, touch, and read about their monarch in the squares of their cities. Their sultan was on the clock towers when they wondered what time it was, or on the entrances of the mosques in their villages, when they performed their prayers. In times of discontent, police stations in the towns or military stations in the cities would protect the security of the citizens and refurbish the order in the region. Wrongdoers would be tried at the closest court and serve time in recently built or reformed prisons.

In his reign, the sultan-caliph observed to protect peace at home and abroad, which required intensive diplomatic maneuvers. In order to maintain imperial power, the Ottoman sultan needed close relations especially with the European monarchs and their ambassadors in Istanbul. On 1 September 1901, all foreign diplomats in Istanbul were summoned at Yıldız Palace to present letters of felicitations from their sovereigns to

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<sup>523</sup> Özbek, "Policing the Countryside," pp. 51-3.

celebrate the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II. They dined together with the Ottoman sultan and watched the illuminations and demonstrations on the Bosphorus.<sup>524</sup>

Abdülhamid II and his bureaucrats used the silver-jubilee celebrations to rehabilitate or secure the Empire's international relations. Many diplomats were invited to and hosted in Istanbul hotels. The palace met the expenses of the travel and accommodation of foreign visitors. The Ottoman archives are full of the account records for the expenses of foreign visitors, who attended the ceremonies.<sup>525</sup>

*Tebriknâme* included a list of foreign monarchs and their relatives to the Ottoman sultan. Highly esteemed visitors on the list testified the legitimate authority of Abdülhamid II.<sup>526</sup> From these visits and the copies of letters and telegrams between foreign monarchs and the Ottoman sultan, it is clear that Abdülhamid II had close relations with certain dynasties, particularly of European empires.<sup>527</sup> Moreover, the sultan also sent letters to honorary consuls of the Empire abroad, such as the consul at Bologna and Chicago, to answer their congratulatory messages.<sup>528</sup>

These close relations not only consolidated the coalition among European monarchies, but also contributed to the technology transfer between countries. In a friendly letter to the German emperor, Abdülhamid II demanded for an adjustment in the purchase order

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<sup>524</sup> John Burman (ed.), *Notes from Constantinople: The Political Diary of Sir Nicholas O'Connor, Britain's Ambassador to the Porte* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), p. 105.

<sup>525</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2457/74; BOA, DH. MKT. 2457/83; BOA, DH. MKT. 2457/104; BOA, DH. MKT. 2468/41; BOA, BEO. 1642/123092; BOA, DH. MKT. 2477/69; BOA, DH. MKT. 2516/3.

<sup>526</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>527</sup> BOA, Y. EE. 63/43.

<sup>528</sup> BOA, BEO. 1551/116287; BOA, BEO. 1561/117009.

of *Mauser* rifles, which were outdated by the newest *Loewe* rifles. For the Ottoman sultan, it would be intolerable for his modern army to draw on outdated equipment. It would be a disaster if neighboring countries, intentions of which were questionable, accessed latest technology.<sup>529</sup>

Hamidian regime also interpreted the silver jubilee as an opportunity to ameliorate Abdülhamid II's image in the western public. The palace sent information about the news from the celebration festivals and the lists of Abdülhamid II's acts and deeds in the Empire throughout his reign to foreign newspapers. The regime sponsored foreign journalists to publish articles to praise the reign of the sultan.<sup>530</sup>

According to *Tebrikname*, fortitude and vigilance were prerequisites of a great political career. Equipped with these characteristics, Abdülhamid II tried to deliver and prolong peace for humankind even cases of provocations, during his twenty five years of service.<sup>531</sup>

Celebrating the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II, *Tebrikname* draws attention to the measures taken in judiciary matters to maintain public order, and reforms in correctional facilities and methods. During his reign, legislative reforms and the establishment of 481 new *nizamiye* courts all around the Empire were supported by the reorganization of prosecuting, responding, and appealing practices.<sup>532</sup> In order to cultivate judges and

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<sup>529</sup> Abdülkadir Özcan & İlhan Şahin, "II. Abdülhamid'in Hususi Mektub ve Telgrafları," in *Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. 34 (1984), pp. 468-9.

<sup>530</sup> BOA, Y. PRK. TKM. 44/7 ; BOA, Y. PRK. TKM. 44/9 ; BOA, Y. PRK. HR. 29/12.

<sup>531</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 32.

<sup>532</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, pp. 53-6.

officers, *Mekteb-i Hukuk-u Şahane* was established in as early as 1879.<sup>533</sup> According to Avi Rubin, “the ultra-centralistic practices that were imposed by Abdülhamid II and his senior officials, eventually turning the Empire into a sort of police state, were advantageous for the purpose of realizing the judicial reforms.”<sup>534</sup> Autocratic Hamidian regime and its disciplinary measurements within administrative organs and bureaucracy helped the consolidation of Tanzimat era’s judicial reforms and *Nizamiye* (order) courts.

Those who are found guilty and sentenced for imprisonment would serve time in jails that were ordered to be inspected regularly according to latest public health (*hıfzısıhha*), regulations. In the cause of correction of personality and morality (*tehzib-ün nefis ü ahlak*) prisoners would learn a craft in prisons. Abdülhamid II sent high officers to a congress that was held in St. Petersburg to learn about the latest developments regarding the imprisonment practices in Europe. In accordance with the modern regulations, newly built correctional facilities for men and women, in separate buildings, were improved with hospitals, bath houses, dormitory rooms and workshops.<sup>535</sup> The Ottoman state reorganized its legal standards according to modern European practices.

Philanthropic activities multiplied during the Hamidian era. According to Nadir Özbek, the increasing number of such activities represented the development of civil society and public sphere in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In every corner of the Empire, both the elite and non-elite segments of society organized philanthropic events, fund

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<sup>533</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 60.

<sup>534</sup> Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 54.

<sup>535</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 57.

raisings, and lotteries.<sup>536</sup> Main agenda of the events were to help victims of poverty and natural disasters.<sup>537</sup> Many of the charity events involved collecting aids for war victims. Philanthropy not only helped the construction of Ottoman civil society but also called attention on the part of the public to the developments at the war front, especially during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 and the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897.

The state, in most cases, was the main sponsor of philanthropic activities. *Tebriknâme* informs the reader about the social policies of the Hamidian regime in general and the sultan’s personal charities in particular. According to the author of *Tebriknâme*, because of his philanthropist policies Abdülhamid II can be called as “succor for the helpless and a blessed protector for the feeble,” *meded-res bî câregân ve hâmi-i akdes dermandegân*.<sup>538</sup> The image of the guardian of the less-fortunate and the helpless aimed to upgrade the public image of the sultan. *Tebrikname* narrated the foundation of *Dar-ül Aceze* (founded in 1895) for the helpless, *Hamidiye Etfal Hastahanesi* (founded in 1899) for the children in poor health, *Dar-ül Eytam* (founded in 1899) for orphans.<sup>539</sup> All of these charitable institutions were constructed and financed under the auspices of Abdülhamid II. It also explained the creation of the funds and commissions to deal with the unfortunate, the orphans, the children that comes from underprivileged families, and the disaster victims, in a detailed manner.<sup>540</sup> According to the writer, Abdülhamid II’s

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<sup>536</sup> Özbek, “Philanthropic Activities,” p. 67.

<sup>537</sup> See appendix A-39 for the aid office to the orphans and widows of the martyrs

<sup>538</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 34.

<sup>539</sup> See appendix A-40, 41, 42, 43 for such hospitals for the orphan or the less-fortunate.

<sup>540</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 34.

philanthropist actions displayed the considerable amount of welfare and happiness, *fikr-i a'mâr u 'umrân*, in the hearth of the sultan.<sup>541</sup>

Throughout the Hamidian era, central power took legal, administrative, and educational measures, and installed modern disciplinary tools to maintain social order. The Ottoman State constructed modern facilities, such as garrisons, barracks, gendarme stations, and prisons, to represent central power in urban and rural spaces. At the same time, the central authority took advantage of public events organized by associations, which were the guilds of modern era, to construct a civil society according to its communitarian-social projections.

Wars became incidents during which, various segments of society and the state shared identical sensibilities. War literature helped to awaken social activism and collective awareness. The Ottoman society, the Ottoman army, and the Ottoman sovereign gradually merged with each other. Written to narrate the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II on the occasion of the sultan's silver jubilee, *Tebrikname* narrated the ways in which the regime deliberately constituted a union between different segments of society and the central authority through modern organizations and techniques.

The historical shift that comes with the Hamidian regime has been studied in terms of educational reforms by Selçuk Akşin Somel and Benjamin Fortna; by Avi Rubin in terms of legal reforms; in terms of political uses of caliphacy by Kemal Karpat; and in terms of administrative transformation and legitimation efforts by Engin Akarlı and Selim

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<sup>541</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 35.



Deringil.<sup>542</sup> *Tebriknâme* details all of these reforms in order to display them as successes of the Hamidian regime. It expresses that legal, administrative, and educational changes were depending on a comprehensive, officially supported scheme with social undertones. Written to celebrate the Hamidian era, *Tebriknâme* is a significant example to show the intimate link between literature and political power.

## 7.2. Spatial Impositions

Abdülhamid II paid from his personal wealth for the curtains and grave coverings in Ibrahim bin Adham's tomb to be renewed.<sup>543</sup> Famous for his generosity and philanthropism, Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 777–8) was one of the first Sufi ascetics to inspire later Sufi generations. Born into a wealthy community in Balkh, he migrated to Syria and chose a semi-nomadic puritan lifestyle. He fought against Byzantine forces and died on the battlefield in 777. Adham is believed to be buried in Jableh, close to Latakia in today's Syria.<sup>544</sup>

During the reign of Abdülhamid II, several mosques, religious schools, dervish lodges, and tombs were whether constructed, restored, or furnished all around the Empire.

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<sup>542</sup> Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839–1908*; Benjamin C. Fortna, "Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman 'Secular' Schools," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2000); Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*; Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts*; Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*; Engin Deniz Akarlı, *The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggles, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics under Abdülhamid II (1876–1909)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University (1976).

<sup>543</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 16.

<sup>544</sup> *EI2*, Vol. 3, p. 985.

Pilgrims to Mecca and Medina encountered various restorations and newly built caravanserais, hospitals, baths, public fountains, public kitchens and police stations.<sup>545</sup> In Ka'ba, new private rooms were prepared for the use of women.<sup>546</sup> Even in the Holy places, the Ottoman sultan was not afraid of imposing modern order and spatial re-organization. While he executed the traditional duties of the Ottoman sultans to watch over the Holy places, he re-invigorated and consolidated his leading position in the Muslim world.

Besides construction of many mosques in his name, Abdülhamid II tried to invigorate spaces connected with religious orders. *Dergahs* of many Sufi orders were built, restored, ornamented, and furnished. Tombs of many sheiks, seyyids and the leaders of *Şâzelî*, *Kâdirî*, *Nakshbandî*, *Rîfâî* and other important mystic orders were built or renovated.<sup>547</sup> By building close connections with these religious orders, the sultan aimed to gain support to strengthen his position in the Muslim world.

Even though the invention of early Ottoman history came out before Hamidian era, its spatial supplements were by and large created throughout the Hamidian reign. Many renovation efforts including Ertuğrul Mosque next to the Yıldız Palace, the Sheikh Edebali Mosque in Bilecik, the Tomb of Ertuğrul Gazi in Söğüt, the Tomb of Gazi Süleyman Paşa (son of Orhan) in Bolayır, the Tomb of Gazi Mihal in Edirne, the Tomb of Hayme Ana (mother of Ertuğrul) in Söğüt were the major spatial instruments to

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<sup>545</sup> See appendix A-44 for a photo of the dormitory building at Mecca.

<sup>546</sup> *Tebrikname-i Milli*, p. 13.

<sup>547</sup> See appendix A-45 for a photo of Şâzelî Dergah adjacent to the newly built Ertuğrul Mosque in Beşiktaş.

reproduce and engrave the early Ottoman past. These buildings were either in desperate conditions or they were “invented” during the Hamidian era. Therefore, the renovations or “emergence” of these buildings aimed to reinforce the regime’s historical and religious claims. Thus, legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty and its ghazi identity was carved on map and cast in stone.

Throughout the Hamidian era, Söğüt, a small town, from which the Ottoman State was born, became a sanctuary town. In 1886, Abdülhamid II built a tomb for the founder of the state, Ertuğrul Gazi in Söğüt. In the following year, a tomb stone for Hayme Ana, who was believed to be the mother of Ertuğrul, and 25 other stones for the ghazis, Ertuğrul’s knights, were placed adjacent to his tomb.<sup>548</sup> During that process of “dynastic legitimation,” in Deringil’s words, Abdülhamid II re-decorated Anatolia with numerous commemorative buildings. The Ottomans encountered the spatial symbols that aimed to make visible of the Ottoman dynasty in their everyday lives.

The Ottoman sanctuary in Söğüt immediately became a place of remembrance. Every October, *Karakeçili* Tribe, which claimed itself as the original ancestors of the Ottomans living in the region, paraded in Söğüt on their horses and wearing swords, chanting “we are the soldiers of the Ertuğrul Regiment... We are ready to die for our Sultan Abdülhamid.”<sup>549</sup> According to Feridun Emecen, the tribe really took a role in the early Ottoman military expansion.<sup>550</sup> However, Deringil denied that role and interpreted the

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<sup>548</sup> Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>549</sup> Quoted in Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, p. 32.

<sup>550</sup> Feridun Emecen, “Kayılar ve Osmanlılar: Sahte Bir Kimlik İnşası mı?,” Tufan Gündüz & Mikail Cengiz (eds.), *Oğuzlar: Dilleri, Tarihleri ve Kültürleri. Beşinci Uluslararası Türkiyat Araştırmalarının Bildirileri* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2015), p. 242.

parades of *Karakeçilis* as an “invented tradition,” which aimed to support Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman dynasty.

