

Entertainment Among the Ottomans

Entertainment Among the Ottomans

Edited by

Ebru Boyar

Kate Fleet



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Ottoman Society through the Lens of Entertainment

Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet

Watching again the dances of the illustrious beauties
The cries of the musical instruments again reach to the heavens
The sparks of sound excite
Joyful tidings for the flowery pleasure grounds, the time of illuminations
and festivities has come¹



Thus Nedim, the quintessential poet of the *Lale Devri*, the Tulip Age (1718–30), which came to be seen as the epitome of Ottoman entertainment, described the joy and exuberance, the illuminations and sounds and the fun of the exciting world of festival and pageantry opening before him.

But what exactly is entertainment? Although there is a general idea that the meaning is obvious, in fact the definition of it is still rather unclear.² Stephen Bates and Anthony Ferri, unhappy with the vague subjective approach which regards “entertainment [as] whatever individuals find entertaining”,³ have set out to provide an objective definition of entertainment: it “involves communication featuring external stimuli; it provides pleasure to some people ... and it reaches a generally passive audience”.⁴ In so doing, they remove leisure or play from the entertainment equation, so axing off activities such as sports,

1 Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki (ed. and transcribed), *Nedim Divânı* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1951), p. 382.

2 Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn (Khosrovani), L.A. Ferydoun, “Introduction to entertainment in Qajar Persia”, *Iranian Studies*, 40/4 (2007), p. 447, for example, notes that “entertainment encompasses a wide variety of activities” but gives only a very general idea of what it actually is.

3 Bates, Stephen and Anthony J. Ferri, “What’s entertainment? Notes towards a definition”, *Studies in Popular Culture*, 33/1 (2010), p. 2.

4 Bates and Ferri, “What’s entertainment? Notes towards a definition”, p. 15.

dancing or playing musical instruments. Not all, however, remove play from the definition of entertainment. For Peter Vorderer, entertainment is playing that “helps to cope with life”.⁵

Ottoman entertainment encompassed all these rather vague definitions. That it was indeed a coping mechanism and perceived as such by the Ottomans, at least in the sixteenth century, is borne out by Feridun Bey, the secretary of Selim II, who was said to have remarked to the grand *vezir* that “by nature people cannot bear constant repression, they sometimes want release”,⁶ a release provided by the entertainment of festivities and pageantry. The same could apparently be said for coffee houses for, despite the perceived moral correctness of banning them, Koca Sinan Paşa –who piously noted that he had never in his life set foot in one– raised a note of caution over the sultan’s order to ban them in Istanbul, for, he said, “a place of entertainment [eğlence] is necessary for the people”.⁷ This view was not an Ottoman one alone for one might cite, for example, the Prussian authorities’ response in a later period to King Friedrich Wilhelm III’s irritation about their failure to ban carnival, that “prohibiting the festival would be more “harmful to morale” than allowing it to continue”.⁸

Entertainment, a break from the monotony of life, as the poet and novelist Halide Nusret Zorlutuna noted,⁹ was a social release mechanism. Apukurya, when “the gaieties of Carnival” exploded onto the streets,¹⁰ or *bayram*, when the routine of life could be turned into wild excess, provided a release valve for social pressure and permitted at least temporary escapism. It could also cement social bonds, or reinforce social stratification, or strengthen identities. Or it could highlight difference. While little Demetra Vaka, from an Istanbul Greek Orthodox family, and her Turkish friend so enjoyed a *Karagöz* performance they were taken to by her friend’s grandfather, a performance that involved “a great deal of swearing, beating, killing, and dying” and one which

5 Vorderer, Peter, “It’s all entertainment – sure. But what exactly is entertainment? Communication research, media psychology, and the explanation of entertainment experiences”, *Poetics*, 29/4-5 (2001), p. 258.

6 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, 2 vols., ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 61-2.

7 *Koca Sinan Paşa’nın Telhisleri*, ed. Halil Sahillioğlu (Istanbul: İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 2004), p. 44.

8 Brophy, James M., *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 180.

9 Zorlutuna, Halide Nusret, *Bir Devrin Romanı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1978), p. 12.

10 Dwight, H.G., *Constantinople. Old and New* (New York: Longmans Green, and Co., 1915), p. 324.

they re-enacted the next day with great gusto before the female members of her friend's household, Demetra's father was less impressed. When Demetra acted the piece out again for the enjoyment of her parents, explaining it to her mother, who did not speak a word of Turkish, her father intervened, explaining to her later:

I shouldn't like you to repeat this piece again; for although it may be right for the actors to say all the things they did, it is better for little girls not to repeat them'. 'But, father' I protested, frightfully disappointed, 'Djimlah and I acted it all before her grandmother and the ladies of her household, and they made us repeat it several times'. 'This is because they are Turks. We are Greeks, and that makes a very big difference.'¹¹

However one defines entertainment, fundamental to it all was the concept of fun and of the experiencing of pleasure. Sliding down sand dunes in sixteenth-century Egypt was thus something people did "just for fun".¹² Promenading, picnicking and passing time in pleasure gardens all provided people throughout the period and geographical extent of the empire with enjoyable entertainment. So did violence. For the Ottomans, as for their European contemporaries, warfare was something of a "passe-temps";¹³ an approach evident in earlier periods. For many European feudal lords "no pleasurable activity could compare with fighting" and many clearly made no distinction, as Marfany notes, between "making war, raiding rival lords' lands, kidnapping maids and married women, hunting, carousing, and composing songs: it is all fun".¹⁴ The entertainment value of violence was evidently understood by the Istanbul crowds who flocked to watch the fighting between Celali bands and Ottoman troops outside the city in July 1649, jostling to get good positions from which to watch the slaughter or stopping en-route for picnics of pastrami, *sucuk* (savoury sausage), *kaşkaval* cheese, roasted chickpeas, nuts and hazelnuts.¹⁵ Smoking, for those who indulged, according to a disapproving Peçevi, writing in the mid-seven-

11 Vaka, Demetra (Mrs Kenneth Brown), *A Child of the Orient* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), pp. 62-5, quotes from pp. 63, 64-5.

12 Rocchetta, Aquilante, "Voyage en Egypte d'Aquilante Rocchetta, mai-août 1599", in *Voyages en Egypte des années 1597-1601*, trans. Carla Burri and Nadine Sauneron, ed. Serge Sauneron (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archaeologie Orientale du Caire, 1974), p. 21.

13 Burke, Peter, "The invention of leisure in early modern Europe", *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), p. 138.

14 Marfany, Joan-Lluís, "The invention of leisure in early modern Europe", *Past and Present*, 156 (1997), p. 176.

15 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname (Gördüklerim) Evliya Çelebi*, ed. Mustafa Nihat Özön and Nijat Özön (Istanbul: Kabcacı Yayınevi, 2005), pp. 208-11.

teenth century, was “an entertainment [eğlence]”, something that “gives pleasure”.¹⁶ It was the “most prevalent means” of attaining “placid enjoyment” according to Lane in his account of Egypt in the nineteenth century,¹⁷ a sensation also obtained from drinking coffee, an “entertainment [trattenimento]” indulged in by Ottomans everywhere, “both in little booths [botteghe] and on the streets” where men “not only of low social standing but also the most important” drank “boiling black water”.¹⁸ When they drank, they did so, according to the French traveller, Jean de Thévenot, sipping carefully to avoid being scalded, “so that being in a *Coffee-hane* ... one hears a pretty pleasant kind of sipping music”.¹⁹

One person’s fun is, of course, not necessarily another’s, and a picnic, a pastime indulged in with great gusto by most Ottomans, could be pure hell. Even getting there was torture for Sermet Muhtar Alus, a writer and journalist born at the turn of the twentieth century, who described the journey to a popular picnic site on the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus. The trip was spent “engulfed in dust, in a carriage thrown about over rocks and stones, juddering and shuddering, hopping and lurching” which ultimately ended when the “completely exhausted” passengers arrived under the trees of the pleasure ground. “Each person” he commented “who totters to a place under these trees is as a patient who has come out of hospital and is returning home to convalesce”.²⁰ The *hamam*, so loved by many and so central to the entertainment scene of the empire, was a site of torment for many small children who were scrubbed repeatedly, subjected to “hot water torture”, and washed with an enthusiasm that left the *hamam* ringing to the “screams of children being boiled in hot water”.²¹

16 Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi*, 2 vols., ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1981), vol. 1, p. 259; Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: n.p., 1238/1866-67), p. 366.

17 Lane, Edward William, *An Account of the Manners and the Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871), vol. II, p. 30. Placid enjoyment was Lane’s translation for the term “keyf”.

18 Morosini, Gianfranco, “Relazioni di Gianfranco Morosini, bailo a Costantinopoli letta in Senato l’anno 1585”, in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Veneti al Senato durante il XVI secolo*, Serie 3, vol. III, ed. Eugenio Albèri (Florence: Società editrice Fiorentina, 1855), p. 268. For a “free” (as the translator himself describes his text) translation of Gianfranco Morosini’s report, see Davis, James C. (ed. and trans.), *Pursuit of Power. Venetian Ambassadors’ Reports on Spain, Turkey, and France in the Age of Phillip II, 1560-1600* (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 125-55.

19 Thévenot, Jean de, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (London: Printed by H. Clark, for H. Faithorne, J. Adamson, C. Skegnes, and T. Newborough, 1686), p. 33.

20 Alus, Sermet Muhtar, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul. 1900’lü Yılların Başlarında Şehir Hayatı*, ed. Faruk İlikan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), p. 85.

21 Yücel, Hasan Ali, *Geçtiğim Günlerden* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), p. 133.

But what can an understanding of an ‘entertainment culture’ of a society tell us about that particular society? Many societies apparently enjoyed the same things. Promenading entertained people in Italy just as much as it did in the Ottoman empire, and eating ice creams in Naples²² or clotted cream in Istanbul²³ in the early modern period was no doubt an equal pleasure to those who indulged in it. Evliya Çelebi and Peter Mundy’s concepts of the entertainment and pleasure of travel were pretty similar, as Palmira Brummett notes.²⁴ So where does this take us, apart from the obvious truism that people liked to enjoy themselves, and many of the ways they did so were the same the world over? Just as humour can tell one much not just about perceptions of political events but also about social relations, morals and mores, so entertainment can indicate what united, or divided, society, the cohesion and fissures within the various social strata, and the internal divisions: gender, regional, rural-urban or rich-poor. How a society entertained itself and why thus tell us much about the fabric of that world. As Akyeampong and Ambler put it, it “provides a window not only on the evolving textures of ordinary lives but on the nature of local societies”.²⁵

The Nature of Ottoman Society

Entertainment served many roles within society. One of these was to mark status: the entertainment chosen designated one’s social position, one’s moral status or one’s financial budget. Hunting, for example, was of interest to many segments of society, but for different reasons and to varying degrees, determined largely by financial means. It was clearly a pastime enjoyed by the middling elements of society, at least in Aleppo in the nineteenth century, where for “affluent aficionados” such as the schoolteacher Na’um Bakhkhash, hunting was the sport of choice.²⁶ It was not, however, as James Grehan points out, a pastime open to all, for it required both the money to purchase the necessary equipment and the leisure time to use it. The fact that Na’um Bakhkhash could

22 Calaresu, Melissa, “Making and eating ice cream in Naples: rethinking consumption and sociability in the eighteenth century”, *Past and Present*, 220 (2013), 35-78.

23 Ahmet Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1553-1591)* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1935), no. 5, p. 40, 23 Muharrem 981 (25 May 1573).

24 Brummett, Palmira, “Caravans and voyages, story and song: entertaining the traveler in/to Ottoman space”, ch. 3 in this volume, p. 44.

25 Akyeampong, Emmanuel and Charles Ambler, “Leisure in African history: an introduction”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35/1 (2002), p. 1.