Whether the historical role of the tribe is true, as Feridun Emecen argued, or an “invented tradition,” according to Deringil, the case is representative to understand the ways in which Hamidian regime capitalized every cultural device according to its legitimation policies. Through spatial, literary, cultural performances, and “great projects,” the Ottoman sovereignty aimed to capture the daily life of the Ottoman subjects in every corner of the Empire, as part of its legitimation policies and centralization attempts.

Ottoman revivalism emerged during the Tanzimat Era as a multifaceted project, in which spatial as well as literary tributes were paid to remember the early Ottoman past. The main aim of this venture was to utilize the glories of the past in the nineteenth century Ottoman legitimacy structures. During the Hamidian era this historical venture became more productive and complicated. In *Levami’ül Hamidiyye*, Ali Emîrî Efendi represented Abdülhamid II as the legitimate heir of the Ottoman throne and the caliphacy.

One of the tools of that multifaceted project to legitimize Hamidian regime was deriving from the sultan’s leading position in the Muslim world. For Ali Emîrî, the sultan’s leading position in the Muslim world is historically legitimate. Literature supported Abdülhamid II’s emphasis on the early Ottoman history and his projects to refashion the places of birth of the Ottoman State. Ali Emîrî connected dynastic legitimacy with the Ottomans’ role as ghazis and protectors of the Islamic faith. The significance of *Levami’ül Hamidiyye* derived from the fact that it constructed a linear continuity between

early Ottoman sultans with their modern heirs regarding the significance and respect given to the religious cause.

According to Ali Emîrî, “one day Osman and Ertuğrul visited Dursun Fakih to spend the night. There, they asked what was hanging on the wall. After realizing that it was Qur’an, they stayed standing up until the sunrise.”<sup>551</sup> To celebrate Abdülhamid II’s silver jubilee, Emin Bey a member of the entourage (*kurenâ*) of the sultan, claimed that he acquired the same Qur’an from the family of Dursun Fakih and wished to present him to Abdülhamid II, in 19 April, 1901.<sup>552</sup>

Started with Osman, strengthened by Mehmed II in the fifteenth century, and continued with Abdülmecid, who renovated Ka’ba, in modern era the theme of Ottoman sultans respecting Islam continued in epic literature. Therefore, Abdülhamid II’s venture of Ottoman-Islamic revival and his revitalization of caliphacy were also perceived along the same line of historical meaning. During the Hamidian era, Holy Lands enjoyed the specifically high esteem from the Ottoman sultan. He financed several restoration projects, including the ornamentation of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, both are in al-Quds, the Jerusalem.<sup>553</sup>

Abdülhamid II did not only use architecture to boost his image as caliph of the Muslim world. He ordered architectural pieces to be built to increase the popularity of his regime

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<sup>551</sup> Ali Emîrî, *Levâmi’ül Hamidiyye*, p. 13.

<sup>552</sup> BOA, Y. EE. 91/14.

<sup>553</sup> Beatrice St. Laurent & Andrés Riedlmayer, “Restorations of Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock and Their Political Significance, 1537–1928,” *Muqarnas*, Vol. 10, Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar (1993), p. 81. See appendix A-46 for a photo of Al-Aqsa Mosque’s interior decoration.

in European cities. He proposed that “an adorable fountain” (*çeşme-i dilârâ*) be constructed in London, in 1901.<sup>554</sup> One of the aims was to repair the sultan’s public image as a tyrant in Europe, especially after “Bulgarian Atrocities” and British Prime Minister Gladstone’s insulting comments on the Turkish government. Interestingly enough, the blueprint of the fountain, which was planned to be built in London, looks exactly the same with the fountain commissioned by German Emperor Wilhelm II to commemorate the latter’s visit to Istanbul. *Kaiser Wilhelm Brunnen (Alman Çeşmesi*, in Turkish) was built in Germany and assembled in Istanbul, at the same year with the one that was planned to be built in London.<sup>555</sup> Abdülhamid II aimed to represent his sovereignty as equal, in terms of legitimacy and power, to the European Kings’.

Hamidian spatial projects did not only aim to harvest spiritual associations, creating historical references, and promote the popularity of the regime abroad. Throughout the reign of Abdülhamid II, public buildings for various services emerged all over the Ottoman Empire. Schools, hospitals, city halls, roads, and bridges shaped the physical environment in the Ottoman cities, which became more connected with the central government, and helped the central authority to communicate with the periphery. Military buildings were great part of that endeavor. Istanbul was fortified with garrisons, barracks, stables, arsenals, and hospitals. Several Anatolian cities were equipped with such facilities, most of which would serve later during the Great War and against the Greek occupation, which followed the allied invasion.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> BOA, Y. PRK. BŞK. 66/53 (see appendix B-2).

<sup>555</sup> For detailed information on *Alman Çeşmesi*, see Ceren Göğüş & Zeynep Kuban, “German Traces in Ottoman Istanbul: the Kaiser Wilhelm Fountain,” *İTÜ A/Z*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (July 2015), pp. 119-29.

<sup>556</sup> See appendix A-47, 48 for photos of such military buildings.

Clock towers, archetypal symbols of the Hamidian reign, were placed in many Ottoman cities mostly to celebrate the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II.<sup>557</sup> The clock-tower was the most symbolically representative archetype of the Hamidian reign. The clock-towers were the significant part of Hamidian iconography at its best. In every corner of the Empire, they exposed the regime's insistence on the new social order and discipline. The regime interpreted them as, "instruments with which to advertise the central government's power in the provinces."<sup>558</sup> The Ottoman sovereign became visible in the heart of the urban public space, indicating time.<sup>559</sup>

Prominent bureaucrats interpreted the silver jubilee of the sultan as an opportunity to offer their loyalty to Abdülhamid II through sponsoring constructions. For instance, Edhem Paşa, the hero of the War of 1897, made the opening ceremony for the mosque he built in Yenişehir (Larissa), which he conquered at the war, during the silver-jubilee celebrations of the sultan.<sup>560</sup>

Ottoman cities and towns witnessed several architectural activities executed by local actors in honor of the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II, in 1901. Local notables around the empire sponsored construction of various types of buildings to express their loyalty to the sultan-caliph. Local commissions controlled the construction process, decided which project was to be done, hired contractors, engineers, architects, sculptors and painters.

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<sup>557</sup> See appendix A-49 for a photo of Hamidiye Clock-Tower in the precincts of Yıldız Palace.

<sup>558</sup> Mehmet Bengü Uluengin, "Secularizing Anatolia Tick by Tick: Clocktowers in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2010), p. 20.

<sup>559</sup> See appendix A-50 for a photo of the local notables at the inauguration ceremony of Hamidiye Fountain in Salonica.

<sup>560</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2411/84.

Such state officials as the *mutasarrıf*, *vali*, *kaymakam* were responsible in supervising the constructions in order to guarantee the conformity of the archetypes to the Hamidian style.

Many construction projects were sponsored by local inhabitants under the supervision of mayors and governors. The regime's aspiration to display its sovereignty in the districts was materialized by local inhabitants. Therefore, the commoners voluntarily become active participants of the authorization process of central power. The intermediaries of that modern political illusion, *mutasarrıf*, *vali*, *kaymakam*, acquired affiliation with the central government. For instance, people of Razlık (today Razlog, Bulgaria) build a municipality office, a hamam, a fountain, and a pool in honor of the silver jubilee.<sup>561</sup> Mehmed Efendi, a local notable of Maraş, sponsored the construction of Timur Paşa Mosque in the city, and primary schools in close towns, Andırın and Göksun (in today's Maraş), in honor of the sultan's silver jubilee.<sup>562</sup>

Abdülhamid II awarded the local bureaucrats, who took roles in such construction projects. For instance, in Erzincan, these local actors built a fountain specifically to celebrate the sultan's silver jubilee. Among the local notables, clerk Hüseyin Bey, engineer Harafim Efendi, and the head of the construction commission Halid Efendi rose in rank, while the contractors Şükrü and Gabril, and painter Aram Efendi each received *Sanayi Medals*.<sup>563</sup> While local actors connected themselves with the regime throughout

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<sup>561</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2414/126.

<sup>562</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2417/45.

<sup>563</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2414/39.



the process, they also helped Ottoman sovereignty to become visible in almost every corner of the empire.

Apart from the projects handled by local notables and bureaucrats, the state sponsored many architectural projects all around the Empire in honor of the sultan's silver jubilee. In Salonica, a primary school, *Selanik Yedigâr-ı Hamidiye İbtida'î Mektebi* was built.<sup>564</sup> The name of the school directly indicated the purpose of building the school in connection with the sultan's silver jubilee. In Karabiga, Çanakkale, a mosque was built to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abdülhamid II on the Ottoman throne.<sup>565</sup> Several schools, hospitals, and fountains were constructed around the province of Ankara for the same purpose.<sup>566</sup> In Siroz (today Serres, Greece), a mosque, a prison, a fountain, dorms for poor children and a separate section for women in the Hospital of the town for the less-fortunate were built.<sup>567</sup> In Yanya (today Ioannina, Greece), the state sponsored the construction of an office for reserve soldiers, a clock-tower, and a fountain.<sup>568</sup>

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the enthronement of Abdülhamid II was an opportunity for the Hamidian regime to consolidate the sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan throughout the empire. The Ottoman central administration announced the inauguration of many great construction projects and sponsored the erection of several buildings across the empire to bolster the image of the sultan. Furthermore, the regime also encouraged local

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<sup>564</sup> BOA, MF. MKT. 659/1.

<sup>565</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2411/82.

<sup>566</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2398/12.

<sup>567</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2397/146.

<sup>568</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 2398/45.

actors such as local notables and state officials to join the construction projects.

Architecture became a tool for the central government to reconstruct its relationship with the Ottoman citizens. The next part looks at the eulogies, which were written to celebrate the sultan's silver jubilee.

### 7.3. Literary Compositions

Hamidian regime and the sultan's silver jubilee were not only celebrated through spatial appearances but through literature. As part of the celebration program for the twenty-five years of Hamidian rule, traditional poetical forms to eulogize the reigning sultan, such as *kaside* and *medhiye*, reappeared. Poems to glorify the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II appeared for various reasons. They were created either to be read in public festivals, to be chanted at schools, to be devoted to his caliphacy, to his military leadership of the Muslim world, or to his political leadership of the Ottoman world. Journalists and government officers created Hamidian epic in Turkish, Greek, or Arabic.

Non-Turkish odes to Abdülhamid II represent the formation of the late nineteenth century Ottomanism. Non-Turkish speaking communities used literature to strengthen their relationship with the central power, which was mainly related to the persona of the sultan. Greek examples owe much to the nineteenth century idea of Helleno-Ottomanism that was generated by the leaders of the Greek community to guarantee minority rights by accepting the legitimacy of the Ottoman rule.<sup>569</sup> Greek patriarch was the guarantor of that

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<sup>569</sup> Sia Anagnostopoulou & Matthias Kappler, “Ζήτω Ζήτω ο Σουλτανος / Bin Yaşa Padişahimiz: the *millet-i Rum* singing praises of the Sultan in the framework of Helleno-Ottomanism,” *Archivum Ottomanicum*, Vol. 23, (2005/06), p. 47.

relationship. While the Ottoman sultan was the political leader, the patriarch was the national leader for the Greek community. Due to the fact that they were both sent from god, they were unchallengeable.<sup>570</sup> Therefore, Abdülhamid II's autocratic regime was also beneficial for the Greek patriarch, when criticisms within the community threatened its leadership.<sup>571</sup> The patriarch was also responsible to display his community's obedience to the sultan in religious festivities, at Greek schools, and in the presence of the sultan. In January 1898, the Greek patriarch in Istanbul hosted Orthodox bishops in a dinner for Abdülhamid II's fifty-sixth birthday.<sup>572</sup> Poetry was part of these public displays. "Ode to His Imperial Majesty the Sultan" is a march that is recorded in a Greek musical anthology from 1888. Written in epic form, it exhibited how close Greek elites to the idea of the leadership of an Ottoman sultan. It praised Abdülhamid II as:

"He continuously granted gain and prosperity for all the nation,  
He made the enemy draw back with fear from the subduing foe.  
He cured the sick of community with modern treatment.  
He illuminated and exalted the throne of the world with his luck."<sup>573</sup>

Motivation for the Arab writers to praise Abdülhamid II was quite different. Even though they also targeted the well-being of the Empire, those who blessed the sultan did so according to the future prospects for the Muslim world under the leadership of the sultan-caliph. An antagonist of the British rule in Egypt, a well known Arabic writer Ahmed Shawqi (1868–1932) emphasized that the only political power to unite Muslim world and

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<sup>570</sup> Anagnostopoulou & Kappler, "Bin Yaşa Padişahımız," p. 49.

<sup>571</sup> Anagnostopoulou & Kappler, "Bin Yaşa Padişahımız," p. 52.

<sup>572</sup> Fatmağül Demirel, "Osmanlı Padişahlarının Doğum Günü Kutlamalarına Bir Örnek," *İlmi Araştırmalar: Dil, Edebiyat, Tarih İncelemeleri 11* (2001), p. 69.

<sup>573</sup> Anagnostopoulou & Kappler, "Bin Yaşa Padişahımız," p. 73.

resist western colonialism was that of the sultan-caliph in Istanbul. In 1897, he addressed the sultan as:

“The world would not have been placed in order,  
if you (Abdülhamid II) were not us peace and harmony.  
The Muslim and the Islam accepts Abdülhamid.  
May God give you power.”<sup>574</sup>

Celebrating the victory in 1897 against Greeks, Shawqi wrote his *Sadâ ül-Harb* (echoes of the war). Very much similar to the Ottoman-Turkish narratives written after the war, he praised military leadership of Abdülhamid II, the ability of the Ottoman soldiers, and Ottoman modern weaponry. Following the epic stories of Ottoman heroism against a Christian enemy, the book ended with Shawqi’s literary commitment to the Ottoman sultan and his ghaza:

“Oh my master Abdülhamid,  
the swords have praised you  
and how beautiful they have spoken.  
I hope that my writing tube also can praise you.”<sup>575</sup>

Arab writers’ reaction to the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II mainly coincided with the announcement of Hijaz Railway Project to unite Istanbul and the holy city of Medina via Damascus on May 1, 1900. The main purpose of the project was to integrate Arab region to the center of political and religious authority. Besides its ideological purpose, the project had benefits for the defense and security of the Arab lands. With the installment of Suez Canal in 1869, Britain took control of the route from Mediterranean to Hejaz and

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<sup>574</sup> Turki Mugheid, *Sultan Abdulhamid II im Spiegel der Arabischen Dichtung: Eine Studie zu Literatur und Politik in der Spätperiode des Osmanischen Reiches* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1987), p. 145. I have translated the verses in German in Mugheid’s book into English.

<sup>575</sup> Mugheid, *Sultan Abdulhamid II*, p. 165.

Yemen. When the Ottomans completed the construction, they would be able to transport Ottoman troops to the Arabian Peninsula in times of inner turmoil and foreign military intervention.<sup>576</sup>

Hejaz Railway Project aroused great interest in the Arabic public opinion. The Egyptian writer of Circassian origin, Ahmad Muharram (1871–1945) welcomes the project:

“The pilgrims are happy as the locomotive runs,  
thus they forget the camels.  
It befits the caliph as people are pleased (on the train),  
without you (Abdülhamid), men cannot be happy.”<sup>577</sup>

At the end of his twenty-five years of reign, Abdülhamid II managed to get his claim for the leadership of the Muslim world accepted by Arab intellectuals. At the beginning of his reign, Ottoman writers were already committed to fashion Abdülhamid II as the caliph. Written to celebrate the new Ottoman sultan, *cülüsnames* announced the expectations from Abdülhamid II to exhibit a powerful leadership in the Ottoman and the Muslim world:

“Issues of the country found a new inspiration  
Here comes a fresh spirit for the kindred and colleagues of Islam  
Enemies of the religion and the state are drowned into misery  
Friends of the state and the nation became happy.”<sup>578</sup>

“Buldu ahvâl-i umûr-ı memleket feyz-ü cedîd  
geldi hısm ü heyet-i İslâmiyâna tâze cân  
düşmanân-ü dîn ü devlet oldular garkâb ü gâm  
dostân-ü mülk ü millet oldular heb şâd-mân,”

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<sup>576</sup> Murat Özyüksel, *Hicaz Demiryolu* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), pp. 70-1.

<sup>577</sup> Mugheid, *Sultan Abdulhamid II*, p. 157.

<sup>578</sup> Mehmed Mihri, *Cülusnâme-i Sultan Abdülhamid Hân-ı Sâni* (İstanbul: 1293/1876), p. 3.

Nevertheless, at the early stage of the Hamidian era, fearing that the unification of the Muslim world under the Ottoman leadership would threaten their colonial interests, British scholars opened a debate to separate the religious leadership from Ottoman sultanate. Against the Ottoman claims for caliphacy, they sought a formula to assign the Sheriff of Mecca as the caliph.<sup>579</sup>

Abdülhamid II used propaganda measures to respond the challenges against his position as the leader of the Muslim world. Not only to defy the criticisms for the Ottoman caliphacy and to celebrate the sultan's silver jubilee, el-Mekkî prepared a detailed list of public works done by Abdülhamid II in the Holy Lands of Islam. The book started with a brief interpretation of the ghazi role of the Ottomans in the history of Islam. According to el-Mekkî, as the great Ottoman caliphs (*hulefâ-i 'izâm-ı Osmaniyye*), the Ottoman sultans established the rule of science, justice, and security by enlarging the kingdom of Islam through the conquests (*fütühât u gazavât*).<sup>580</sup> The function of the Ottomans was not limited to their ghazi role in the frontier of Islamic world. As caliphs, the Ottoman sultans perfectly followed the religious precepts and paid attention to protect the Holy Lands and ameliorate their conditions. Heir of this tradition, during the reign of Abdülhamid II, the region witnessed many restoration and construction works. The inhabitants of the Holy Lands enjoyed not only order and security in the region but also infrastructural developments, such as fresh water and communication.

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<sup>579</sup> Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Opposition to the Ottoman Caliphate in the Early Years of Abdülhamid II: 1877–1882," *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1996), pp. 65-8.

<sup>580</sup> Muhammed el-Emin el- Mekkî, *Hulefâ-i 'izâm-ı Osmaniyye Hazerâtının Haremeyn-i Şerifeyndeki âsâr-ı Mebrûre ve Meşkûre-i Humâyunlarından Bahis Tarihi bir Eserdir* (Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Osmaniyye, 1318/1900–1901), p. 2.

Through Abdülhamid II's silver jubilee, the criticisms against the Ottoman caliphacy disappeared. Due to the rising anti-western colonialist opinions among many Arab intellectuals and the sultan's effective centralization policies, the Arab press became part of the Hamidian public diplomacy. Another Egyptian poet, who was famous for his political polemics, Ahmad al-Kashif (1878–1948) addressed Abdülhamid II as:

“You have paved the road for pilgrims,  
until the route became faster than the clouds.  
You have united the warring hearts on the right line,  
although alienated those on the wrong.”<sup>581</sup>

Abdülhamid II was not only the leader of the Muslim world. He was also the ruler of the Empire with a great non-Muslim population. One archival document shows that the sultan was not only quite successful to carry out this dual role, but also his dual role was accepted both by Muslim groups abroad and by non-Muslims in the Empire. According to the document, the sultan appreciated the celebratory letters, which were sent through the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's delegate in Russia, Archimandrite Yafeos, from the Muslims living in Russia.<sup>582</sup>

Besides non-Muslim and Arab writers, Hamidian epic writers located in Istanbul precipitated to document the acts and deeds of Abdülhamid II after the victory in 1897 through the sultan's silver jubilee in 1901. Mehmed Celal, once an opponent of the Hamidian regime, wrote a long eulogy for the sultan. He dedicated *Şevketlü Padişahımız Gazi Büyük Abdülhamid Han-ı Sâni Efendimiz Hazretleri* to Abdülhamid II, as the title

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<sup>581</sup> Mugheid, *Sultan Abdulhamid II*, p. 157.

<sup>582</sup> BOA, BEO. 1558/116787 (see appendix B-3).

suggested. The first half of that long poem summarized the histories of the great sultans from the history of Islam and the Ottoman Empire.

In the second half, Mehmed Celal summarized the achievements of Abdülhamid II, during his first twenty-five years on the Ottoman throne. The summary culminated around the sultan's contributions to the education, medicine, and social policies in the Empire and his philanthropism. According to Mehmed Celal, Abdülhamid II made countless contributions to the modernization of the Empire. He wrote:

“He exalted the state by his kindness,  
He revived the nation by his justice.”<sup>583</sup>

“Devleti lütfuyla ‘alâ eyledi  
milleti adliyle ihyâ eyledi,”

Mehmed Celal wrote a verse for every institution that was established during the Hamidian era. For instance, he celebrated the foundation of *Mekteb-i Sanayi-i Nefise-i Şahane*,<sup>584</sup> which was modeled from *Ecole des Beaux-Art* in France:

“He perfected every school,  
Honoring the graces of the king of the kings.  
In short, that Mekteb-i Sanayî  
With favors of which became beneficial for this state.”<sup>585</sup>

“Her mektebi eyledi mükemmel  
Eltâf-ı Şehinşâha mübeccel  
Ez cümle şu Mekteb-i Sanayî  
Lütfuyla bu mülke oldu nef'î.”

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<sup>583</sup> Mehmed Celal, *Şevketlü Padişahımız Gazi Büyük Abdülhamid Han-ı Sâni Efendimiz Hazretleri* (Konstantiniye: Tahir Bey Matbaası, n.d.), p. 167.

<sup>584</sup> See appendix A-51 for a photo of the musical band of *İzmir Mekteb-i Sanayii*.

<sup>585</sup> Mehmed Celal, *Şevketlü Padişahımız*, p. 164.



During the Hamidian era, number of medical facilities and medical doctors increased.

*Mekteb-i Tibbiye-i Şahane* and *Askerî Tibbiye İdâdisi* became centers of positive sciences and not only raised doctors but also future intellectuals, such as Abdullah Cevdet (1869–1932), biologic materialist and one of the founders of *İttihat ve Terakkî Fırkası*. Mehmed Celal celebrated the developments in the field of medicine as:

“Medicine and physicians got inspired  
Oh the unique king, you ordered  
Hospitals to be built everywhere.”<sup>586</sup>

“Feyz aldı tabâbet ve etibbâ  
Emr eyledi Şah-ı yegâne  
Heryerde yapıldı hastahâne.”

Modernizing measures targeted to cultivate a society with the utmost loyalty to the regime. While modern facilities furnished the imperial domains from Damascus to Istanbul, the regime was demanding accordance from newly educated generations with the precepts of the central administration. Young officers in particular and the army as an organization in general could only improve with the regime’s claim for a unity between the sovereign, society, and the army not only in theory and understanding but also in practice. Calling for a paternalistic bond between the sultan and the army, Mehmed Celal emphasized the need for a unity by telling that:

“Our soldiers, those glorious individuals,  
Precious children of our Sultan.”<sup>587</sup>

“Askerlerimiz, o şanlı efrâd  
Sultânımıza değerli evlad.”

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<sup>586</sup> Mehmed Celal, *Şevketlü Padişahımız*, p. 174.

<sup>587</sup> Mehmed Celal, *Şevketlü Padişahımız*, p. 184.

Besides epic writers, Abdülhamid II personally emphasized his patronage over the army. After the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897, a military officer visited Mustafa Süleyman, the hero of the story at the beginning of this chapter, at his hospital bed in İstanbul. The officer was assigned to decorate the ghazi with a medal. Before that, the officer read Abdülhamid II's general letter for the ghazis that started with "my dear children," to Mustafa Süleyman.

The letter began by stating that the Greeks were responsible for the war. According to Abdülhamid II, even though the Ottoman state paid utmost respect to protect the peace and order (*sulh-i musâlemetin muhafazası*), the Greeks attacked the Empire and acted to reverse the agreement (*nakz-i 'ahd*). Therefore, it became an obligation for the Ottomans to prevent justice and not to let the enemy to set foot on Ottoman soil. The Ottomans went to war and "became victorious with the help of God and spiritual help of the prophet." The sultan did not forget to express his gratitude for the good behaviors of the Ottoman soldiers in wherever they conquered. The sultan dedicated the medal that came with the letter to the determination, the service, the loyalty, and the bravery of the Ottoman soldiers at the war. According to Selanikli Tevfik, Abdülhamid II assigned his military officers by telling that "go see my ghazi children. They are my lions and my children that I do not differ from my own...and I grant them each a medal as the reminiscence of the war...God willing they will arrive to their homelands after they are recovered."<sup>588</sup> Therefore, the sultan constructed a patrimonial relationship with the soldiers.

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<sup>588</sup> "Sûret-i nutk-ı humâyun-ı pâdişâhi," Selanikli Tevfik, *Mirat-ı Vukuat-ı Harbiye*, pp. 303-04.

Mustafa Süleyman's forwardness in asking the sultan to build a mosque at his village could be derived from the latter's way of addressing the ghazi at his hospital bed.

Abdülhamid II's letter could be analyzed in several ways as regards his newly established patrimonial relationship with the ghazis.

The major theme in the royal letter was justice. The Ottoman state reacted to the failure of the Greeks to follow the rules of its treaty with the Empire and maintain the peace in Crete and Thessaly. The Ottoman army responded only when the Greeks violated the Ottoman sovereignty in these regions. Abdülhamid II was thankful to the Ottoman soldiers for their acts in the conquered lands. According to the general behavior of the Empire to follow the international legal codes, the Ottoman soldiers did not violate the general order wherever they appeared. The sultan's emphasis on justice and order addressed the harmony between the measures taken by the central administration at home and the military troops on the front.

The second significance of the letter was that the sultan chose an indirect tone in addressing the ghazis. The letter included phrases, such as "go see my children." The officer read the phrase as it did not address him. Thus, the dialogue became plurivocal, in which the officer became both the addressed and the addressee. The messenger of the sultan, the officer did not only become part of the imperial enterprise but also the voice of the central enterprise. In line with this, at the turn of the century, the Ottoman military establishment was fermented in the Hamidian regime in sense, in thought, and in vision at least in the way epic literature promoted or represented. The Ottoman victory at the Greek War in 1897 and its literary accounts helped the construction of such unity. Even during the decline of the Hamidian regime at the beginning of the twentieth century, the

confidence of the Ottoman military class in the imperial enterprise continued. Even though, some officers, such as Mustafa Kemal, might have imagined a republican regime, “it is clear that many officers in the war of independence were fighting not for a republic but to save the Ottoman state.”<sup>589</sup> The Ottoman military elite had never lost its faith in the survival of the Empire.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

For the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid II in 1901, the Yıldız Palace ordered celebratory books listing the legal, administrative, and military reforms, charitable works, architectural projects, and spatial arrangements. These were prepared to create an image for the Ottoman sultan as the modern founder of the state and to increase the visibility of the sovereign in the everyday life of the subjects

Besides officially sponsored projects, high bureaucrats, local actors, and non-Muslim communities also funded various projects around the Empire. They aimed to repair or strengthen their relations with the palace, which was more concerned with the concept of loyalty during the reign of Abdülhamid II.