26 Grehan, James, “Fun and games in Ottoman Aleppo: the life and times of a local schoolteacher (1835-1865)”, ch. 5 in this volume, p. 116.

hunt and fish with such gusto marked him out, these outdoor pursuits being “the very badge of an urban gentleman”.²⁷ For both Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali and the author of the sixteenth-century work *Hirzü'l-müluk*, who advised that the sultan should spend six hours of his day in recreation, including the chase,²⁸ hunting was sport for the top echelons of society only. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali regarded the chase as above all a pastime for the *padişahs* and *şehzades*, followed by *beys* and *beylerbeyis*. It was not for those slightly lower down the social ranking, the *vezirs* and the *emirs*, for such indulgence by these men had a deleterious effect on the people. It was definitely not for the lower echelons to indulge in hunting, which was beyond their means, “to acquire merlins and greyhounds and dogs and constantly to wander around summer and winter like a dog chasing its tail”, for the cost of this would destroy them.²⁹ Ahmed Rasim was to make the same point much later when he noted that hunting was an entertainment for the rich but a matter of survival for the poor.³⁰ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali's view of hunting contains an element of moral concern: one's entertainment should match one's pocket and pursuit of pastimes beyond one's financial reach was to be discouraged.

As Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali's viewpoint indicates, entertainment was intricately intertwined within the moral fabric of Ottoman society. It was entertainment which provided a flexibility within society, where pleasure pushed the boundaries of moral acceptability or circumvented or subverted social divisions and distinctions. The antics of the immensely popular Karagöz and Hacivat, who poked bawdy fun at social distinctions, “career[ing] madly up and down the keyboard of equivocal conduct”, replete with scenes so risqué that Davey could not relate them “even in Greek, let alone Latin”,³¹ highlight social pretensions, stereotypes and social subversion. Using regional accents, those of the *muhacir* (Muslim migrant from the Balkans) or the Jew from Istanbul, for example, something done by both the *meddah* (storyteller),³² whose imitation of regional accents, especially those of Konya, Kastamonu and

27 Grehan, “Fun and games in Ottoman Aleppo: the life and times of a local schoolteacher (1835-1865)”, p. 119.

28 Akgündüz, Ahmet, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri. 8/I. III. Murad Devri Kanunnâmeleri, 8/II. III. Mehmed Devri Kanunnâmeleri* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1994), p. 37.

29 Şeker, Mustafa (ed.), *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli ve Mevâ'idü'n-nefâis fi-ğavâ'idü'l-mecâlis* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), p. 290.

30 Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları*, ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul: Oğlak Klasikleri, 2005), p. 140.

31 Davey, Richard, *The Sultan and his Subjects* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), p. 243.

32 Nutku, Özdemir, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, n.d.), pp. 115, 160-1.

Adana, amused Murad IV,³³ and by *Karagöz*;³⁴ the parodying of social types, the poetry-reciting Persian, the unlikeable “Frenk” who appears “dancing a polka and interpolating Greek or French words in his speech”,³⁵ or the cunning man from Kayseri;³⁶ or sharply juxta-positioning the urban-rural divide, as Yusuf al-Shirbini does, contrasting the uncouthness, vulgarity and scurrility of the rural peasant with the wonderful urban world of Cairo, “the city of conviviality and amusement, of pleasure and fulfilment”,³⁷ such humour allows us both an understanding of the divisions that existed and how they were, or could be, regarded.

One social boundary often presented as largely impermeable was that between male and female. While Ottoman society was clearly a highly segregated one, with women excluded from much social activity and often secluded at home –although the level to which this was in fact the case needs to be questioned–,³⁸ the reality of such divisions was often somewhat blurred, and women partook of entertainment usually regarded as a male preserve. Many *Karagöz* shows were held in coffee houses for a male audience, but not always, for at a performance in Istanbul in 1894 Davey described how various *paşas* were accompanied by “little bright-eyed children [who] nestled close to them, watching proceedings in that earnest, yet half-listless way peculiar to Turkish urchins”, a performance also attended by “a group of Armenian and Greek women of the lowest class” who were settled in “an obscure corner of the room”.³⁹ The three little granddaughters of one of the *paşas* were so entranced by it all that their “braided pigtails...literally vibrated with the intensity of their excitement”.⁴⁰

The compartmentalization of the male and female realms, though not hermetically sealed, did result in one particular example of an entertainment

33 Refik Ahmed, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu? Fetihden Zamanımıza Kadar* (Istanbul: Suhulet Kitabhanesi, 1927), p. 59.

34 And, Metin, *Karagöz. Turkish Shadow Theatre* (Ankara: Dost Yayınları, 1975), p. 49. See also pp. 52, 57, 58.

35 And, *Karagöz*, pp. 57-8.

36 Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri*, pp. 153-4.

37 al-Shirbini, Yusuf, *Brains Confounded by the Ode of Abū Shādīf Expounded*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Humphrey Davies (New York: University of New York Press, 2016), vol. 11, p. 371. Left in the mud and filth of the countryside, the peasant was mired in ignorance, some apparently even more so than others for “the plowman is...less well-endowed mentally than his fellows, as his companions by day are oxen and by night are women; consequently his mental capacities never become completely formed”, al-Shirbini, *Brains Confounded*, 1, p. 153. The work was written towards the end of the seventeenth century.

38 See Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet (eds.), *Ottoman Women in Public Space* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

39 Davey, *The Sultan and his Subjects*, p. 241.

40 Davey, *The Sultan and his Subjects*, p. 245.

space which, while apparently very much a heterosexual one, was, Ebru Boyar argues in her chapter in this volume, in fact a homosocial location: the brothel. Discussing the brothel in Istanbul in the late Ottoman period, Boyar shows how brothels produced a space not just of sex but also of socialisation which presented men with an environment which contained women but which did not threaten the existing gender order in late Ottoman society.⁴¹

Just as entertainment could serve to blur the division between male and female, it could also make malleable the shades between the morally good and the morally bad, and in so doing show us what the society wished the moral world to be and what it actually was. While prostitutes were generally regarded as outside the realm of polite social gatherings, they could nevertheless be openly invited in 1743 to the wedding of the daughter of the treasurer of Damascus, Fathi al-Daftari, who lavished them with presents, for they had become “a social factor to be reckoned with”.⁴² Prostitutes also openly attended the theatre in Beyoğlu in Istanbul in the late nineteenth century, sitting immediately behind the state officials attending the performance.⁴³ Late night leisure was associated with “the blurring of boundaries between moral and immoral; between hard work and indolence; between male and female; and finally between Self and Other”.⁴⁴

Social spaces could transform the unacceptable or the frowned upon into a tolerated entertainment. The wine house became the space, according to Evliya Çelebi, where people “consoled themselves and conversed”.⁴⁵ The coffee house, too, “the main bastion of a public culture of fun”, as James Grehan has noted,⁴⁶ where the pleasurable but often disapproved of pastimes of smoking and coffee consumption took place, was a site of contemplation. It is this form of contemplative entertainment that Tülay Artan examines in her chapter in this volume, a chapter in which she criticises “loose talk” of eighteenth-century Istanbul and “the unified, uniform and ahistorical (re)construction of the Ot-

41 Boyar, Ebru, “The late Ottoman brothel in Istanbul: a heterosexual space for homosocial entertainment?”, ch. 8 in this volume.

42 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Public morality in 18th century Ottoman Damascus”, *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 55-56 (1990), p. 190.

43 Uşaklıgil, Halit Ziya, *Kırk Yıl*, ed. Nur Özmel Akın (Istanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2008), p. 772.

44 Wishnitzer, Avner, “Eyes in the dark: nightlife and visual regimes in late Ottoman Istanbul”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 37/2 (2017), p. 251.

45 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Dankoff, Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), p. 356.

46 Grehan, James, “Smoking and “early modern” sociability in the great tobacco debate in the Ottoman Middle East (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries)”, *The American Historical Review*, 111/5 (2006), p. 1375.

toman capital in the eighteenth century as a city of pleasures".⁴⁷ Contemplation, as Tülay Artan shows, was a popular Istanbul pastime in the eighteenth century. Mahmud I, for example, spent countless hours at various waterfront kiosks watching the waves and the passing vessels. Thévenot was very disparaging about such behaviour, commenting that most Turks passed almost all their time sitting and doing nothing, a characteristic he ascribed to laziness rather than to any concept of contemplation.⁴⁸ Contemplation was clearly not the entertainment of choice for Europeans. Von Moltke, writing to his mother in April 1836, noted that he and his companions from the Prussian embassy were forced to pass time in coffee houses where they would "sit down on low cane stools, smoke nargilehs or hubble-bubble pipes, look at the vessels passing through the Bosphorus and the dolphins which play about them in hundreds", for "this is the land of lazy ease, a whole nation in slippers".⁴⁹

It was watching that the foreign traveller often indulged in, a pastime that amused and entertained, and sometimes gave a reassuring frisson of superiority. As Gérard de Nerval, in Istanbul in 1842, remarked "the Orient has different ideas than us on education and morality", referring to the, for him, inexplicable parental choice of Karagöz as the best possible present for children, into whose hands they pressed "without scruple" this "indecent figure".⁵⁰ For Palmira Brummett, "observing local customs, rituals and ethnographies constituted a generic form of entertainment for foreign visitors".⁵¹ Watching, however, could also turn to incorporation, as the observer moved from the safety of the margins to engagement with the erstwhile observed entertainment. While some foreign travellers energetically traversed the empire, others took a more leisurely route, through the costume album. Such volumes, as William Kynan-Wilson shows, opened up a vista onto a different world for those who perused

47 Artan, Tülay, "Contemplation or amusement? The light shed by *ruznames* on an Ottoman spectacle of 1740-1750", ch. 2 in this volume, p. 26.

48 Morosini, "Relazioni di Gianfranco Morosini", p. 268.

49 Helmuth von Moltke to his mother, from Constantinople, 28 April 1836, *Letters of Field-Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke to his Mother and his Brothers*, 2 vols., trans. Clara Bell and Henry W. Fischer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), vol. 1, pp. 89-90. His views were echoed by Théophile Gautier, who commented that the East was where "every one busies himself doing nothing, with a conscientiousness quite admirable; and where people pass the whole day seated upon a mat, without the effort of a single movement", Gautier, Théophile, *Constantinople*, trans. Robert Howe Gould (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1875), p. 54.

50 de Nerval, Gérard, *Voyage en Orient* (Paris: G. Charpentier et Cie, 1889), vol. II, p. 192. Gérard de Nerval was the pseudonym of Gérard Labrunie.

51 Brummett, "Caravans and voyages, story and song: entertaining the traveler in/to Ottoman space", p. 46.

the pictures, or pulled back the flaps to reveal the intimate private world beyond.⁵²

The Nature of the State

While entertainment can aid an understanding of social boundaries, it also sheds light on the role of the state, the limits of its power, and the mechanisms it employed in order to gain legitimacy or impose authority. The regular banning of coffee houses is a clear indication of just how much the power of the state could be impotent in the face of an entertainment of such overwhelming popularity. Despite strident religious opposition, the tide of coffee was unstoppable:

The *ulema* said that the coffeehouse was a place of evil and that it was better to go to a wine-house than to the coffee shop. The preachers tried to convince people not to go there and the muftis gave *fetvas* [rulings] stating that coffee was forbidden. During the time of Murad III they started to give warnings about the problems of coffee. But nobody listened. And they even opened secret coffeehouses and the police could not do anything about it. The situation became such that the authorities gave up trying to warn people or to stop them going to the coffeehouses and the muftis and the preachers began to say that it was permissible to drink coffee, and everyone, *ulema*, *şeyhs*, *vezirs* and important people, all drank coffee. It came to such a point that some of the great *vezirs* built coffeehouses to make money and they were getting one or two gold pieces daily as rent.⁵³

For the Ottoman state entertainment was something to control, an approach no different from other states whose rulers sought to do the same thing. Although governments would on many occasions have been pleased to ban public festivities outright, this was frequently considered counterproductive. The state response was often, therefore, to provide entertainment which served the dual purpose of control and inculcation of the correct views: the success of the state, the piety of the ruler, the prestige of the local authority. The seven-day wedding festivities laid on by the treasurer of Damascus for his daughter in

52 See Kynan-Wilson, William, "Play and performance in Ottoman costume albums", ch. 4 in this volume.

53 İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevî Tarihi*, 2 vols., ed. Murat Uraz (Istanbul: Neşriyat Yurdu, 1968), vol. 1, p. 196, from Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 191.