The writers of epic literature celebrated the sultan’s silver jubilee with eulogies. They aimed to legitimize the sultan and supported his political claims. The Ottoman-Arab and Christian subjects also dedicated poems to the sultan. The Arab writers exalted Abdülhamid II for fighting against Western imperialism, while Greek Patriarchate

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<sup>589</sup> Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” p. 43.

dedicated marches to the sultan for his protection of religious communities from nationalists.

Late Ottoman war literature helped the Hamidian regime to consolidate its hegemony on society and the army. It represented Abdülhamid II as a ghazi, the Caliph, the father of the Ottomans, and as reformer. Hamidian epic was popular in terms of the published works up until the end of the Hamidian era in 1908, when the epic writers were ready to boost the popularity of new heroes.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

“Vive Abdul Hamid Khan, l’idole de ma vie,  
Je m’écrierais toujours—et—vive la Turquie.”<sup>590</sup>

The Greco-Ottoman War of 1897 ended up being a Pyrrhic victory for the Ottomans. Even though the Ottoman troops advanced as far as Athens in a space of few weeks, the Empire’s fragile international standing stripped the Ottomans from critical diplomatic support. Despite relative success on the battlefield, the Ottomans withdrew to the empire’s former borders and were forced to grant autonomy to Crete. After the terms of the armistice were known to Mustafa Kemal, the future leader of Turkey, he refused to partake in the customary glorification proceedings of Abdülhamid II at the Military School in Monastir.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Grégoire Laureani, “A sa Majesté Abdul Hamid, Empereur de Turquie,” Evariste Carrance (ed.), *Le XIX<sup>me</sup> Siècle Poésies* (Agen: Imprimerie V. Lenthéric, 1888), p. 262. The honorary chancellor of the Ottoman consulate in Messina, Laureani wrote the poem to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abdülhamid II on the Ottoman throne.

<sup>591</sup> George W. Gawrych, *The Young Atatürk: From Ottoman Soldier to Statesman of Turkey* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 6.

Once one of the mightiest powers in Europe, the Ottoman Empire underwent significant political and economic hardships during the nineteenth century. The Ottoman bureaucrats were forced to find solutions to keep imperial domains intact and the legitimacy of the state unquestioned. Stripped of finances, manpower, and ideas, however, the Ottoman Empire faced the very real threat of disintegration by the turn of the century, together with the Romanovs and the Habsburgs.

Nevertheless, when the armistice ending the Ottomans' Great War was signed in 1918, the psychological atmosphere in the barracks was not one of despair. Desertion was not common and officers were awaiting orders from the central headquarters.<sup>592</sup> Indeed, after losing one of the most devastating wars of modern history, the Ottoman troops were able to re-mobilize quite quickly. Likewise, the educated circles in the empire seem to have never lost faith in the legitimacy of the empire, as they considered imperial rule to represent the culmination of history.<sup>593</sup> In what ways, therefore, was this imperial loyalty constructed? When and how did the Ottoman army become identified with an imperial enterprise?

This study has investigate(d) the mechanisms through which imperial loyalty to the dynasty was forged, sustained, and mobilized during the Hamidian era, when the Ottoman Empire faced, for the first time in its history, the very real threat of imperial collapse and physical disintegration. It sought to approach these issues from a literary perspective: by tracing literary strategies and cultural codes invented during the

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<sup>592</sup> Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 179.

<sup>593</sup> Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," p. 43..

Hamidian era, it offered a fresh way of analyzing the chaotic cultural universe of an empire on the ropes. This universe was built on the premise of survival and glory—the Hamidian epic, which defines the logic of Ottoman War Literature, did not merely produce an empty heroism, but laid out the very principles of Hamidian social policy and intellectual mindset. Hamidian War Literature underscored the virtues of obedience, discipline, pietism, frugality, morality, and courage. Expressed through literary tropes, these values targeted the production of a social order that could revitalize a dying empire.

What's more, the institutional, psychological, and social heritage of the Hamidian regime survived well into the Republican period. It may even be argued that the very seeds of the modern Republican regime, which ostensibly defined itself in opposition to Hamidian rule, were sown under Abdülhamid II. The cultural universe of modern Turkey that shaped its politics and society was partly formed under the Hamidian regime.

Developments in press technology, the emergence of popular media and new literary genres helped synchronize readers' opinions to a certain extent. In particular, war literature narrowed the gap between people and warfare. War literature ensured that warfare was no longer a matter of a professional army and commanders alone, but a central public concern.

Selim Deringil suggests that the Ottoman state of the late nineteenth century invented a series of traditions, ranging from the royal procession of the Sultan to Friday prayers to the proliferation of commemorative medals, to shore up the empire's legitimacy and



restore its public image in precarious times.<sup>594</sup> This study suggests that Hamidian epic literature constitutes another episode in a series of “invented traditions,” which aimed at forging social solidarity and political unity within the empire.

The Ottoman Empire witnessed a media boom in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although strictly under control of the Hamidian regime and therefore unable to engage directly with political matters, the Ottoman press nevertheless managed to shape and streamline the everyday worldview of the Ottoman public. Especially during wars, newspaper columns heightened public tension and mobilized public support. This was only one of the reasons behind the Hamidian bureaucrats’ increasing attention to the power of media that led to its stricter control.

Besides the press, the regime utilized other strategies to enhance its public visibility. Physical spaces, such as urban squares, mosques, and even building entrances, became the sovereign’s agents for underscoring his legitimacy and political aspirations. An ordinary Ottoman subject/citizen began hearing the Sultan’s name in Friday prayers, church processions, public and military marches, and when fulfilling their compulsory military service.

It was not only through spatial reorganization and public displays that the Ottomans bonded with the Sultan. A series of novel rules and regulations addressing social discipline, order, and morality made sure that the regime penetrated deeper into the everyday reality of Ottoman subjects.

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<sup>594</sup> Selim Deringil, “The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan., 1993). See appendix A-52 for the cover page of *Tebriknâme-i Millî*, which consisted of various visual symbols that Hamidian regime utilized.

Abdülhamid II's social and political aspirations, his views on the relationship between governance and sovereignty were shaped by the political developments in which the empire found itself at the turn of the century. Prior to Abdülhamid II, the Young Ottomans had indeed constructed a theoretical background for bringing together sovereignty and Islamic leadership. Their call for a modern constitutional regime included heavy references to both Ottoman and Islamic traditions, particularly when they identified "consultation" as the Islamic equivalent of modern parliamentary rule in the West. Yet the very practice of power and boundaries of sovereign power were not clearly defined to promote a more liberal politics. Second, their efforts in championing historical figures for inspiring a nation that was under attack on all fronts proved to be a double-edged sword: Napoleon and Saladin, whose biographies were penned in the second half of the century, were at the same time "rogue" figures that had seized military and political power at the expense of other, balancing political institutions. Finally, despite their liberal approach to government, the very precarious condition of the empire in the second half of the nineteenth century forced them to adopt an anti-Western stance, which discourse was readily inherited by Abdülhamid II.<sup>595</sup>

Nevertheless, Abdülhamid II's reluctance to directly confront foreign intervention at a time when the Ottoman state was struggling to stand against separatist movements was frequently criticized by the Committee of Union and Progress. Both the liberal and centralist faction within the CUP saw in Abdülhamid II an impotent ruler, who gave in to

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<sup>595</sup> Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 34-6.

Western pressure without fighting back. Therefore, there was continuity between the anti-Western views of the Young Ottomans and of the CUP.

The sultan acted upon the Young Ottomans' political agendas by coating them in an autocratic dressing, which was legitimized by a concoction of Islamic and early Ottoman traditions. In a similar fashion, the ideas to revitalize the Empire, whether or not sympathetic to the idea of a powerful monarch, helped Abdülhamid II to gradually seize the tools of communication and intellectual production in the Empire.

The Hamidian regime also made heavy use of the historical accounts produced during the nineteenth century. Facing sustained foreign pressure, influential writers such as Namik Kemal and Ziya Pasa penned many works to underline the importance of Islam and Muslim thinkers for the history of world civilizations. Likewise, historians during Hamidian rule produced many historical narratives championing the rule of Abdülhamid II as the caliph and Sultan, as the legitimate leader of the Muslim world, as the protector of Islamic faith that was under attack at a time when colonial rule had extended to virtually all corners of the world.

At the same time, military commentaries shored up the Hamidian policy of boosting social discipline and public order. These accounts pointed out the close relationship between everyday morality and rules, such as the ones Ottomans had to follow at home, and military practice in the barracks and at the front. Furthermore, these narratives once again portrayed the Sultan as the sole leader of the Ottoman army, as the soldiers had to show unquestioned obedience to their superiors and, ultimately, to the Sultan, who was represented as the father of the ghazis.

Wars shaped the political atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian Era. Epic accounts of the heroic Ottoman defense in Plevna during the otherwise catastrophic Russo-Ottoman War of 1876–78 served to heal the wounds of the disappointed Ottoman public. After the catastrophic defeat at the hands of Russians, the Hamidian regime embarked upon military modernization projects, recruited Prussian military specialists, and renewed its arsenal. Whether these developments resulted in the victory at the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897 is another question, but the fact remained that Ottoman epic literature reached a peak after the war. Epic writers celebrated Abdülhamid II as the architect of the decisive victory and boosted the sultan's popularity.

It is essential to note that these epic accounts reached a wider population thanks to the developments in print technology. Hence, more and more subjects of the empire were showered by pro-Hamidian sentiments, expanding the base of support for the Sultan's policies. At the turn of the century, ordinary Ottoman subjects received daily news from the front, studied carefully constructed visual images of Ottoman pashas and modern weaponry, and read the description of conquered territories. The distance between the home and the front, between the city and the barracks dissolved. Proliferation of epic accounts produced with an authoritative tone served to synchronize the emotional and political experiences of Ottoman subjects living in what seemed to be permanent warfare.

Abdülhamid II's regime was consolidated with the silver jubilee, during which both non-Muslim and Arab writers across the empire published epic poems to celebrate the Ottoman sultan, albeit with different motivations. While non-Muslim poets produced eulogies to express their supra-religious loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty and the sultan,

Arab writers represented Abdülhamid II as the protector of the Muslim world from western aggression.

Reorganization of the state's legal-administrative apparatus, introduction of the police and gendarmerie institutions, and symbolic representations of sultanic power through architectural displays supported Hamidian rule and control over imperial domains that were still multiethnic in composition. In this context, the emerging epic literature played an important part in providing a link between Hamidian political aspirations and social imagination. Epic literature, including especially narratives produced to celebrate the silver jubilee, did not forget to touch on virtually all the projects that were carried out during the Hamidian Era. At *fin de siècle*, the Ottoman epic had indeed become a powerful medium to spread the agenda of the Hamidian regime to the general public.

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the relationship between political power and epic literature in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. It has argued that the Hamidian epic projected a peculiar political order in which the society, the army, and the state were all repositioned and even juxtaposed to forge loyalty to Abdülhamid II. The regime preferred to relate directly to the common soldier, as we have seen in the Sultan's letter, which directly addressed the "ghazis" for their heroics in 1897. Against this heroism, the CUP opposition proposed a different form of loyalty, claiming that a soldier's loyalty should be not to the Sultan, but to the motherland and the nation.

One of the most contentious debates between Abdülhamid II's supporters and his critics revolved around the issue of whom to obey. Army officials were regular participants in these everyday political debates. For instance, Ahmed Rıza's *Askerlik* perfectly captured

the “national” perspective of the constitutionalist Young Turks, as Ahmed Rıza touched on the necessity of a constitution and a parliament for balancing the excessive powers of the Sultan. This vision did not only reveal the ideological differences between autocratic and constitutionalist perspectives vis-à-vis modern military duty, but also the similarities between these perceptions when it comes to the social role of the military organization.

Ahmed Rıza believed that military forces could potentially reorient the Sultan when he failed to follow the precepts of sharia.<sup>596</sup> According to Rıza, the army was the sole institution that could generate social order and provide a sense of justice to the empire in the late nineteenth century. Interestingly enough, he criticized previous military reforms, because initiatives like Nizam-ı Cedid ended up separating the military class from the nation.<sup>597</sup> Bravery, the most prevalent theme of the Hamidian epic, featured heavily in Ahmed Rıza’s commentary on the army. However, referring to the contemporary sultanic rule, he claimed that “bravery is significant...but those who grew up under pressure cannot be brave.”<sup>598</sup> The nation needed brave citizens, and freedom was a prerequisite of bravery.

Ahmed Rıza’s comments on military duty were different from the views of the supporters of the Hamidian rule in terms of “whom to obey.” While the regime’s supporters considered the Sultan as the ultimate object of obedience, his critics like Ahmed Rıza believed that the Ottoman soldiers needed to prioritize the interests of the nation instead.

This is significant insofar as it suggests that the army and its role in politics were not

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<sup>596</sup> Ahmed Rıza, *Vazife ve Mes’uliyet. İkinci Cüz: Askerlik* (Mısır: 1322), p. 3.

<sup>597</sup> Ahmed Rıza, *Vazife*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>598</sup> Ahmed Rıza, *Vazife*, p. 11.

simply the concern of the Hamidian establishment, but also of the Young Turk opposition, which believed that the barracks and salvation went hand in hand. Both for Abdülhamid's supporters and his critics, the army sat at the center of politics at the turn of the century.