1743 thus served to provide pleasure to the populace, to discourage opposition to him, and to secure loyalty, or at least acquiescence, to his position.⁵⁴

Much of Ottoman state power revolved round persuasion and negotiation, and in this entertainment played a major role. As Sarah Carpenter has noted, “the line between recreational relaxation and political statement [is] inevitably permeable”,⁵⁵ and intertwining political messages into public festivity was common practice among states. The magnificence of such ‘state’ events as royal weddings and circumcisions, the feeding of the populace at such events, such as the 60-day circumcision celebrations for Murad III’s son Mehmed (later Mehmed III) in 1582, and the scattering of largess all drew people into an entertainment which linked them into the state, whose successes were therefore their own. Spectacle equalled power, and magnificence entertained. Pyrotechnic displays could literally illuminate military prowess. At the celebrations for the wedding of the daughter of the grand *vezir* in 1675, fireworks exploded from a very large model of the castle of Kandiye (Candia, modern Heraklion), recently conquered by the Ottomans, and many rounds of gunfire were shot from within it, after which it was set ablaze, a spectacle that lasted one hour or more and “made the goodlyest bonfire that ever I saw”.⁵⁶

It was not only the provision of grand-scale entertainment that was important for the state, but also its ability to provide such entertainment safely. Sultans thus sought to keep a tight control on festivities, particularly those held at night, and this in part explains the various bans imposed on the presence of women on such occasions.⁵⁷ As the anonymous author of the *Ramazanname*, written in the second half of the eighteenth century, put it, to see the performance of spectacle, everywhere adorned and embellished, meant that all was safe and sound in the world.⁵⁸

Power was clearly a message that was required. What better than the combination of violence and entertainment, spiced with a little fear, to keep the

54 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Diversion and pleasure in Damascus during the Ottoman period”, in *Divertissements et loisirs dans les sociétés urbaines à l’époque moderne et contemporaine*, ed. Robert Beck and Anna Madoeuf (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2013), p. 163.

55 Carpenter, Sarah, “Performing diplomacies: the 1560s court entertainment of Mary Queen of Scots”, *The Scottish Historical Review*, 82/214, part 2 (2003), p. 195.

56 Covell, John, “Extracts from the diaries of Dr John Covell”, in *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, ed. T. Bent (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1893), p. 224.

57 Ambros, Edith Gülçin, Ebru Boyar, Palmira Brummett, Kate Fleet and Svetla Ianeva, “Ottoman women in public space: an introduction”, in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 14.

58 Çelebioğlu, Amil (ed.), *Ramazannâme* (Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser) (Istanbul: Kervan Kitapçılık A. Ş., n.d.), p. 260.

population amused, and quiescent. The decapitated heads of rebels displayed on the *ibret taşı* (the example stone) at Topkapı provided a satisfying spectacle, akin to the swish of the guillotine in the French Revolution. It was a spectacle that could involve active participation as it did in 1809 when the populace rushed to see the head of the day, that of Kadı Paşa, swearing at it, pulling at its beard and spitting on it “so much that the head was completely smothered in spittle. Not even a hair of the beard remained”.⁵⁹ Military processions, victories, departure and arrival of the army, all served to entertain with a message, a major part of which was the success and power of the state. The heads of the enemy displayed on poles by the returning army depicted in Schweigger,⁶⁰ or the inclusion of the unfortunate Philip of Burgundy after his defeat at the battle of Nikopolis in 1396, “sent to Adrianople as an adornment for the triumphal procession”,⁶¹ offered a pleasing and entertaining spectacle of success and triumph over the enemy for a celebrating populace.

The message of such entertainments was not merely aimed at a home audience, but also targeted ambassadors and visiting diplomats. “Performing diplomacy”, to use Sarah Carpenter’s phrase,⁶² was an art form among the Ottomans, used skilfully to impress, inspire caution or instil fear. Murad III used his procession across the capital, accompanied by a huge retinue of cavalry, “to terrify” the Safavid ambassador, instructing one of his *paşas* to tell the ambassador “that all this cavalry which he had seen were only the chickens in the coop and that he should consider how infinite a number remained outside in so many fields”.⁶³ A similar message, in a somewhat more veiled and smaller scale manner, is evident in the reception of the French embassy to England in 1564 which was received on its way to London from Dover by the Archbishop of Canterbury who, after several hours of conversation about the English Church, showed them part of his armoury “whereby they did see that some preparation we had against their invasion, if it had been so purposed. And so some of them expressed, that if a bishop hath regarde of such provision, belike other had a

59 Oğuluckyan, *Georg Oğulukyan'ın Ruznamesi. 1806-1810 İsyancıları. III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, ed. Hrand D. Andreasyan (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1972), p. 46.

60 Schweigger, Salomon, *Ein neue Reyssbeschreibung auss Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem* (Nurnberg: Johann Lansenberger, 1639), p. 94.

61 Beçikemi, Marin, “Panegyric to the Venetian state”, in Barleti, Marin, *The Siege of Shkodra*, trans. and ed. David Hosaflook (Tirana: Onurfi, 2012), p. 192 (written in 1503).

62 Carpenter, “Performing diplomacies: the 1560s court entertainment of Mary Queen of Scots”.

63 Domenico, *Domenico's Istanbul*, trans. M.J.L. Austin, ed. Geoffrey Lewis (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2001), p. 30.

more care thereabout".⁶⁴ Feeding, so prominent a feature in many state celebrations, could also be used to good effect. The Safavid embassy was fed and entertained so well during the circumcision festivities for Murad III's son Mehmed that, seeing this "munificence" of the sultan, many Kızılbaş, including even a young man who was a "han-zade", a son of a Safavid notable, converted to Sunni Islam.⁶⁵

The performances put on for visiting ambassadors were carefully crafted, and the route taken orchestrated with great care, as was the case with the Safavid ambassadors to the Ottoman empire, Şah Kulu in 1568 and Tokmak Han in 1576.⁶⁶ On these occasions, the Ottomans appear to have amused themselves a little with the entertainment laid on when it came to the crossing of the Bosphorus, the sea not being an element in which the Safavids found themselves at home. As Şah Kulu and his entourage, entertained with feasts on five galleys, crossed from Üsküdar, guns and cannons were fired off. "Dumbfounded with amazement and anguish" and crying out to Ali for protection, they called on the soldiers: "the sea is bad for us, *gazis* find a solution for us". As soon as the ships reached land, they flung themselves ashore.⁶⁷ Tokmak Han had a similar experience when he and high-ranking members of the embassy were entertained with a banquet by the grand admiral Uluç Ali Paşa as they crossed the Bosphorus. During this feast, at the moment at which the ambassador popped the first morsel of food into his mouth, the cannons were fired and the Safavid guests clung to each other in fear. Laughing, Uluç Ali Paşa calmed them down.⁶⁸

On the flip side, entertainment was also used to challenge state authority. Just as coffee houses could be locations for smouldering discontent, so too could the *hamams*, where the clientele could voice sharp political criticism as they immersed themselves in water and steam. Criticism of the government was what led to the arrest of women in the *hamam* in 1809.⁶⁹ While Marko Kraljević drank wine, danced with women and dressed himself in green during Ramazan, in contravention of the orders of Sultan Süleyman I, according to

64 McGee, Edward, "The English entertainment for the French ambassadors in 1564," *Early Theatre*, 14/1 (2011), p. 84, quote from John Bruce and Thomas Thomason Perowne (eds.), *Correspondence of Matthew Parker* (Cambridge, 1853), pp. 214-15.

65 Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Câmi'ü'l-Buhûr Der Mecâlis-i Sûr*, ed. Ali Öztekin (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), pp. 64, and 249.

66 Boyar, Ebru, "The Ottoman-Safavid propaganda war: reception of Safavid embassies in Ottoman territory, 1555-1578", forthcoming.

67 Selaniki, *Tarih*, 1, p. 69.

68 Gerlach, Stephan, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1573-1576, 1. Cilt*, ed. Kemal Beydilli, trans. Türkis Noyan (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), p. 335.

69 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi*, 2 vols., ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 1, p. 392.

the Serbian ballad,⁷⁰ poetry and song could voice political criticism, as the satirical poems employed in *Karagöz* and *Orta Oyunu* did, at least until the period of Sultan Abdülaziz,⁷¹ *Karagöz* mocking the janissaries in Aleppo in the eighteenth century to great popular effect.⁷² Before censorship took its toll, *Karagöz* was apparently a vehicle of political and social satire, benefitting from “a liberty without limits”, for it was as “a daily paper, without control, without official sanction, without an editor, a terrible paper, for it does not write: it speaks and sings before numerous subscribers ... it attacks all”.⁷³ *Karagöz* attacked the French in Algiers, with Satan appearing in performances in French uniform. The result was a ban on *Karagöz* by the French authorities in 1843 “for expressing anti-colonial ideology”.⁷⁴ Sharp political satire also led to a ban on political references in 1911 in Tripoli.⁷⁵ Although *Karagöz* fell victim to the state crack-down on such unbridled mockery and satire, unable again “to restore this pungent side of his character”,⁷⁶ the development of the press in the later nineteenth century saw satire appear instead in print in the form of cartoons and satirical pieces for the entertainment of readers, including *Diyojen*, the first satirical journal which appeared in November 1870 until its demise three years later, and the journal *Karagöz*, which was first published in 1908 and was to run well into the Republic.

The Sense of Belonging

Much entertainment revolves around belonging, humour, for example, underlining how some belong and some do not. The difference between what entertains one society but does not entertain another also delineates belonging. The Persian envoy, Mirza Abul Hassan Khan, in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, completely failed to understand the enjoyment of his host, Lord Radstock, in collecting old masters, or the amount of money he spent on this pastime, commenting in his diary “I found all of this

70 Low, D.H. (trans.), *The Ballads of Marko Kraljević* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 150-2.

71 And, Metin, *Türk Tiyatrosunun Evreleri* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 1983), pp. 95-8.

72 And, *Karagöz*, pp. 70-1.

73 Méry, Joseph, *Constantinople et le Mer Noire* (Paris: Belin-Leprieur and Morizot, 1855), p. 358.

74 And, *Karagöz*, p. 71.

75 And, *Karagöz*, p. 71.

76 And, *Karagöz*, p. 69.

very strange".⁷⁷ Lord Radstock's invitation was itself perhaps somewhat odd, for according to Mirza Abul Hassan Khan, Lord Radstock had invited him "to visit his house and see his paintings of beautiful women".⁷⁸

Sharing entertainment meant being part of a shared world, and this shared world becomes accessible to us through the lens of entertainment. Just how shared this world could be is indicated by the experience of Leon Sciaky who as a child recalled the evening visits of the scholarly headmaster of one of the Schools of the Alliance who would read *Les Misérables* to the assembled family, translating from French to Spanish as he went along for the benefit of Sciaky's grandparents who did not know French.⁷⁹ Sciaky's father also read aloud to the family, translating Dumas, this time from Turkish to Spanish.⁸⁰ It was this shared world of entertainment that led to Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's mastering of the polka and the waltz with his Jewish friends in İzmir, taught in an upper room of the Cezayir Hanı by a Greek-speaking Jewish teacher originally from one of the Greek islands.⁸¹

Sharing a past, too, meant belonging to the same social group/society/state/empire, however mythical that past might be, and in this entertainment played its role. It could create a sense of "nostalgic belonging", a membership of a world long since gone, but one with which nevertheless the recipient of the entertainment identified, such as that experienced by Sciaky when listening to the songs of his great grandmother.⁸² Entertainment could also attach both spectator and player to the 'normal' world when circumstances had taken it away from them. In the context of the First World War and the prisoner of war camps, it was theatre which gave soldiers, both those in the audience and those acting both male and female parts, a temporary escape from the homosocial world in which they found themselves. More than mere entertainment, Yücel Yanıkdağ argues in this volume, prison camp theatres were "therapeutic in helping heal and reaffirm the prisoners' sense of manliness which ... had been undermined by their capture and treatment".⁸³

History as entertainment, as the recitation of the glorious past, of the triumphs of 'us' over 'them', in other words as 'myth' history, cultivates this sense

77 Cloake, Margaret Morris (trans. and ed.), *A Persian at the Court of King George 1809-10. The Journal of Mirza Abul Hassan Khan* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988), p. 64.