The disconnect between the Hamidian establishment and CUP opposition on the ultimate source of loyalty persisted until the 1908 Revolution. According to Zürcher, even during the turbulent days of the revolution, Young Turk officers did not feel comfortable in “trust(ing) their own troops enough to involve them in the insurrection,” mainly because of an “enormous chasm between these college-educated officers and the common soldier, who probably was still extremely loyal to the sultan.”<sup>599</sup> The palace was so confident of its influence in the army that until the summer of 1908 that it merely replaced the insurgents in the army with loyalists.<sup>600</sup>

As an ideological tool, Hamidian epic managed to influence the army, except a small clique of officers, who were the CUP members, until the end of the rule of Abdülhamid II. Further studies need to be made to analyze the relationship between Ottoman epic literature and the reign of CUP, which monopolized political power in the Empire after the promulgation of Second Constitution in 1908, especially during the Balkan Wars in 1912–13 and the World War I (1914–18). Military figures from the CUP, who had been educated in Hamidian military schools, occupied the upper echelons of the *İttihat* administration. During the last decade of the Ottoman Empire, epic writers continued to

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<sup>599</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, “The Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution: Broad Consensus, Some Disagreement, and a Missed Opportunity,” *“Livresse de la Liberté” La Revolution de 1908 dans l’Empire Ottoman*, François Georgeon (ed.) (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), p. 104.

<sup>600</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–14*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Hurst, 2010), p. 4.

support the ruling elite, albeit this time heroism was reserved for *İttihat* leaders. The Hamidian epic narratives, which had originally aimed at boosting the popularity of the Sultan, were now replaced by accounts that glorified the military officers who had ironically terminated the reign of the last powerful Ottoman Sultan.

The Ottoman Empire effectively collapsed at the end of the First World War. Throughout the war, members of the generation who were trained in the Hamidian military schools fought in the Caucasus, Gallipoli, Suez, Iraq, Palestine, and Hejaz. After the dust settled, they were either waiting for further orders or trying to assemble resistance forces against Allied occupation. These figures, who had inherited the nineteenth-century ideas and practices that lingered throughout the former Ottoman space, did not give up. Falih Rıfkı's words that inspired this thesis was indeed spot on: just like its beginning had been, the end of the Ottoman Empire was epic.

In popular literature, epic narratives continued to carry weight after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, though this time they targeted the persona of Mustafa Kemal, who was represented as the savior of the Turkish nation. Epic accounts (give examples) of his military feats during the War of Independence sought to reinforce both his and his reforms' legitimacy. Interestingly, these epic narratives continue to provide the backbone of the mythical aura that has ever since surrounded the figure of Mustafa Kemal, suggesting that the relationship between epic and ideology is very much alive in contemporary Turkey.



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## Appendix A

### FIGURES



1. An injured woman (Source: Mehmed Behcet & Hüseyin Nesimi, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli yahud Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi* (Hanya: Yusuf Kenan Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 18.



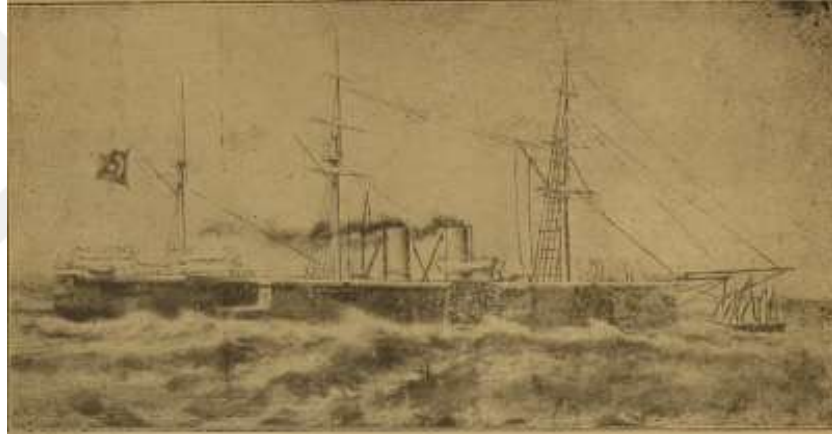
2. A child with a head injury (Source: Mehmed Behcet & Hüseyin Nesimi, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli yahud Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi* (Hanya: Yusuf Kenan Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 21.



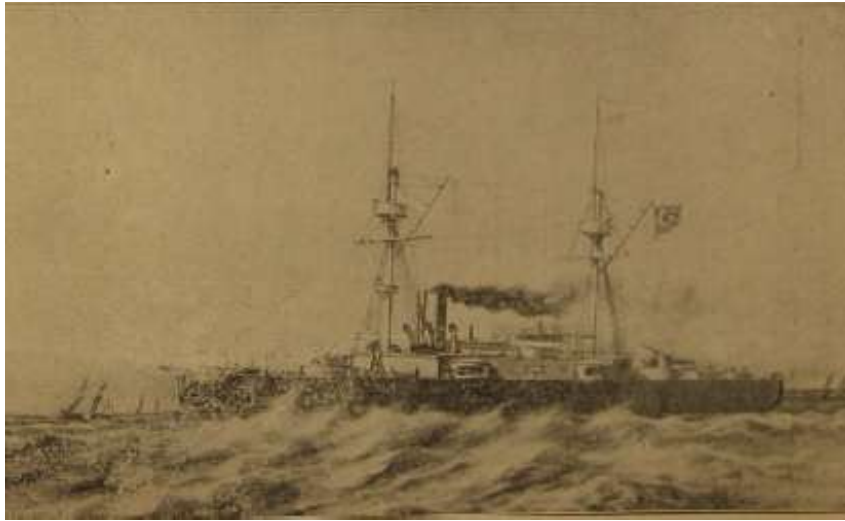
3. A girl lost arm (Source: Mehmed Behcet & Hüseyin Nesimi, *Girid Hailesinin Zeyli yahud Girid Müslümanlarının Numune-i Felaketi* (Hanya: Yusuf Kenan Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 19



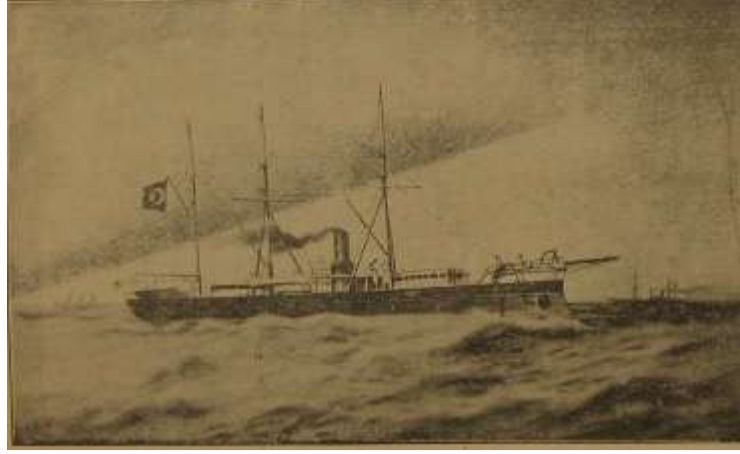
4. Hamidiye Cruiser (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



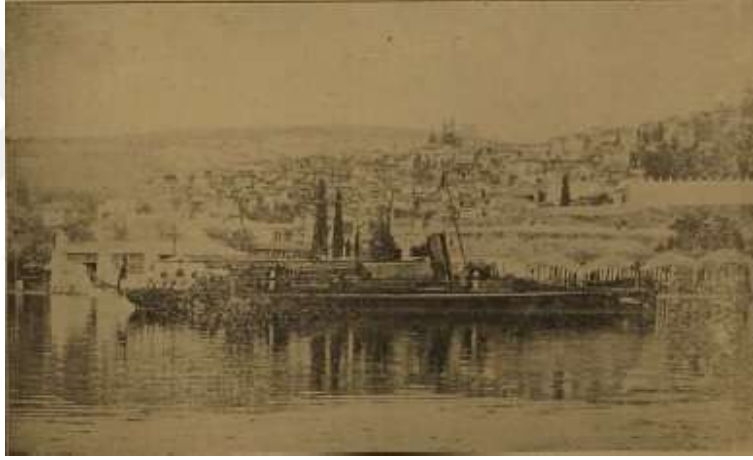
5. Mesudiye Cruiser (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



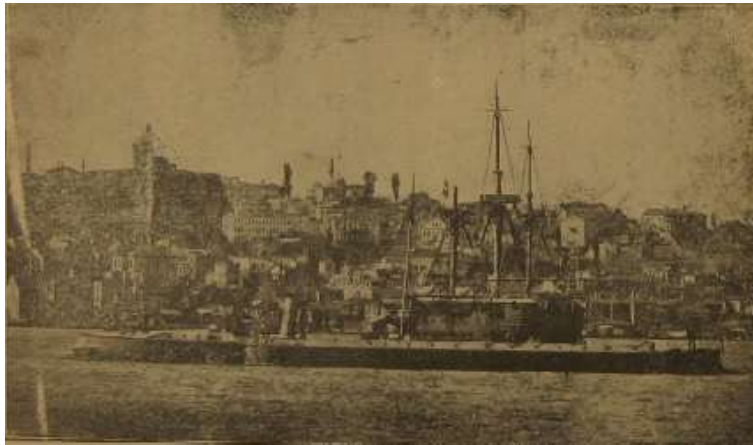
6. Osmaniye Cruiser (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