78 Cloake, *A Persian at the Court of King George 1809-10*, p. 57.

79 Sciaky, Leon, *Farewell to Salonica: City at the Crossroads* (London: Haus Books, 2007), p. 23.

80 Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, p. 69.

81 Uşaklıgil, *Kırk Yıl*, pp. 246-8.

82 Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, p. 45.

83 Yanıkdağ, Yücel, "Warriors in drag: performing gender and remaking men in prisoner of war theatre", ch. 11 in this volume, p. 228.

of belonging. “We swim in the past as fish do in water”, as Eric Hobsbawm has noted,⁸⁴ and it is this universality that gives it its power in the implantation of perception and in the crafting of belonging. For the Ottomans history was fun, even a “universal passion”, at least according to Brown, for “they employ all their leisure time in hearing or telling the Exploits of their Ancestors”.⁸⁵ The practice of reading historical works aloud was widespread in Ottoman Egypt, for example, something, Nelly Hanna argues, was perhaps encouraged by the spread of the coffee house.⁸⁶ In the introduction to *Kitab Lata’if akhbar al-uwal fi man tasarrafa fi Misr min arabab al-duwal*, a history from the early Islamic period to 1033/1623, al-Ishaqi explains that history “is an art (*fann*) which talks of the important events (*waqa’i*) but at the same time is entertaining, including stories and anecdotes (*hikayat, nawadir*) to amuse and entertain the reader”.⁸⁷ The “exploits of their ancestors” were related by *aşıks* (wandering minstrels) as they moved from village to village and town to town throughout Anatolia.⁸⁸ They were used to great effect among the military, serving to boost a sense of belonging both to the military body and to the state for which it fought. *Meddahs* accompanied Ottoman armies on campaign and entertained the soldiers with stories of heroic exploits.⁸⁹ Their shared history of swashbuckling victories was reinforced by recitations of the chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade, a work “evidently composed to be read aloud”.⁹⁰ Such swashbuckling tales were to be used much later, with a different twist and to different effect, among Serbian soldiers who were regaled with songs and stories about the battle of Kosovo and Stefan Dušan.⁹¹

Entertainment could be all about creating a defined group in opposition to another. Sephardic theatre in the Ottoman empire was thus “a medium of instruction” whose “long term goal was the transformation of Sephardim’s worldview”.⁹² In the words of a Ladino paper from 1874, “theatre is not only

84 Hobsbawm, Eric, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1998), p. 13.

85 Brown, Edward, *The Travels and Adventures of Edward Brown* (London: J. Applebee, 1739), p. 390.

86 Hanna, Nelly, “The chronicles of Ottoman Egypt: history or entertainment?”, in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950-1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 242.

87 Hanna, “The chronicles of Ottoman Egypt”, p. 247.

88 Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri*, p. 18.

89 Refik Ahmed, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?*, p. 49.

90 Ménage, V.L., “The beginning of Ottoman historiography”, in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 174.

91 Kaytchev, Naoum, “Children into adults, peasants into patriots: the army and nation-building in Serbia and Bulgaria (1878-1912)”, in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 123.

92 Borovaya, Olga, “New forms of Ladino cultural production in the late Ottoman period.

entertainment but also [a place where] one learns about morality, education, and civilization”,⁹³ a view echoed by the author of an article on theatre in the journal *Uhurvet* in May 1906.⁹⁴ For Namık Kemal it was less a “school of morals” than a highly beneficial entertainment.⁹⁵ Theatre, Milena Methodieva argues in her chapter in this volume, in which she challenges “the common assumptions which portray the Muslim community as a conservative inert mass uninterested in any cultural endeavors”, was significant in the cultural reform and political mobilization of the Muslims in the newly-created Bulgarian state. For Bulgaria’s Muslims, theatre represented “an attempt to carve out their own place in Bulgaria while maintaining their own cultural traditions and identity”.⁹⁶ Svetla Ianeva, too, notes in this volume the use of theatre for ‘nationalistic’ purposes. In relation to the banning in Rusçuk (modern Ruse) in Bulgaria of a theatre performance of an historical drama, *The Accession to the Throne of Krum the Formidable* about a ninth-century Bulgarian king, Svetla Ianeva argues that “at least some members of the Ottoman provincial authorities seem to have been aware that the growing taste of their Bulgarian subjects for history dramas, recalling their ‘great’ past, had to do with growing national feelings and even aspirations to independence and were therefore not particularly favourable to the presentation of such plays”.⁹⁷

A similar process, involving public ceremonies, is discernible in another area of the Balkans. As Antonis Anastasopoulos argues in relation to the ceremonies of 1884 commemorating the Ottoman defeat at the battle of the Arkadi Monastery, near Rethymno in Crete, in 1866, such ceremonies were aimed at inculcating ideas of Greek national pride, of union with Greece and at reinforcing the differences between the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the island. In this particular case, he goes on to argue, the newspaper coverage had a further impact, as it affected those who were not themselves present at the ceremonies but were being provided with information about both their con-

Sephardic theater as a tool of indoctrination”, *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, 2/1 (2008), p. 67.

93 Borovaya, “New forms of Ladino cultural production in the late Ottoman period. Sephardic theater as a tool of indoctrination”, p. 67.

94 Quoted in Methodieva, Milena B., “Muslim culture, reform and patriotism: staging Namık Kemal in post-Ottoman Bulgaria (1878-1908)”, ch. 10 in this volume, p. 212.

95 Methodieva, “Muslim culture, reform and patriotism: staging Namık Kemal in post-Ottoman Bulgaria (1878-1908)”, p. 212.

96 Methodieva, “Muslim culture, reform and patriotism: staging Namık Kemal in post-Ottoman Bulgaria (1878-1908)”, p. 211.

97 Ianeva, Svetla, “Between tradition and modernity – entertainment in late Ottoman Rusçuk”, ch. 6 in this volume, p. 131.

tent and their political meaning while at the same time in effect crafting the memory of those who had attended.⁹⁸

Entertainment could also serve to link people to the concepts of the day, to being ‘modern’, for example. The balls held in Rusçuk in the later nineteenth century were “not only perceived as a modern form of entertainment *per se*, but ... were aimed at advertising modernization and reforms and involved people sensitive to this agenda”.⁹⁹ Bicycle riders at the turn of the twentieth century were not merely energetic but also members of the forward-looking, the modern, those in the van-guard of social progress. A harbinger of modernity and progress as Yavuz Köse notes,¹⁰⁰ the bicycle slotted into the changing concepts of time evident in the empire in the late nineteenth century. For Ahmed Tevfik, whose book on his bicycle tour to Bursa in 1899 is discussed by Yavuz Köse in his chapter in this volume, it was also a source of pleasurable entertainment and a vehicle of tourism. Köse notes that by the early twentieth century the bicycle had come to be seen as a sports vehicle and that its appearance was swiftly followed by the formation of cycling clubs in several Ottoman towns.¹⁰¹ But for Ahmed Tevfik, it appears that his main source of entertainment was the travel itself, according to Köse, who argues that by the late nineteenth century the Ottomans “had discovered their *Reiselust*” and that travelling and sightseeing had become entertainments in their own right. Travel accounts appear to have a further facet, that of portraying progress, showing the reader “the progress (that is western-oriented modernization) the country was making under Sultan Abdülhamid”.¹⁰² Future research on tourism in the Ottoman empire, Köse points out, will require a (re)consideration of the sources,¹⁰³ something that Tülay Artan also calls for in relation to the study of Istanbul in the eighteenth century, a “back to basics” approach to counter the tendency of

98 Anastasopoulos, Antonis, “Public celebrations and ceremonies in the late Ottoman Cretan press: building a collective identity among the Christian population”, ch. 7 in this volume.

99 Ianeva, “Between tradition and modernity – entertainment in late Ottoman Rusçuk”, p. 122.

100 Köse, Yavuz, “Bicycling into modernity in the late Ottoman empire: Ahmed Tevfik and his bicycle travelogue”, ch. 9 in this volume, p. 184.

101 Köse, “Bicycling into modernity in the late Ottoman empire: Ahmed Tevfik and his bicycle travelogue”, p. 190.

102 Köse, “Bicycling into modernity in the late Ottoman empire: Ahmed Tevfik and his bicycle travelogue”, p. 203.

103 Köse, “Bicycling into modernity in the late Ottoman empire: Ahmed Tevfik and his bicycle travelogue”, p. 207.

much current scholarship “to seek refuge in grand theorizing about Ottoman early modernity”.¹⁰⁴

For the nineteenth-century Ottoman elite the fun of shopping involved perusing French or English magazines and purchasing foreign fashions.¹⁰⁵ The upper echelons of society now went to the theatre, rather than to *Karagöz* or *Orta Oyunu*, which, stripped of their political satire, became mere bawdy shows of questionable humour, at least for some. For Namık Kemal they were “parade grounds of base behaviour”, “the school of base morals”, “the school of disgrace”.¹⁰⁶ Basiretçi Ali was scathing about an *Orta Oyunu* performance he attended in Bayrampaşa in Istanbul:

if you ask me what kind of a play it was, well as you know it was one of those plays in which men get caught with women. I don't know about the others but I myself was much vexed during the time I sat there. For the play does not benefit the spectators, rather it may even corrupt their morals! Inside there were pure-hearted and tender young girls and virtuous and chaste women. The dialogue was such as to shock even decent men. If it so shocks men then just think what it does to women!¹⁰⁷

Although many modes of entertainment had changed by the nineteenth century, or at least had changed for some strata of society, much of this change was superficial, for new forms were often moulded to traditional frameworks and inserted into the pre-existing social mores. A prime example of this is the *deniz hamamı*, or sea *hamam*, where sea bathing was re-formulated as if in a traditional *hamam* relocated to the sea shore.¹⁰⁸ Ramazan now came with new fashion requirements, the must-wear apparel for the *alafranga* man, a figure often ridiculed for his affected following of the mode of European fashion. The fashions requirements for one Ramazan listed by Ahmed Rasim, who often poked fun at the *alafranga* male, were as follows: “The collar is to be stiff and straight. The tie is to be a purplish brown colour, the overcoat black, with tiny spots of blue and puffy shoulders, the waistcoat open and with double

104 Artan, “Contemplation or amusement? The light shed by *ruznames* on an Ottoman spectacle of 1740-1750”, p. 41.

105 Fleet, Kate, “The powerful public presence of the Ottoman female consumer”, in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 116-18.

106 And, *Türk Tiyatrosunun Evreleri*, p. 100.

107 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *Mektupları*, p. 165, from Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 276.

108 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 283-5.

buttons. Trousers are to be a dark black and the trouser legs narrower. Shoes are to be polished and laced, socks, a light yellow".¹⁰⁹

Entertainment in the Ottoman empire could thus serve to create nodes of attachment to separate worlds, to that of the Jewish community, to the Orthodox world of the Rum, to the intellectual, urban elite, or to the 'modern', but it could, and did, also create a sense of belonging to the empire itself, a belonging that transcended the smaller worlds of belonging and linked subject to sultan, individual to empire. Nasreddin Hoca, that quintessential figure of Turkish folklore, was a universal figure for the empire, one to whom all Ottomans related, his stories known and understood from the Balkans to Egypt. Sciaky recalled how the teacher of Turkish, Selim Efendi, in the Shalom School in Thessaloniki, would relate anecdotes about Nasreddin Hoca to his pupils.¹¹⁰ For the nineteenth-century Christian schoolteacher from Aleppo, Na'um Bakhkhash, the world of festivity and entertainment was not restricted to his own religious milieu. Religious holidays, regardless of whether they were Christian or not, were sources of entertainment and social exchange, as James Grehan in this volume demonstrates. Religious festivities were communal celebrations regardless of religion, and the exchange of gifts at such times was "indifferent to religious identity".¹¹¹

The cult of victory, the military successes, the weddings and births of royals, all served to cement people into a 'supra' belonging, to the empire. At the very end of the empire's existence, the Ottoman government's unilateral abrogation of the capitulations, a move described in *The Times* as "a sudden stroke by Turkey",¹¹² was publicly celebrated with great gusto both in the capital, where flags flew from shops and houses and government buildings and ships on the Bosphorus were illuminated at night, and in provincial towns.¹¹³ In this period, with the empire submerged in a series of wars, the Ottoman-Italian War of 1911, the Balkan Wars, the First World War, theatre "was an ideal instrument for the strengthening of the civilian and military morale".¹¹⁴ This sense of belonging was to an Ottoman unity that tied those within the empire to a political allegiance to their sultan or, more expansively, to a shared Ottoman world. In

109 Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir*, pp. 328-9, from Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 304.

110 Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, pp. 77-8.

111 Grehan, "Fun and games in Ottoman Aleppo: the life and times of a local schoolteacher (1835-1865)", p. 100.

112 *The Times*, 12 September 1914, p. 7.

113 Ahmad, Feroz, "Ottoman perceptions of the capitulations 1800-1914", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11/1 (2000), p. 18.

114 And, *Karagöz*, p. 18.

answer to the question can one really talk of an Ottoman empire as a cohesive unit, of a tangible connection between regions as disparate as, say, Sofia and Cairo, one can point to the power of entertainment and argue that in fact this did provide an overarching connection that did, however loosely, hold the empire together as one, very flexible, diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, conglomeration that did have a distinct sense of itself as a united empire, a shared world.

Ulinka Rublack has argued that “if we wish to understand this particular society”, here referring to Renaissance Europe, and in particular German speaking regions, “we need to be able to analyse its visual production and the role it played in cultural arguments”.¹¹⁵ One could perhaps say the same for entertainment, for this too provides a route into a more in-depth understanding of the society of the Ottoman world.

¹¹⁵ Rublack, Ulinka, *Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 27.

Contemplation or Amusement? The Light Shed by *Ruznames* on an Ottoman Spectacle of 1740-1750

Tülay Artan

I have always felt uncomfortable, and if anything recently grown even more uncomfortable, with loose talk of “eighteenth-century Istanbul”. This is a rather big block of time in the history of the Ottoman capital that old and new generations of historians have addressed by trying to latch on to themes of administrative change, lifestyles, or the evolution of art and architecture. They have ended up by attributing to it a unified, uniform character which stands in contrast to, and therefore separates it from, the preceding or the following centuries. On the one hand there is the triumphant stability of the “classical” age, so-called, and on the other, the Tanzimat’s modernization reforms from the top down. In between, the Ottoman eighteenth century is taken as representing “change”, which, moreover, is said to be especially evident and embodied in the imperial capital. Entertainment, whether in the form of courtly parades or wedding festivals, or the waterfront parties of the royal and sub-royal elite, or popular gatherings revolving around poets or storytellers in public places, plays a particularly strong role in this classification.¹

From here the phrase “eighteenth-century Istanbul” takes off into a life of its own. It has, indeed, come to be vested with such authority that, as with any cliché, in many cases it is being used and overused as a substitute for real, empirical evidence. There are now too many sweeping generalizations about this

1 The depiction of the early eighteenth-century capital as the city of pleasures is largely built on new forms of sociability and entertainment attributed to the latter part of Ahmed III’s reign that came to be known as the Tulip Period (1718-30). See Ahmed Refik (Altınay), *Lale Devri* (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i Askeri, İbrahim Hilmi, 1331 [1915]); Özcan, Abdülkadir and İskender Pala, “Lâle Devri”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XXVII (2003), pp. 81-4 and 84-5. See also Melikoff, Irène, “Lâle Devri”, *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, vol. v, pp. 645-8. For a critical assessment of the literature see Karahasanoğlu, Selim, “Osmanlı Tarih Yazımında ‘Lale Devri’: Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme”, *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 7 (2008), 129-44; Karahasanoğlu, Selim, “İstanbul’un Lale Devri mi? Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı”, in *Tarih İçinde İstanbul Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, ed. Davut Hut, Zekeriya Kurşun and Ahmet Kavas (Istanbul: İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı, 2011), pp. 427-63.

“eighteenth-century Istanbul” that lack substance.² This is largely why I would like to confine myself to a period of only ten years, as well as a single specific form of courtly entertainment, more obscure than usual though it may be, the practice of watching passing ships and boats (known as *temaşa-yı sefayin-i iyab u zehab* or *temaşa-yı zevrekan*), while also smoking and drinking coffee, from coastal pavilions at the tip of the historical peninsula.³

Unlike other kinds of entertainment open to the public, usually narrated by European travellers as well as Ottoman poets or painters, it is to much more drily routine and bureaucratic *ruznamecis* that we owe our as yet limited knowledge of this practice. A *ruzname* is ordinarily a calendar, a journal or diary, or a book of daily receipts and expenditure. By the same token, *ruznamecis* are officials or clerks in charge of journal-keeping. But in this specific case, what they are recording are the daily activities of the sultan.

Luckily for our purpose, an almost uninterrupted series of such journals is available for virtually the entire reign of Mahmud I (1730-54).⁴ The author of

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- 2 For a criticism of the “Istanbul in the eighteenth century” cliché see Artan, Tülay, “I. Mahmud ve Boğaziçi, 1740-1750: Temâşâ, Tefekkür, Tevakkuf ve ‘Şehr-i Sefâ”, *I. Mahmud Dönemi Sempozyumu*, ed. Hatice Aynur (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, forthcoming). For a typical example of such overreaching generalization see Hamadeh, Shirine, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2008).
- 3 For an extensive treatment of Mahmud I's watching passing ships and boats see Artan, “I. Mahmud ve Boğaziçi, 1740-1750: Temâşâ, Tefekkür, Tevakkuf ve ‘Şehr-i Sefâ”. For a description of a *zevrek* see Raşid Mehmed Efendi, Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi, *Tarih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, Yunus Uğur, Baki Çakır and Ahmet Zeki İzgöer (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013), vol. 11, p. 1322: “... şehzâde-i civân-bahıtları Sultân Süleymân hazretlerinin süvâr oldukları zevrakçe-i hilâliyyü’ş-şekle nakl ü tahvîl ve...”. See also Turan, Selami, “Divân Şairlerinin ‘Zevrak’ Etrafında Oluşturdukları Benzetme Dünyası”, *Turkish Studies*, 4/2 (2009), 1039-71.
- 4 Several volumes of *ruznames* have been located and some are transcribed. A number of *ruznamecis* (*sır katibi*) are identified in this period: Hıfzı Ağa (15 Rebiülevvel 1143-27 Safer 1144/28 September 1730-31 August 1731); Ahmed (18 Muharrem 1147-9 Cemaziülâhır 1147/20 June-6 November 1734); (Has Odalı) Hıfzı Muhammed Ağa (1 Muharrem 1148-23 Safer 1151/24 May 1735-12 June 1738); [Salahaddin] Salahî (23 Safer 1151-25 Cemaziülevvel 1151/12 June 1738-10 September 1738); Ahmed Ömer Ağa (25 Cemaziülâhır 1153-23 Rebiülâhır 1163/17 September 1740-1 April 1750); Yenişehirli Mehmed and another Mehmed (15 Cemaziülâhır 1165-28 Safer 1168/30 April 1752-14 December 1754). The *ruzname* of the last two is located by Selman Soydemir who is currently writing a Ph.D. dissertation on this corpus. For earlier studies see Çınar, Şükran, “Patrona Halil İsyânı’na ve I. Mahmud Devrine Ait Bir Tarihçe”, Graduation Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1974; Uzun, Efkân, “Sultan I. Mahmud’a Ait Bir Rûznâme (H. 1147/M. 1734)”, *Turkish Studies*, 8/7, (2013), 687-703; Oral, Yavuz, “Kadı Ömer Efendi. Rûznâme-i Sultan Mahmud Han-ı Evvel (1153-1157/1740-1744)”, Graduation Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1966; Özcan, Özcan, “Kadı Ömer Efendi. Rûznâme-i Sultan Mahmud Han-ı Evvel (1157-1160/1744-1747)”, Graduation Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1965; Bayrak, Kamuran, “Kadı Ömer Efendi. Rûznâme-i Sultan Mahmud Han-ı Evvel (1160-1163/1747-1750)”, Graduation Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1972.

the 1740-50 *ruzname* was a certain Kadı Ömer Ağa (Efendi). Hence it becomes possible to trace, within this new genre, the language employed by a single author for his routine observations, day and night, for ten whole years. It allows us to pinpoint even minute changes regarding one particular pastime. It is in this way that we come to observe a gradual, almost imperceptible shift from (solitary) contemplation to (sociable) amusement in watching passing ships and boats. This entails a certain proliferation or expansion from the court to the non-royal urban elite and beyond. It also becomes possible to compare the iconographical language of the *ruznames* with period chronicles, poetry, or miniature paintings that also deal with such pastimes.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, European visitors, too, repeatedly took note of contemplation as a favoured Istanbulite pastime. One of them was Charles Colville Frankland, a British naval officer, who, travelling in a caique up a small creek at the far end of the Golden Horn, and reaching (with considerable difficulty) a landing place under some fine trees in a beautiful valley, observed some “splendid groups of contemplative Turks, seated near the stream, enjoying their pipes and their coffee”.⁵ Many others also left their accounts of similar parties of the wealthy entertaining themselves on the shores of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus.⁶ The variety of images accompanying these narratives demand further interpretation, since they themselves

5 He continued to say that “...the quiet, modest-looking knots of veiled females, retired to a little distance from the men; their beautiful and richly dressed children, playing about the green enamelled with flowers, attended by negro women; the picturesque-looking Greek and Jew vendors of trinkets and bonbons, gliding about; the Oriental facade and porticoes of the kiosk, the green hills on each side of the valley, the blue sky and bright sun”, Frankland, Charles Colville, *Travels to and from Constantinople, in the Years 1827 and 1828: or Personal Narrative of a Journey from Vienna, through Hungary, Transylvania, Wallachia, Bulgaria, and Roumelia, to Constantinople. And from that City to the Capital of Austria, by the Dardanelles, Tenedos, the Plains of Troy, Smyrna, Napoli Di Romania, Athens, Egina, Poros, Cyprus, Syria, Alexandria, Malta, Sicily, Italy, Istria, Carniolia, and Styria*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), vol. 1, pp. 5 and 148. Then a lieutenant in the British Navy, Frankland introduced it as a journal “unembellished by any attempts at authorship”.

6 Some relied heavily on the accounts of previous travellers, but Frankland was among the very few who did not cull from the earlier textual or visual narratives. Likewise, 38 engravings illustrating his book, especially the panoramas which were labelled as drawn by himself, were strictly documentary in nature. For his drawing experiences in Istanbul, see *The London Literary Gazette; and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c.*, no. 652, Saturday, 18 July 1829, pp. 465-7. Frankland's drawings were signed “Engraved by J. Clark”, Bryan, Michael, “Clark, John Heaviside”, in *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers. Biographical and Critical Volume 1: A-K*, ed. Robert Edmund Graves (London: George Bell and Sons, 1886), pp. 280-1.

were an amalgam of intertextual recollections (of earlier artists's descriptions), subjective imagination and objectifying observation.⁷

Further yet, it was around this time that a particular image of leisurely gatherings on the Bosphorus came to dominate works (sketches, paintings, engravings) by European artists some of whom had never been to Istanbul.⁸ Its point of origin was painting *fêtes galantes* and *fêtes champêtres* in the Watteau manner, giving rise to a tempered Rococo transposed into the Orient.⁹ Crowded with props like quays, landings, meadows, groves, rills, streams, curled bridges,

7 Schiffer made this observation regarding travellers' descriptions of landscapes, Schiffer, Reinhold, *Oriental Panorama: British Travellers in 19th Century Turkey* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999), p. 82.