7. Hıfzullah Corvette Cruiser (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).

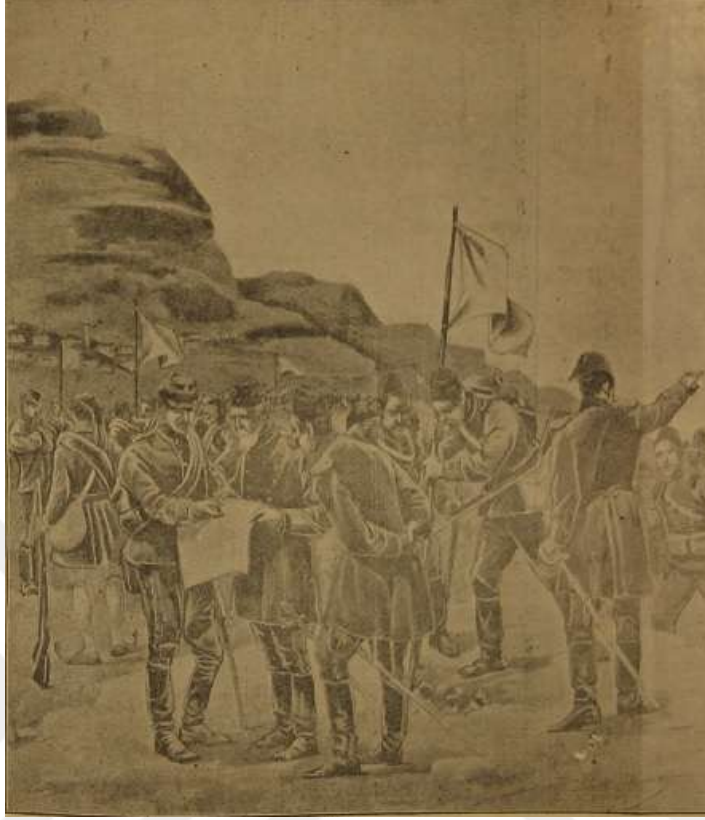


8. Guillaume First Class Torpedo Cruiser (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



9. Satvet Torpedo Steamboat (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).

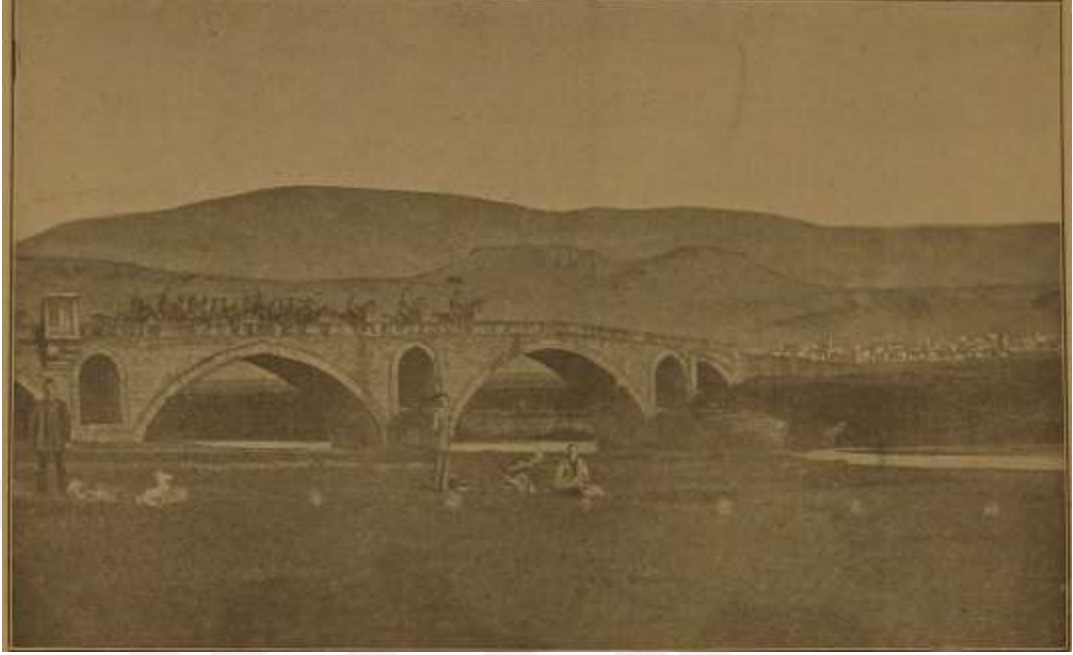




10. Delegates Signing the Armistice near Domokos (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



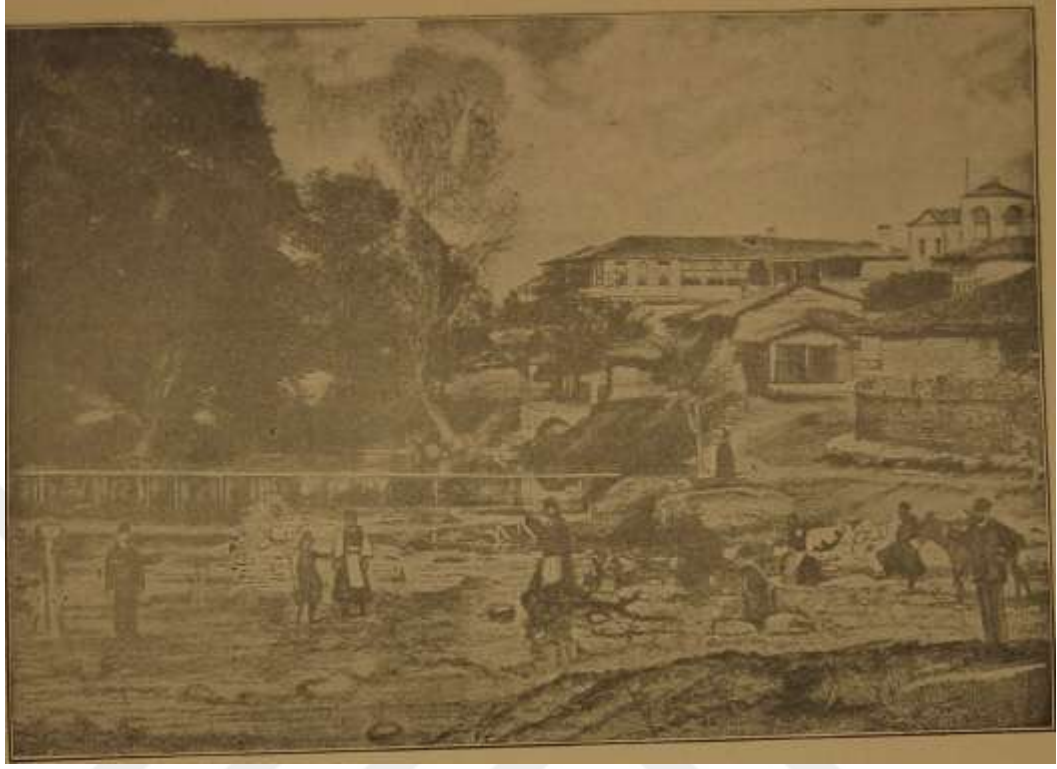
11. Prayer of the Feast of Sacrifice (Salat al-Eid) (Source: Süleyman Tevfik, *Devlet-i Aliyye ve Yunan Muharebesi* (İstanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1315/1897), pp. 408-09.



12. Çatalca (Pharshala) (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 16.



13. Domokos (Dömeke) (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 25.

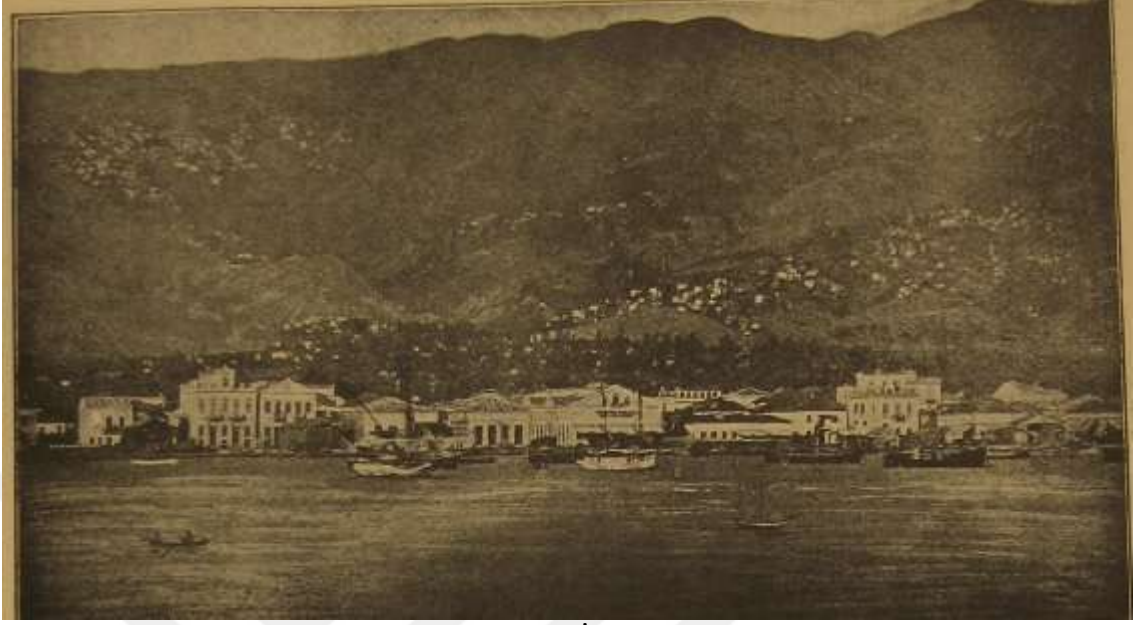


14. Tricala (Tırhala) (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 12.



15. Velestino (Veletin) (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 18.





16. Golos (Volo) (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 19.



17. Greek Soldiers Throwing their Cannons to the Sea to prevent the Ottomans to Seize them (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 50.



18. Hacı Hayri Paşa, Commander of the First Army (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 161.



19. Ömer Rüşdü Paşa, Chief of Defence (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 160.



20. Rıza Paşa, Defense Minister (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 158.



21. Martyr Abdülezel Paşa (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 190.



22. Battle at Krenia (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 170.

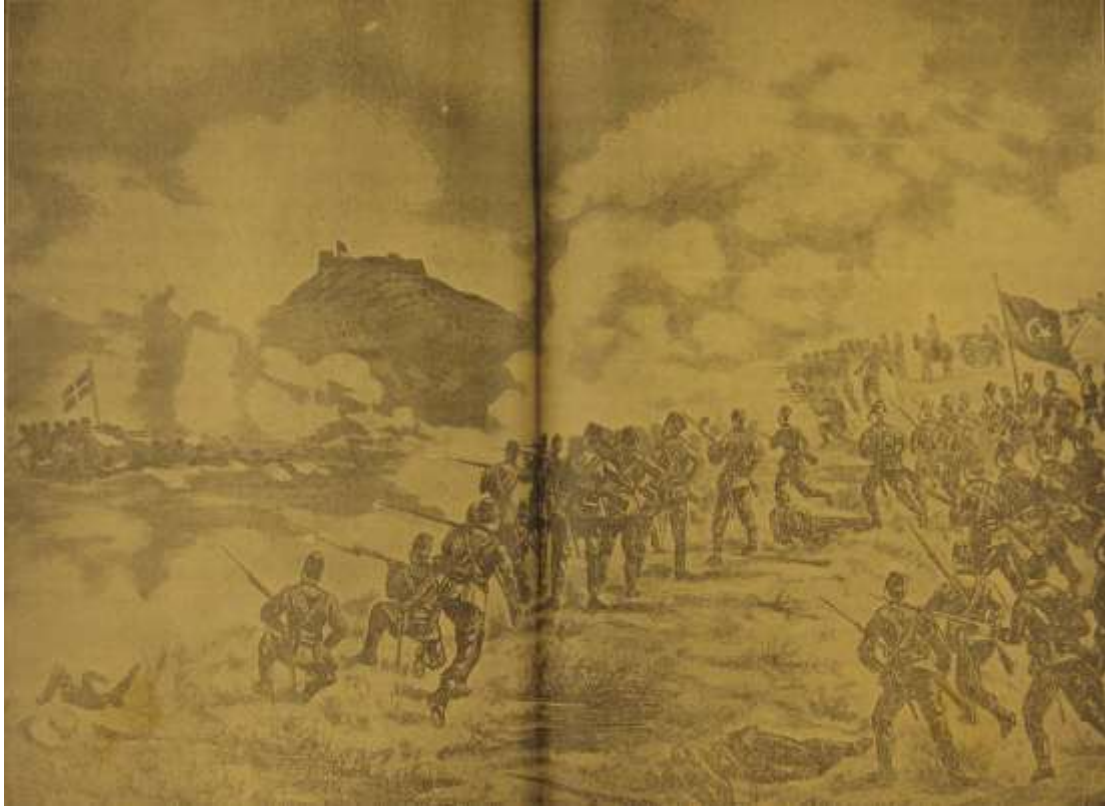


23. Battle at Milona (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 188.





24. Battle at Velestino (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 232.



25. Battle at Domokos (Source: Süleyman Tevfik, *Devlet-i Aliyye ve Yunan Muharebesi* (İstanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1315/1897), pp. 424-25.



26. Impact of an Ottoman bomb at the Battle of Domokos (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



27. Battle at Milona (Source: Süleyman Tevfik, *Devlet-i Aliyye ve Yunan Muharebesi* (İstanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1315/1897), pp. 312-13.

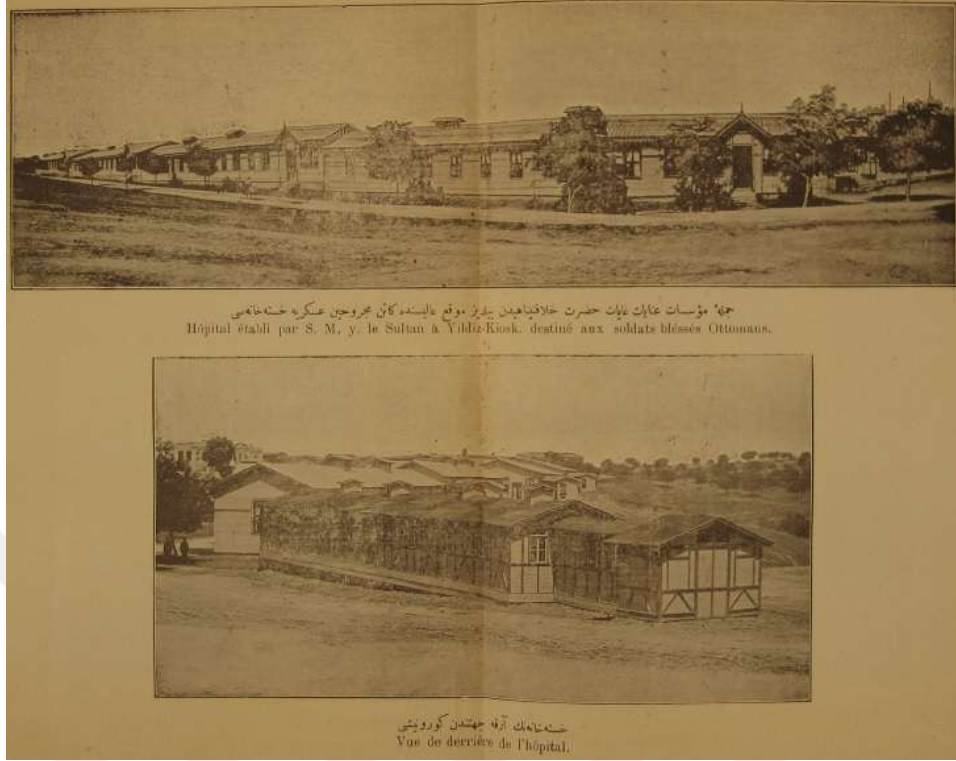


28. Soldiers Waiting for the Train at Muradlı Station (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 149.

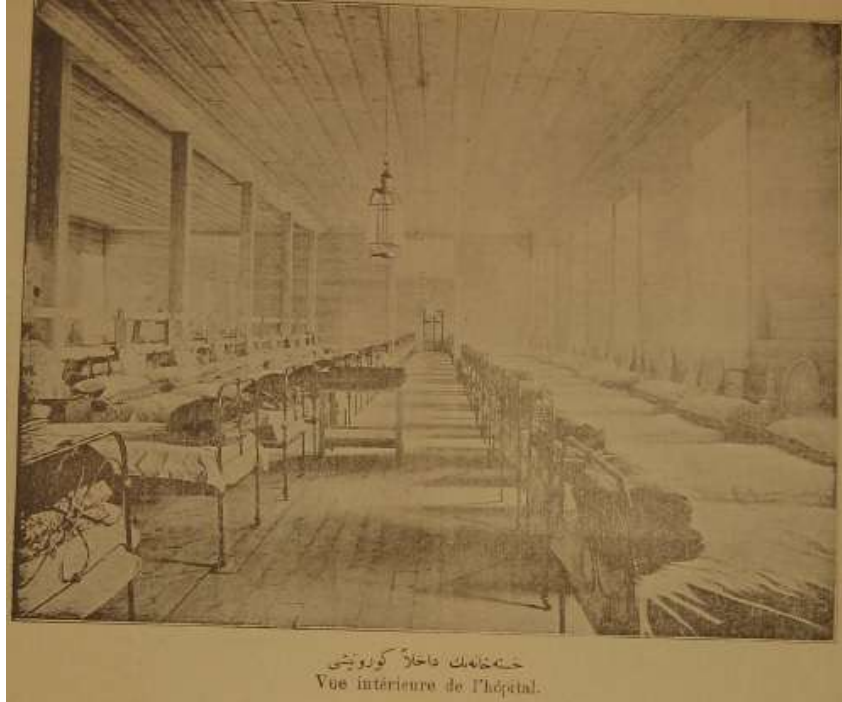


29. Soldiers Dancing while Waiting to be Transferred to the Front (Source: Vecihi, *Musavver Tarih-i Harb* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1315/1897), p. 151.