8 There were a number of talented artists visiting the city as well. They belonged to different artistic schools. While Jean-Étienne Liotard (d. 1789) and Antoine de Favray's (d. 1798) portraits of Europeans in Istanbul in Oriental costumes have great documentary value, historical truth was not always the purpose sought by Jean-Baptiste Hilaire (d. 1822?) and Louis-François Cassas (d. 1827), both commissioned by the French Ambassador Count Choiseul-Gouffier. Hilaire depicted imaginary landscapes that express a nostalgia for the rural ideal derived from Watteau and he represented the East in pure fantasy and enchantment, with Orientals in Western costumes. Cassas, on the other hand, stayed in Istanbul for a short period and travelled to Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, and Asia Minor to document costumes, architectural monuments, processions, scenes from daily life and ancient sites. Elsewhere, he too painted romantic landscapes; and his paintings were very influential on many artists and stage designers in the early decades of the nineteenth century. A landscape painter in the retinue of the British Ambassador Robert Ainslie, Luigi Mayer (d. 1803) and his equally gifted artist wife Clara Barthold, both had a naïve aestheticism and realistic style. Likewise, Antoine-Ignace Melling's (d. 1831) figural landscapes documented the Ottoman capital at the turn of the century without romanticizing but with a particular effort to "beautifying Istanbul along European lines", see Davis, Fanny, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (NYC, Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 15.

9 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 35. The poetical term *fête galante* refers to a new genre of paintings and drawings in the early eighteenth century. Jean-Antoine Watteau (d. 1721) and his followers created a new form, with a certain timelessness, characterised by subtleties largely inspired by images of bucolic merrymaking in the sixteenth-century Venetian and seventeenth-century Dutch painting. It featured bourgeoisie at play with figures in ball dress or masquerade costumes sporting themselves amorously in parkland settings, reminiscent of the mythologized land of Arcadia, where humans had supposedly lived in leisurely harmony with nature, Sheriff, Mary D. (ed.), *Antoine Watteau: Perspectives on the Artist and the Culture of His Time* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2006); Vogther, Christoph Martin and Mary Tavener Holmes (eds.), *De Watteau à Fragonard – Les fêtes galantes*, Musée Jacquemart-André, 14 mars-21 juillet 2014 (Paris: Fonds Mercator, 2014). Williams, focusing on the eclectic and interconnected nature of European responses to Ottoman culture, argues that "Turquerie was not a style; rather it was a theme that in the course of the 18th century sparked varied responses in different places", Williams, Haydn, *Turquerie. An Eighteenth-Century European Fantasy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2014). See also Avcioğlu, Nebahat, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728-1876* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

marble fountains and summer pavilions, such works exuded a high degree of theatricality. They served to evoke a timeless, unchanging Orient.¹⁰ In turn, they inspired another cycle of Turkish/Ottoman allusions in contemporary European theatre, balls and masquerades, garden follies and the decorative arts. As many historians mistook some of these scenes for historic reality, altogether they played a crucial role in the unified, uniform and ahistorical (re)construction of the Ottoman capital in the eighteenth century as a city of pleasures.

Pondering, Contemplation, Meditation and Amusement

Raşid, in his *Tarih*, mentions Ahmed III as occasionally watching ships and boats. Mahmud I, however, seems to have spent countless hours at various waterfront kiosks watching the waves as well as passing *kayıks*, *peremes* or sailboats. Towards the end of the century European observers were beginning to note and describe residents of small Bosphorus villages, too, as they gathered in waterfront coffee houses, smoking, drinking coffee, and watching the opposite shore in complete silence, without so much as uttering a single word for hours. They found these non-talkative Ottoman men rather strange. They described what they were doing – stopping, sitting (or standing) still and watching – as contemplation.¹¹

10 Bohrer, Frederick N., “The Sweet Waters of Asia: representing difference/differencing representation in nineteenth-century Istanbul”, in *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*, ed. Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 121-38.

11 Ottoman urban cemeteries constituted a unique type of public space to contemplate death and be ready for it. A selection of accounts from the early nineteenth century, mostly by Victorian British men and women obsessed with death and cemeteries, reflect on this practice and testify also to contemplating Turks on the shores of the Bosphorus, Tietz, Friedrich, *St. Petersburg, Constantinople, and Napoli di Romania, in 1833 and 1834. A Characteristic Picture, Drawn During a Residence There* (New York: Theodore Foster, 1836), p. 116: “...the graves themselves resemble luxuriant flowerbeds, so that a Turkish churchyard has an exceedingly pleasant effect, and in fine weather is constantly frequented by the natives, who either slowly walk along the side of the graves, or sit close to those which are dear to them, smoking their pipes in serious contemplation”; Pouqueville, François Charles Hugues Laurent, *Travels in Greece and Turkey: Comprehending a Particular Account of the Morea, Albania, &c. A Comparison Between the Ancient and Present State of Greece, and an Historical and Geographical Description of the Ancient Epirus*, 2nd ed. (London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1820), p. 295: “The rich Turk commonly passes the afternoon in his kiosk. Those who inhabit the shores of the Bosphorus contemplate with particular pleasure the coasts of Asia, where repose the bodies of their fathers”. For cemeteries as outdoor recreations in Istanbul and British observers who appreciated the solitude, stillness, melancholy of the Ottoman cemeteries and did not seem to have been appalled by

What such Westerners missed is that silence is actually a form of worship in Islam.¹² Hence *temaşa*, a curious term that the *ruzname* writers used to describe this sultanic activity, is more than just watching.¹³ It implies a pastime, but extends to include *tefekkiir*, a term also used in the *ruznames* to describe pursuits taking place in the tranquillity of waterfront kiosks. Referring to a heightened spiritual awareness or somatic calm which may turn into private devotion or mental exercise in search for truth or meaning, this term implies (or implied) contemplation, reflection or meditation.¹⁴ In turn, meditation covered a broad variety of practices and techniques intended to promote relaxation, to build internal energy or life force, and to nurture love, patience, compassion, generosity and forgiveness.¹⁵ A particularly ambitious form of meditation strove to achieve effortlessly sustained single-point concentration; it was said to have enabled its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity.¹⁶ Another key term in the *ruznames* of Mahmud I is *tevakkuf*, also meaning to stop and stand still, to pause or to stay (put). In Islamic jurisprudence, the term refers to a hesitant attitude on the part of those scholars who “distance themselves from sharp rules reflecting a definite and unvarying judgment”, who prefer “not taking po-

the idea of social entertainment in burial grounds see Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, pp. 204-9. Schiffer noted that the British observers' interest in Ottoman burial grounds was connected to the European cult of tombs and cemeteries which sprang up in the second half of the eighteenth century and flourished in the nineteenth.

- 12 Silence leads to pondering and contemplation, Buehler, Arthur F., *Recognizing Sufism: Contemplation in the Islamic Tradition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016). There is also a hadith, rendered in a variety of forms, which claims the Prophet saying “there is no worship that is more valuable than contemplation”.
- 13 Artan, “I. Mahmud Döneminde Boğaziçi”.
- 14 “Tefekkiir”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, XL, p. 271; Kutluer, İlhan, “Düşünme”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. x (1994), pp. 53-7. Concepts like *tedebbür*, *teemmül* and *tezekkür* mean to think on a subject, past and present, very deeply, systematically, and in great detail; *tefekkiir* in Sufism literally means reflection upon the universe, a form of cognitive and emotional growth through meditating over your sins, yourself and the creation. *Tevakkuf*, on the other hand, involves the suspension of the rule-making process when the texts of revelation were unclear, obscure or contradictory. It is *ihhtiyat* (cautiously waiting), in contrast to *ictihad*, referring to independent reasoning or the thorough exertion of a jurist's mental faculty in finding a solution to a legal question and independent reasoning, as opposed to *taklid* (imitation).
- 15 Merkur, Dan, “Meditation”, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/meditation-mental-exercise>>) (last updated 14 January 2018; accessed 9 February 2018).
- 16 The repetition of holy words in remembrance of God, which is known by the concept *zikr* in Islam, is interpreted in various meditative techniques in Islamic mysticism. Meditative techniques in the Sufi traditions are systematized to include a number of mystical exercises, varying from one path to another.

sitions of principle over many juridical issues”, and who instead “attach primacy to presumptive clues or evidence”.¹⁷ In our 1750s context, while *tevakkuf* is less often used to describe the sultan’s regular visits to waterfront pavilions, it soon comes to be replaced by another synonym: *eğlence*, which originally meant stopping (on the way), stopping to take a break, or stopping and staying put. It was only later that it took on further meanings of “pastime, diversion, or entertainment”.

To judge by Ömer Ağa’s entries, early in the morning the sultan would visit one of three kiosks at the tip of the peninsula – the Yalı, the Sepetçiler or the Bahçekapı – to drink coffee (*kahve-nuş*) and watch the ships or boats sailing past; this was a pattern that was repeated virtually every day, and even reading entry after such entry can have a dulling effect on one’s mind. In the afternoons, on the other hand, over his ten years of faithful duty Ömer Ağa unflaggingly observed and recorded other routines of watching various games or musical performances, and each time diligently noted that eventually the party returned to the palace and retired following evening prayers. The verb used to describe watching all such leisurely activities or spectacles was *temaşa*. Only on some Tuesday mornings was this routine broken as the sultan chose to attend an occasional *divan* meeting in the Imperial Council Hall of the Topkapı Palace. Much more definitely, every Friday morning Mahmud I attended Friday prayers at a different mosque of his choice, though in the afternoon he reverted to his entertainment routines of watching games or musical performances, including, every now and then, going to the Mevlevis’ ritual ceremonies at Beşiktaş, or inviting two whirling dervishes and their sheikh from Galata Mevlevihanesi to perform their rite at the palace (*temaşa-i sema’-i dervişan*).¹⁸ Only rarely does one encounter anything truly different, such as when, in March 1746, they brought in several notoriously overweight Istanbul men and put them on the scales in front of Revan Köşkü; the winner weighed 224 kilos.¹⁹

17 Demir, Osman, “Tevakkuf”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XL (2011), p. 579.

18 For Mahmud I’s Mevlevi identity see Artan, “I. Mahmud Döneminde Boğaziçi”. For depictions of the Mevlevis in mid-eighteenth century Ottoman miniatures, also reflecting Mahmud I’s connection with the order, see Artan, Tülay, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmî. Hamse-i Atayî ve 18. Yüzyıl Başı Minyatürlerinde İstanbul: Zenginlik, Cinsellik ve Kamusal Mekân”, in *Payitaht. İstanbul, Bir Yaşam Sahnesi* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, forthcoming); Tanman, Baha, “Beşiktaş Mevlevihanesi’ne İlişkin Bir Minyatürün Mimarlık ve Kültür Tarihi Açısından Değerlendirilmesi”, in *17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Kültür ve Sanatı* (İstanbul: Sanat Tarihi Derneği Yayınları, 1998), pp. 186-9.

19 İstanbul Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emîrî 423, 104b-105a, 23 Safer and 29 Safer 1159 (17 and 23 March 1746). It seems that obesity was found amusing: on 28 Rebiülahır 1155 (2 July 1742) an overweight swimmer sang songs while he swam at Göksu (f. 53b).

One thing that I was particularly intrigued by is an entry on 1 February 1741, when the sultan and his retinue are recorded as having moved from the Topkapı to the Davud Paşa Palace: it was a Thursday; the sultan and his retinue departed from the Yalı Kiosk on rowing boats (*sandal*) and disembarked at the Defterdar landing (up at the very end of the Golden Horn).²⁰ From there they rode on horseback to the Davud Paşa Palace, where they had coffee in the Large Chamber (of the imperial kiosk, Kasr-ı Hümayun); then they remounted and headed for Kasr-ı Mehmed Paşa.²¹ After watching a game of polo and rewarding the players, they moved once again, now to Kasr-ı Vidos overlooking a large pool.²² There the party was entertained by a group of musicians – on board a boat (or boats) floating in the pool – who performed a *fasl u agaz*.²³ This musical performance was followed by a banquet. The sultan further rewarded his Privy Chamber staff by scattering gold coins (*zer-efşan*), as well as all the

20 İstanbul Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri 423, 12b, 1 February 1741 (15 Zilkade 1153).

21 The only surviving building in this complex, which was once surrounded by a wall and trees, is the Hünkâr Kasrı (Davud Paşa Kasrı). Mehmed Paşa Köşkü, which survived until the late 1920s, is 200 meters to the north-west of Hünkâr Kasrı (built in 1596, by Dalgıç Ahmed Ağa). It, too, was surrounded by a wall and monumental trees. As the army leaving for the campaigns with the holy banner set out from here and was received on its return, it was also called Sancak Köşkü (or Sadaret Köşkü). Its patron Mehmed Paşa, possibly a grand *vezir*, remains unidentified; and there is no clue about its construction date either. It is quite likely that Köprülü Mehmed Paşa commissioned its building or rebuilding after he took office in 1658. At the end of the seventeenth century, it was a venue for the stately banquets, and *cirit* competitions frequently took place in front of it.