30. Military Hospital in the Precincts of Yıldız Palace (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).



31. Interior of the Military Hospital at Yıldız Palace (Source: Müstecabizade İsmet (ed.), *Muvaffakiyat-ı Osmaniye yahud Yadigar-ı Zafer* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1315/1897).





32. Artillery Practice (Source: *Asr-ı Güzin-i Hazret-i Padişahide Terakkiyat-ı Askeriye. Kısm-ı Evvel: Topçuluk ve İstihkam* (İstanbul: Kitaphane-i İslam - Askerî, 1318/1900), p. 8.



33. Artillery Practice in Edirne (Source: *Asr-ı Güzin-i Hazret-i Padişahide Terakkiyat-ı Askeriye. Kısm-ı Evvel: Topçuluk ve İstihkam* (İstanbul: Kitaphane-i İslam - Askerî, 1318/1900), p. 25.



34. Artillery Practice in Istanbul (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 55.



35. Model Artillery Regiments (Topçu Numune Alayı) (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 58.





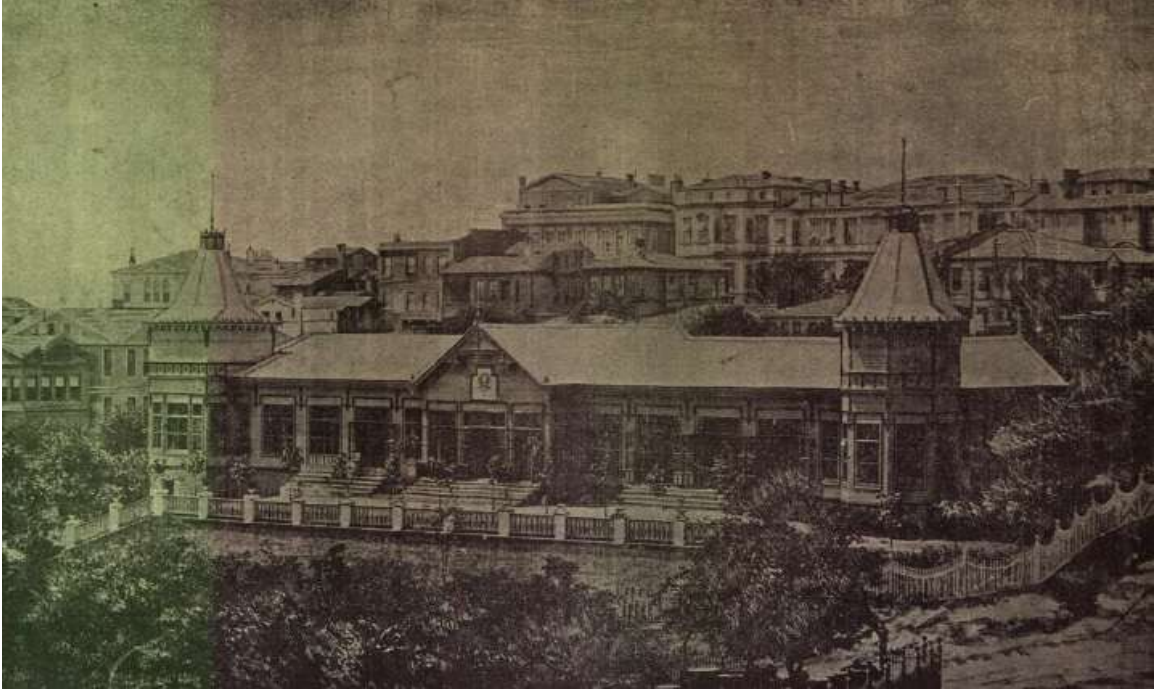
36. Ertuğrul Cavalry Regiments (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 54.



37. Royal Infantry Regiments (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 50.



38. Tripoli Hamidiye Regiments (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 59.



39. The Aid Office for the Martyrs' Families (Şehid Eytam ve Eramil İane Ofisi) (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 43.



40. Hamidiye Children's Hospital (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 22.

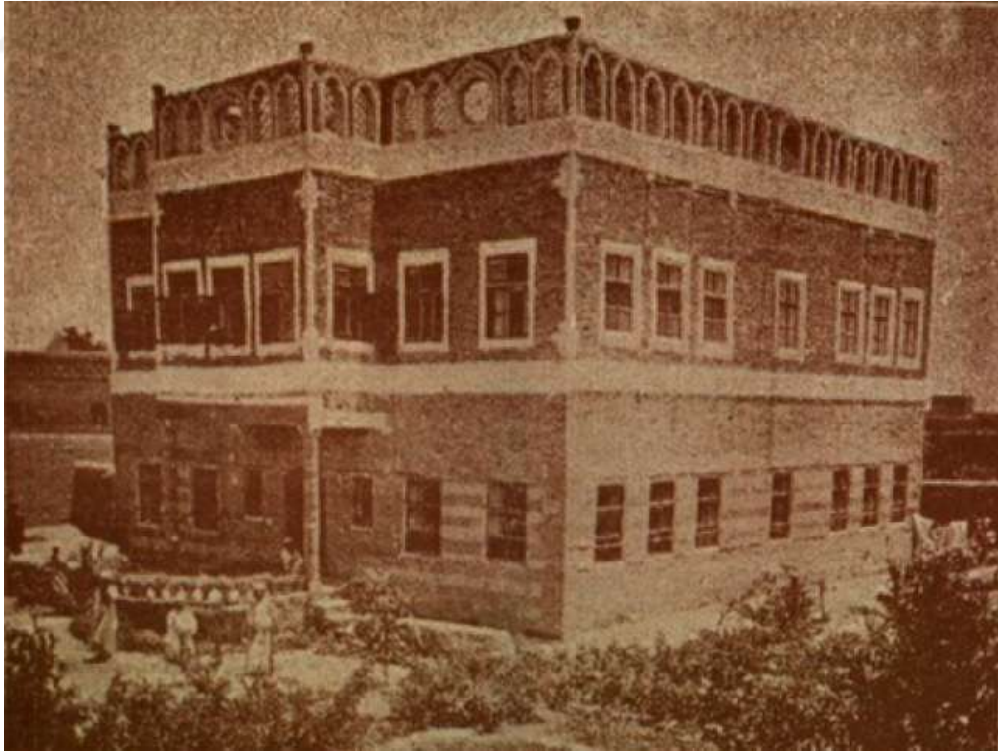


41. Child Posing in Operation Room at Hamidiye Children's Hospital (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 23.





42. Manastır Hospital for the Less-Fortunate (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 33.



43. Hospital for the Less-Fortunate at Sana'a, Yemen (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 27.



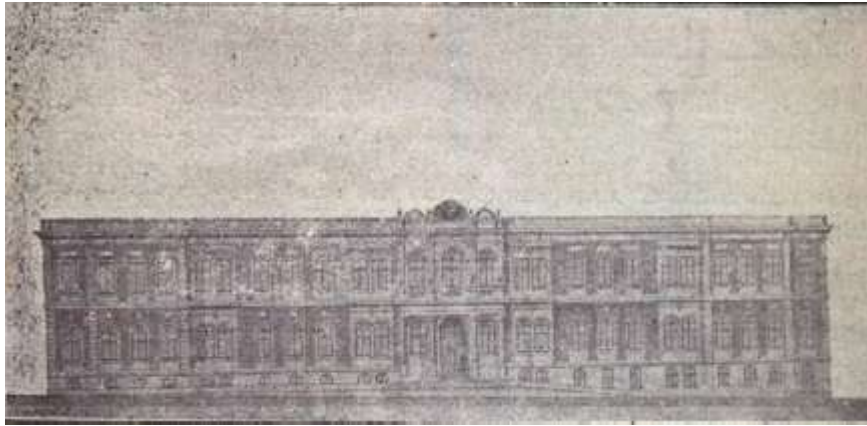
44. Hostel for the Pilgrims at Mecca (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 19.