22 Primary sources are generally silent about Vitos (Vidoz). For a rare reference see Raşid Mehmed Efendi, Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi, *Tarih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, II, p. 980: (17 Rebiülahir 1128/10 April 1716) "... ordu-yı hümayun ile Davud Paşa Yurdu'ndan hareket ve Vidoz Bağçesi kurbunda İncirli nâm karye önünde hıyâm-ı meks ü ârâm eyledi". Eldem, who prepared the survey plans of the extant buildings in 1938-39, published these together with photographs some 30 years later, Eldem, Sedat Hakkı, "Davud Paşa Sarayı Hünkâr Kasrı", "Davud Paşa Sarayı Mehmed Paşa Köşkü", *Köşkler ve Kasırlar*, vol. I (Istanbul: Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 1964), pp. 206-36, 238-49. For two kiosks at Hünkâr Tepe, one of which is Sultan Murad Köşkü, pools and site plan of the garden see Eldem, "Davud Paşa Sarayı Hünkâr Kasrı", p. 217. See also Erdoğan, Muzaffer, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Bahçeleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 4 (1958), 149-82; Koçu, R. Ekrem, "Davudpaşa Sahrası, Davudpaşa Sarayı", *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. VII (Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1966), pp. 4308-11; Öz, Tahsin, *İstanbul Camileri*, vol. I (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987), p. 45.

23 A classical *fasl* is a suite of compositions. It is generally composed of separate movements, including an opening, a song sequence and improvisations. The movements between an instrumental prelude (*peşrev*) and an instrumental postlude (*saz sema'i*) would include vocal compositions (such as *kar*, *beste*, *ağır sema'i*, *yürük sema'i*, *gazel*, *şarkı*), played continuously without interludes and interconnected through *ara nağme/taksim* arrangements, Feldman, Walter, *Music of the Ottoman Court: Makam, Composition and the Early Ottoman Instrumental Repertoire* (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 1996).

singers, mutes and dwarves by handing out more gold coins (*zer-i mahbub*) – all struck in the reign of Mahmud I.²⁴ After prayers, the sultan and his retinue mounted yet again and followed the same route back to the Topkapı Palace.

Of course, what is most striking in this account is the musicians performing on water. Unfortunately only two kiosks have survived from the extensive complex known as the Davud Paşa Palace. While Kasr-ı Vidos is very rarely mentioned even in the documents of the period, a neighbouring kiosk, that of Siyavuş Paşa (d. 1602), a three-time grand *vezir* of Süleyman I, Selim II and Murad III, has come down to the present, and it (too) has a pool that is 24.60 meters long, 20.30 meters wide, and 1.5 meters deep.²⁵ Such dimensions could easily have accommodated a few boats that might have been three to four meters long, moving around (perhaps during the *taksims*) in accord with a certain choreography, and stopping in front of the kiosk when it came to the singing.²⁶ It seems that the dwarves and mutes were also on board. There are numerous references to the dwarves and mutes as musicians participating in similar entertainments in the *ruznames*. Were they playing instruments or just performing antics? Or were the dwarves singing with the nasal, high-pitched voices that they were famous for?²⁷ We cannot know for certain. Interestingly,

24 Artuk, İbrahim, “Zer-i Mahbûb”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. xxxxiv (2013), p. 281.

25 Reached by a bridge, the kiosk measures 12.50 by 8.30 metres and it was probably built in 1571-72 by Mimar Sinan, Eldem, Sedat Hakki, “Siyavuş Paşa Köşkü”, *Köşkler ve Kasırlar*, 1, pp. 109-24; Eldem, Sedat Hakki, *Türk Bahçeleri* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1977), p. 139; Gündoğdu, Hamza, “İstanbul Bahçelievler’de Siyavuş Paşa Köşkü Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler”, *Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 22 (2009), 83-113; Artan, Tülay, “Siyavuş Paşa Köşkü”, *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. vii (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1994), p. 20. For his palace near Süleymaniye, built by Mimar Sinan, see Artan, Tülay, “Ayverdi’nin ‘19. Asırda İstanbul Haritası’: Ağa Kapusu ve Civarı, 1650-1750”, *Vefatının 30. Yılı Münasebetiyle Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi Hatırasına. Osmanlı Mimarlık Kültürü Sempozyumu*, ed. Baha Tanman and Hatice Aynur (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Yayınları, 2016), pp. 117-54.

26 Compare with Murad III’s bedroom pavilion and pool at the Topkapı Palace, Necipoğlu, Gülru, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power. The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York and Cambridge, MA: AHF and MIT Press, 1991), pp. 167-71. The pool beneath the pavilion opened through arches onto the garden and a larger pool with a pier for mooring the sultan’s boat.

27 For a bibliography on dwarves and mutes at the Ottoman Palace see Miles, M., “Deaf people, sign language and communication, in Ottoman and modern Turkey: observations and excerpts from 1300 to 2009, from sources in English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin and Turkish, with introduction and some annotation”, www.independentliving.org/miles200907.html; Miles, M., “Signing in the Seraglio: mutes, dwarfs and gestures at the Ottoman court, 1500-1700”, *Disability & Society*, 15/1 (2000), 115-34; Dikici, Ezgi, “Saltanat Sembolü Olarak ‘Farklı’ Bedenler: Osmanlı Sarayında Cüceler ve Dilsizler”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 248 (2014), 16-25; Dikici, Ezgi, “Imperfect Bodies, Perfect Companions? Dwarfs and Mutes at the Ottoman Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, MA Thesis,

however, several late sixteenth-century miniatures of courtly entertainment revolving around indoor pools show dwarves (and mutes) together with musicians in the presence of Murad III and Mehmed III²⁸ (Fig. 1).

In Ömer Ağa's entry of 1 February 1741, the expression *nev be nev* (again and again) indicates that the court party had repeatedly entertained itself in the same manner. Only a careful study of the pre-1740 *ruznames* may shed light on whether this is correct. If not, this entry might well mark an invention of tradition. Singers, mutes and dwarves performing on water, on the other hand, more probably constituted a novelty – at least for the court of Mahmud I, who otherwise had been given to simply contemplating and pondering, or watching *cirit* or other games, races and competitions. There are various questions to be asked at this point. Surely the first and most important, however, is why they staged such a performance on 1 February, when it must have been a challenge on presumably one of the coldest nights of the year.

Although it may sound bizarre at first, there can be a single answer to this question: to watch and enjoy the full moon! Watching the full moon was not only a long-established trope in the Ottoman imagination, celebrated in mystical poetry where it symbolizes the face of the beloved, but it was also ritualized in festive activities and missing it was regarded as unbearable.²⁹ This was a deep-seated habit in the imperial capital: in summer, upper-class Istanbulites were given to settling down on terraces or in kiosks to watch the full moon. Some late-eighteenth century European paintings testify to this custom and the pavilions (*mehtabiye*) built for this purpose.³⁰ But was there a full moon on

Sabancı University, 2006. See also Scalenghe, Sara, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

28 For Ahmed Nakşi's depictions see *Divan-ı Nadiri*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi [hereafter TSM] H. 889, f. 8v (c. 1620); *Şahname-i Nadiri*, TSM H.1124, f. 49a (c. 1622). Murad III was repeatedly depicted in the company of dwarves around a pool in his library, marvelling at manuscripts and contemplating, see, from manuscripts of *Metalii's-saade ve menabii's-siyade* (The Ascension of Propitious Stars and Sources of Sovereign), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Suppl. turc 242, f. 7v; The Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.788, f. 6v. See also Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Harvard Art Museums 1985.219.2, from a manuscript of Jennabi's *Cevahir'ül-garaib fi tercümet-i bahri'l-Aca'ib* (Gems of Marvels: A Translation of the Sea of Wonders).

29 Kaya, Mahmut, Muammer Dizer and Âmil Çelebioğlu, "Ay", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. IV (1991), pp. 182-91.

30 For a depiction of such a kiosk in Antoine de Favray's (d. 1798) panorama see İstanbul Pera Müzesi, PM_GAP_PC.002 <<https://www.peramuzesi.org.tr/Eser/Istanbul-Panorama-si/192/1>>; Artan, Tülay, "İki Sanatçı, Tek Bakış Noktası: 1740'larda Pera/İstanbul ve Galata Evleri", in *Payitaht. İstanbul, Bir Yaşam Sahnesi* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, forthcoming); Artan, Tülay, "Two artists, one vantage point: Pera/İstanbul in the 1740s", in *Proceedings of*



FIGURE 2.1
Mehmed III,
Album (compiled
in the eighteenth
century), Topkapı
Palace Museum
Library, H.2169,
12b. Courtesy of
the Topkapı Palace
Museum, Istanbul.

1 February 1741? Luckily, the internet now provides us with the dates of all full moons for the past few centuries. It seems that at 17:42:25 in Istanbul on 31 January 1741, yes indeed, it was a full moon.³¹ And, strikingly, there turns out to be more to it than a single incident. I have listed all the full moons for the rest

the 14th Congress of Turkish Art, 18 September-21 September 2011, ed. Frédéric Hitzel (Paris: Collège de France, 2013), pp. 105-16.

31 The sequence of full moon dates in 1741 was 2 March, 1 April, 30 April, 30 May, 28 June, 28 July, 26 August, 25 September, 24 October, 22 November, 22 December. In 1742 the sequence was 20 January, 19 February, 21 March, 19 April, 19 May, 18 June, 17 July, 16 August, 14 September, 14 October, 12 November, 11 December. See <<http://takvim-24.com/a/ay/fazlar/1741>>.



FIGURE 2.2 Mehmed III, Ganizade Nadiri's *Divan* (c. 1605), Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 889, fol. 8b. Courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.

of 1741, and found that for each and every full moon over the succeeding months – give or take a couple of days – Ömer Ağa recorded a special party on the Bosphorus, mostly at Göksu.

It further seems that at least some aspects of this pattern extended over many years. Göksu appears to have been Mahmud I's favoured outing station for the entire decade of 1740-50. Thus every summer, starting in June (when they were already based in the summer palace at Beşiktaş), Mahmud and his retinue would take multiple excursions across the Strait to the kiosk and gardens at Göksu. In sheer physical terms (as dictated by the topography), these cannot have been motivated by a desire to obtain a better view of the full moon. At the same time, the water element was there, as well as music at night, when the coastline would be lit up by strings of torches, lanterns and oil-and-wick lamps (from which the name *Kandilli* derives). Natural or man-made,

lighting was designed not only to inspire awe and wonder, but also to suggest symbolic, metaphysical and spiritual connotations, possibly overlapping with the court's better known illuminated festivities or *mevlevi* rituals on the Bosphorus.³²

Over time, such one-day excursions became ever more frequent. Whether on summer or winter afternoons, there would always be a musical performance, mostly described as *temaşa*. And almost always this would involve musicians, in a boat or boats together with mutes and dwarves, playing and singing directly in front of the kiosk located at the entrance to the Göksu river. The boats would be gliding along, perhaps riding the surface currents, while the spectators in the kiosk took in the music as well as the entire visual display. Occasionally Mahmud I and his courtiers went elsewhere (such as hilltop venues) to engage in full moon festivities (including firework displays), but it was always the Bosphorus that was paramount.