45. Ertuğrul Mosque and Şazeli Dergah at Beşiktaş, İstanbul (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 18.



46. A Chandelier Presented by Abdülhamid II to Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 10.

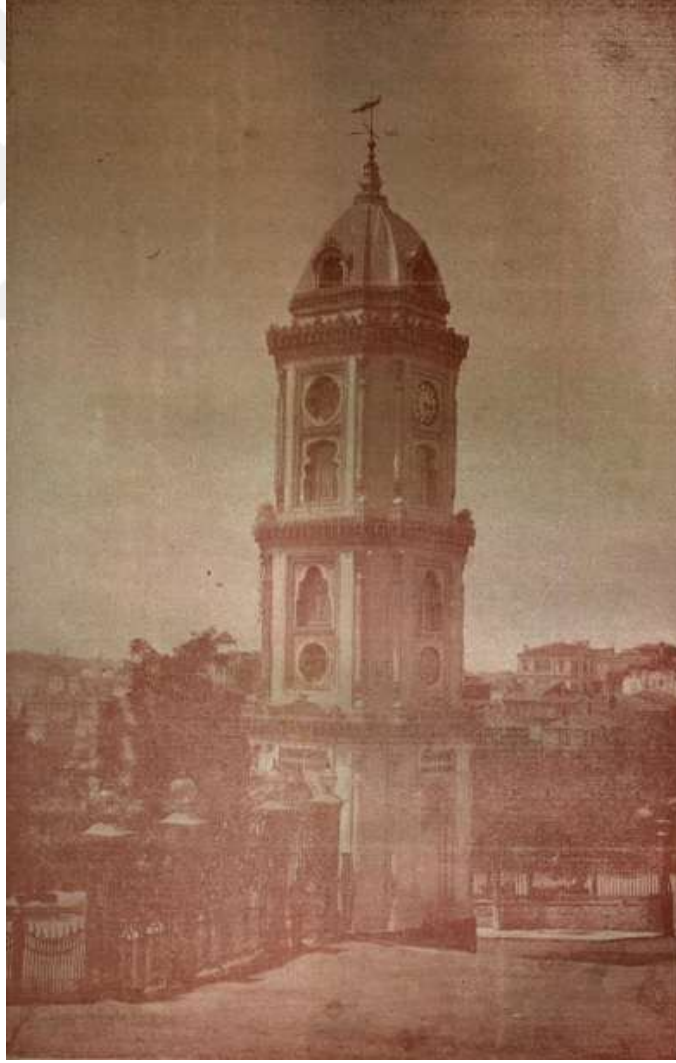


47. Military Office at Edirne (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 46.

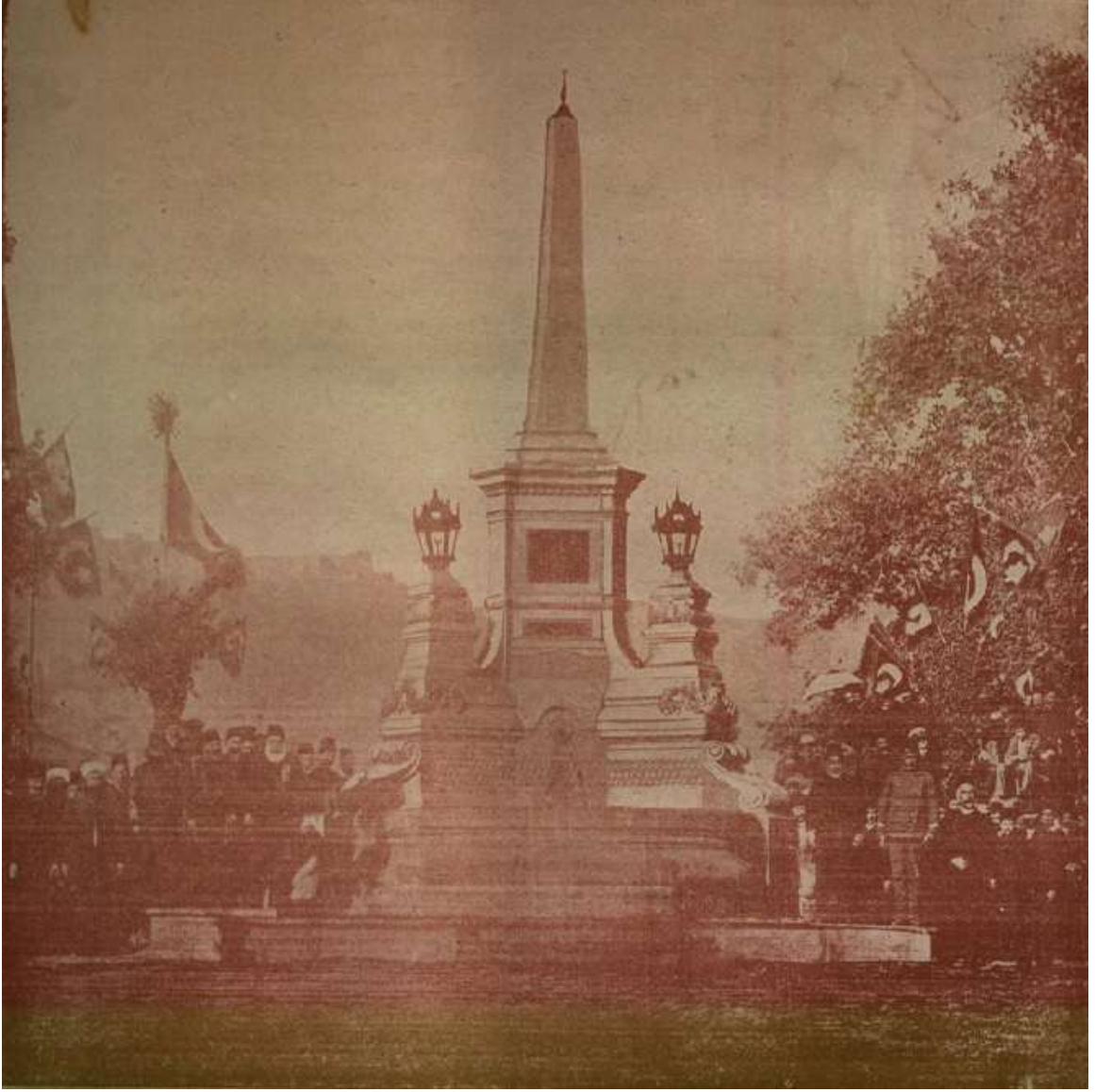




48. Artillery Factory (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 47.



49. Hamidiye Clock-Tower, Yıldız Palace (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 7.

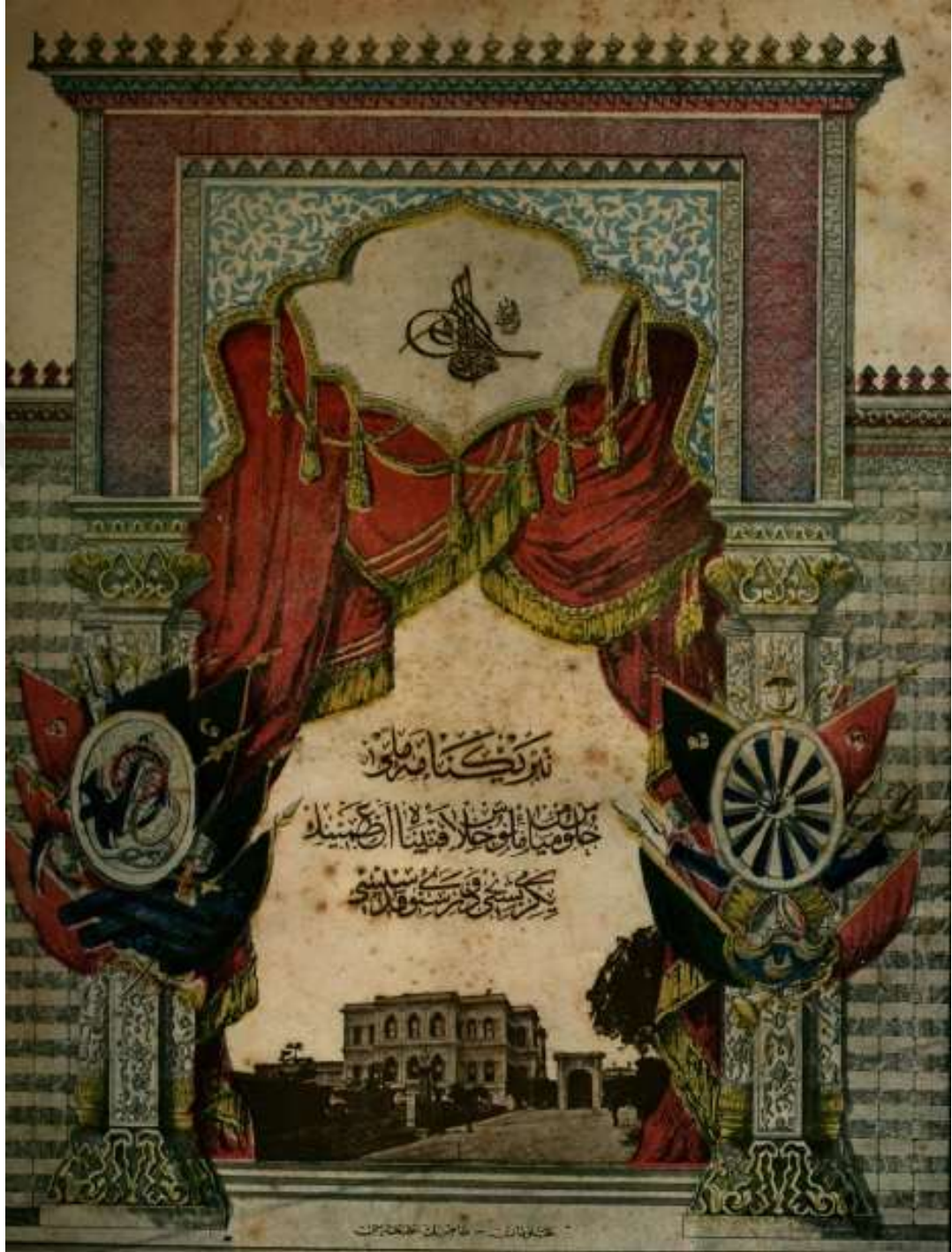


50. Inauguration Ceremony for Hamidiye Fountain, Salonica (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsisi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 11.



51. The Musical Band, İzmir Mekteb-i Sanayii (Source: *Tebrikname-i Milli: cülus-i meyamin-i menüs hilafetpenah-ı azamının yirmi beşinci devr-i senevi-i kudsi*, (İstanbul: Malumat-Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1318/1901), p. 63.





52. The Cover Page, *Tebrikname-i Milli*

Appendix B

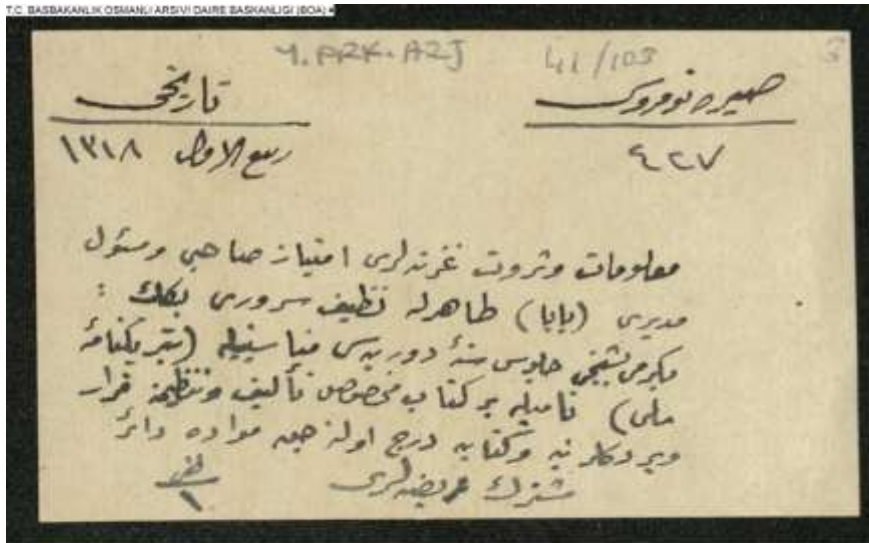
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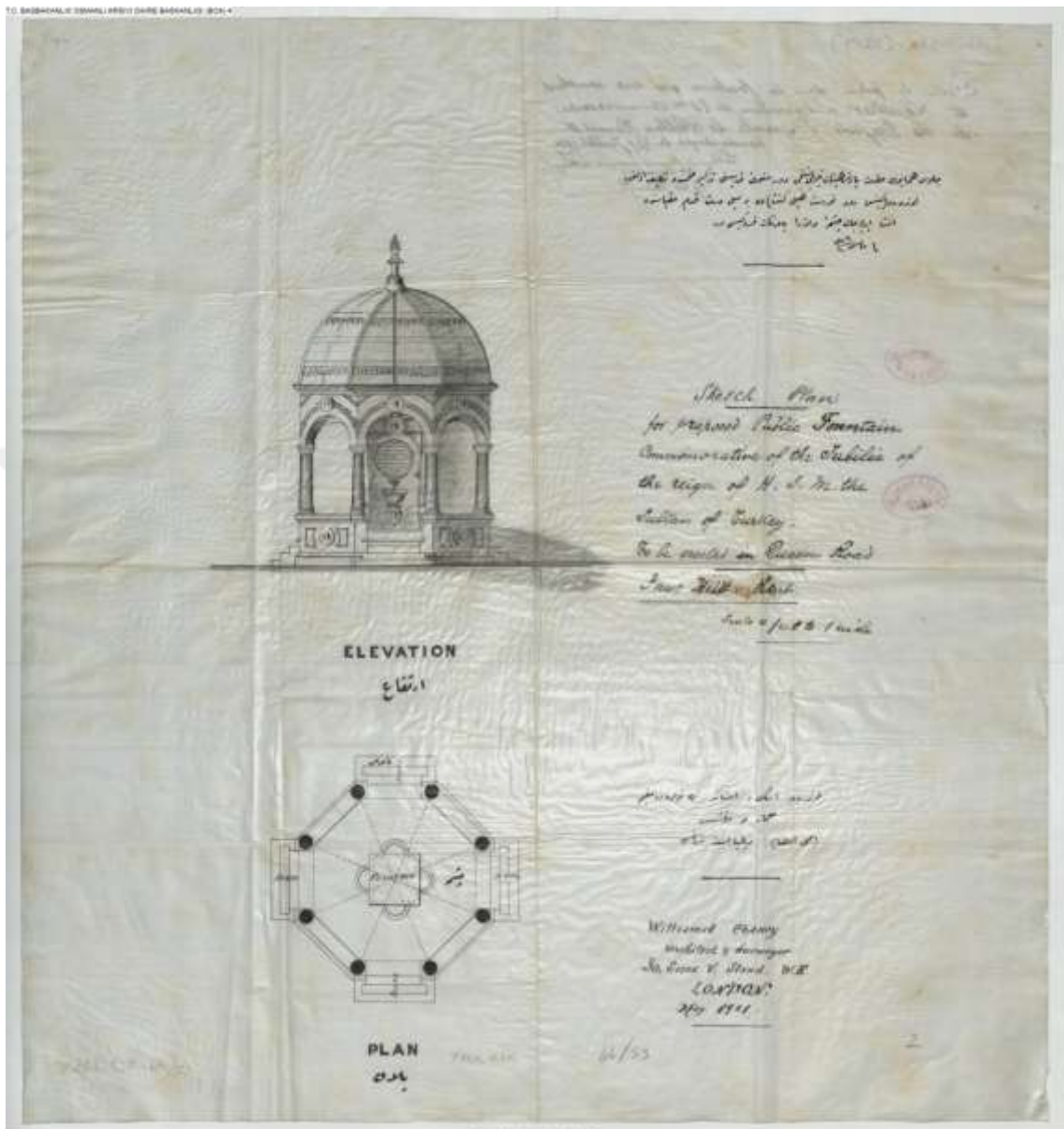
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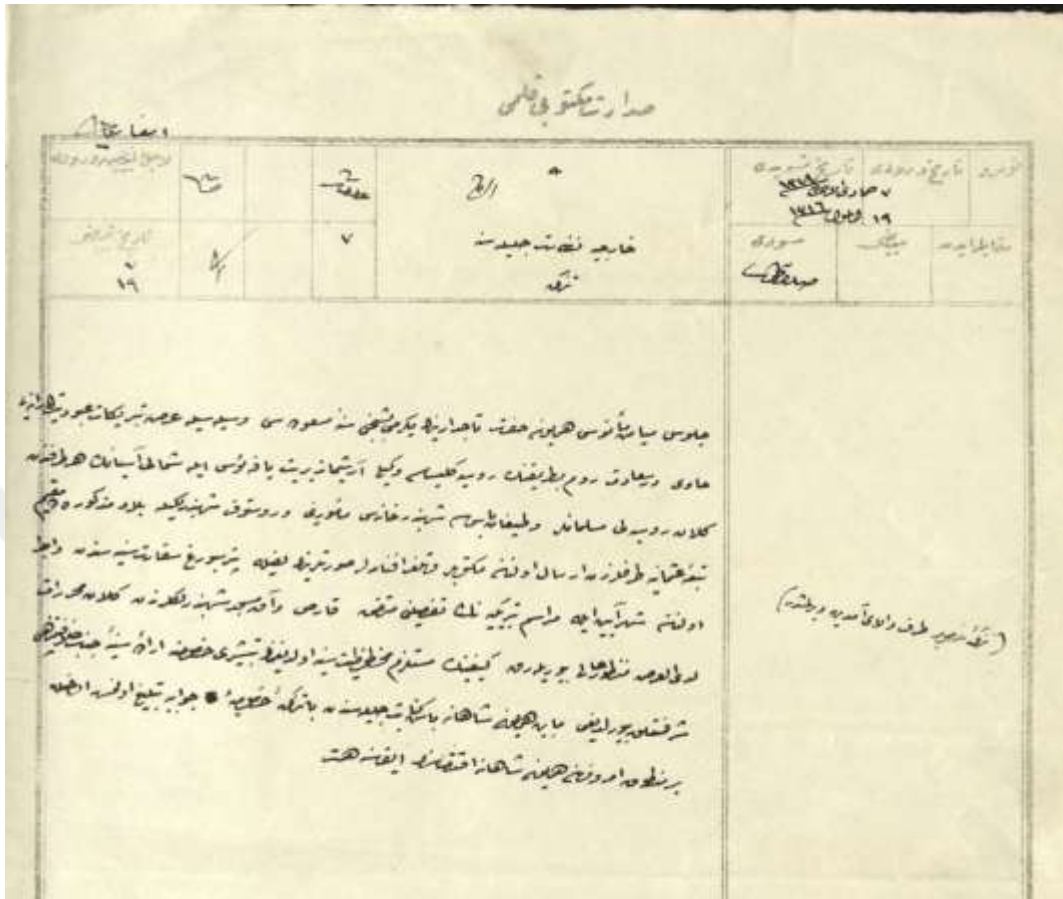
Y.PRK.AZJ.00041.00103.003

1. Abdülhamid II's order for the preparation of *Tebriknâme-i Millî* (BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 41/103)





2. Plan of the Proposed Fountain to be Built in London (BOA, Y. PRK. BŞK. 66/53)



3. The Document Reminding the Need for a Letter of Appreciation to be Prepared for the Messages from Russian Muslims (BOA, BEO. 1558/116787)