Increasingly such imperial outings extended to the waterfront mansions of dignitaries on both shores of the Bosphorus. Some of those dignitaries, such as the grand admiral (*kapudan paşa*), the head of the chancery of the Imperial Council (*reis efendi*), the chief surgeon (*hekimbaşı*), the commander of the salaried cavalry of the Porte (*sipahi ağası*), or the chief customs officer (*gümrükçü ağa*), employed celebrated musicians of the time in their households: Şivelioglu, Çömlekçioğlu, Sürkacızade, Uşşakızade and his son, or the (Mevlevi) flutist (*neyzen*) Taibzade. Initially it was only the sultan and his retinue who went around to attend these musical performances, but over the next decade many other residents of the Bosphorus also began to take to their boats to hear the concerts at any given waterfront mansion. Eventually, the locals seem to have taken over, surrounding and engulfing the sultan's party through sheer numbers. Some dozens of boats, perhaps as many as a hundred or more, began

32 A better known invention of the early eighteenth-century Ottoman court is the *çerağan* festivities – the first of which, we are told by Raşid, took place on 26 April 1720. Ahmed III ordered the illuminated night entertainments accompanied musically to be repeated next spring, and hence started a new tradition, see Wishnitzer, Avner, “Into the dark: power, light, and nocturnal life in 18th-century Istanbul”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46/3 (2014), 513-31. For a French merchant's description of these courtly festivities in the 1740s see Flachet, Jean-Claude, *Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d'une partie de l'Europe, de l'Asie, de l'Afrique et même des Indes orientales* (Lyon: Jacquenod père et Rusand, 1766). *Çerağ*, however, meaning light, candle and *kandil* (oil lamp), had a special role in the sufi convents. Hence a certain attendant, *çerağcı*, was assigned to take care of putting on and off the lights. In the *mevlevihane*s candles were lit at sunset; and after the evening prayers this *çerağ* was used to light all the other candles. At the *sumathane* (*somathane*), kitchen and dining hall in the lodge, too, candles were lit ceremonially after the *şeyh* or the eldest *dede* recited a short prayer *çerağ gülbanğı*.

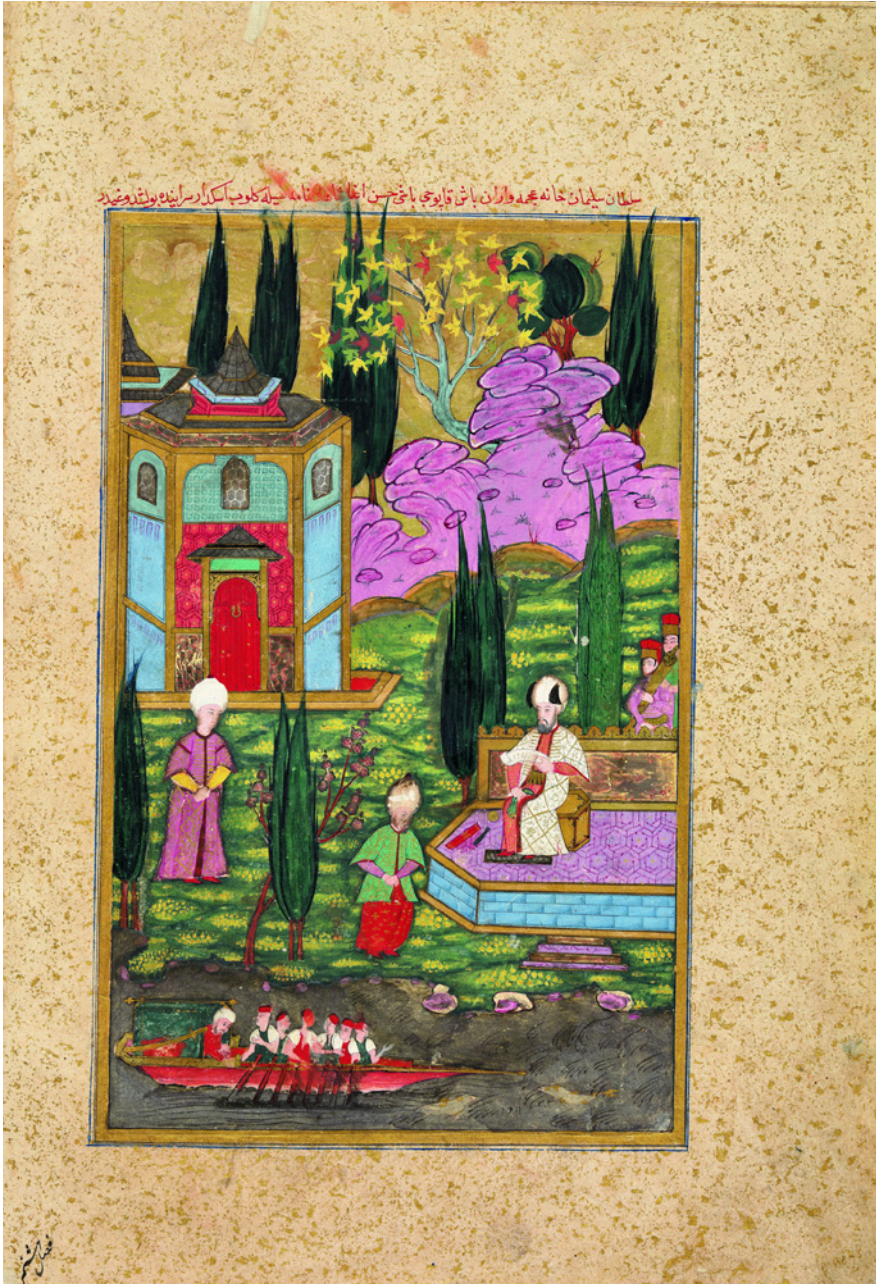


FIGURE 2.3 Süleyman I at Üsküdar, *Hünernâme II* (1589), Topkapı Palace Library, H. 1524, fol. 227b. Courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.



FIGURE 2.4 Murad III at Kandilli, *Şehinşahname* II (1597), Topkapı Palace Library, B.200, 99a. Courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.

to move up and down the Bosphorus every full moon, stopping in front of this or that musical *yalı*, with both boats and buildings lit by candles, lamps, lanterns or torches.

It is through the *ruznames* of the second half of the eighteenth century, such as those kept for Mustafa III, Abdülhamid I or Selim III (all of which have luckily survived and come down to us), that we are able to observe this development from purely courtly to public parades of illuminated boats and music-making on water. Nineteenth-century visitors to the Ottoman capital, too, frequently noted nightly illuminations on the Bosphorus and that “delightful place of resort”, Kandilli, “shaded by sycamores, oaks and plane trees, and dominated by an imperial kiosque which is surrounded by large gardens fairly blushing with roses...”³³ Such accounts, frequently citing “a fountain of white marble, embroidered all over with arabesques, storied all over with inscriptions in golden letters, and capped by a great roof with strong projecting eaves

33 Bohrer, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”, p. 124.

and by small domes surmounted by crescents' points to the traveller this charming resort and place of gathering for the wealthy", are usually accompanied and reinforced by illustrations.³⁴ From there we move to various Boğaziçi residents' early twentieth-century narratives, such as those by Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, Ziya Osman Saba, Sermet Muhtar Alus or Nahid Sırrı Örik, all suffering terribly from nostalgia, who further testify to the evolution of the social ritual that came to be known as *donanma*.³⁵

There is, however, a subtle point that they would seem to have missed, and which can actually be noted by modern historians taking a broad view comprising several decades of the eighteenth century (and earlier). It is a process that starts with passive spectating, and evolves into an activity. First there are just spectators, looking on, watching, contemplating. Then the sultan as one such spectator (together with his retinue) plunges into the scene that he has been gazing at. He becomes part of the goings on in the painting. Further on, other members of the elite (as well as, maybe, commoners) also join in, so that it evolves into a bigger public spectacle. In the end, spectator and spectacle have become one and the same.³⁶

By Way of Conclusion

Thomas Allom, in the text accompanying his *Polyorama of Constantinople* (1838), recounts two nocturnal cruises. He employs a powerful rhetoric of landscape: "Tis night: the pale moon glitters on the slumbering waves, and the summer's breeze, fraught with the fragrance of roses and wild thyme from surrounding hills, fans the lulled sea".³⁷ As an artist, too, Allom romanticized

34 Bohrer, "The Sweet Waters of Asia", p. 124.

35 Unfortunately, nightscapes did not come into their own until Ivan Aivazovsky (d. 1900) mastered painting the moon and the sea in the Ottoman capital.

36 Artan, Tülay, "Architecture as a *Theatre of Life*: Profile of the Eighteenth-Century Bosphorus", Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA, 1989.

37 Allom, Thomas, *The Polyorama of Constantinople, The Bosphorus and Dardanelles*, 3rd ed. (London: Johnson: 1850). The night tour along the shore was from the Dardanelles through the Marmara Sea and up the Bosphorus, Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, pp. 146-7. The word *picturesque*, meaning literally "in the manner of a picture; fit to be made into a picture", was a word used as early as 1703 (*Oxford English Dictionary*), and derived from French *pittoresque* and an Italian term *pittoresco*, "in the manner of a painter". The pictorial genre called "Picturesque" appeared already in the seventeenth century and flourished in the eighteenth, Macarthur, John, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007). For the earliest two uses of the term picturesque (1749 and 1755) dedicated to Paris and its environs see Dézallier d'Argenville, Antoine-Nicolas, *Voyage pittoresque de Paris* (Paris: De Bure l'aîné, 1749); Dézallier d'Argenville,

heavily and focused on fusing nature with architecture (preferably ruins) and muses.

In both prose and painting, Allom displayed and deployed a new artistic style known as the *Picturesque*, which is very much in evidence in most nineteenth-century images of outdoor entertainment in the Ottoman capital. Marked out by their sense of intimacy and personal pleasures, these scenes bear certain similarities to *Turquerie* paintings, usually featuring small groups of elegantly attired men and women, often engaged in decorously amorous play in European settings. In such scenes of outdoors merry-making, exemplified by Thomas Allom's "The Babysers, or the Sweet Waters of Europe", men and women manifest an air of Oriental leisure on the lawns, meadows and groves of Kağıthane at the upper end of the Golden Horn.³⁸ A group of dancing women evoke water nymphs associated with the Greek Muses. Similarly, those shown partying at the Sweet Waters of Asia (Göksu) are also subjected to Rococo treatment through filling their surroundings with "an ensemble of appropriate props".³⁹ At the same time, "such pictures do not have Watteau's melancholy beneath the bright colours; they are either superficially gay, with some fidelity to costumes but without great psychological introspection into the characters, or else they are filled with sentiments among which a saccharine melancholy prevails".⁴⁰

But of course, such *Picturesque* works cannot be taken as relatively accurate reflections of the Ottoman practice of contemplation. Schiffer has rightly ob-

Antoine-Nicolas, *Voyage pittoresque des environs de Paris* (Paris: Du Bure l'aîné Libraire, 1755). For the first such work devoted to the Levant see Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (Paris, 1782-1822). Schiffer argues that the picturesque was taken over as the dominant perspective in the descriptions of Istanbul and that it is indicated by the titles of European travel books, Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 136. For examples of such titles see Pertusier, Charles, *Atlas des promenades pittoresques dans Constantinople et sur les rives du Bosphore* (Paris: Nicolle, 1815); Melling, Antoine-Ignace, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* (Paris: Chez les éditeurs, 1819).

38 Schiffer describes artists and writers in Istanbul, aesthetically distancing themselves from their objects, Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 176.

39 Such props included waters, quays, landings, rills, streams, hills, groves, trees, shrubbery, meadows, curled bridges, summer pavilions, marble fountains, Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, pp. 82, 210.

40 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 210. He continues to say that the images indicate a European construction of Ottoman reality: "For example, Preziosi's *Entertainment by the Göksu River*—now in the Topkapı Museum—shows veiled beauties smoking the pipe and, in the case of the heroine, staring into the off while languishing on carpets spread on the grass. If, as artists, these painters were relatively small fry, they nevertheless produced images that once caught the Victorain and now catch the Turkish imagination".



FIGURE 2.5 Outdoor recreation at Kağthane on the Golden Horn by Thomas Allom, “The Babyses, or the Sweet Waters of Europe”, from Allom, Thomas and Robert Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor*, 1838, between pp. 58 and 59.



FIGURE 2.6 Outdoor recreation at Göksu on the Bosphorus by William H. Bartlett, “Fountain near the Asian Valley of Sweet Waters on the Bosphorus”, from Miss Pardoe, *The Beauties of the Bosphorus. Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs from Original Drawings by W. H. Bartlett*, 1838, between pp. 22 and 23.

served that these depictions of a society at leisure show “a social scene in which class distinctions were either not detected by the untrained European eye or disregarded in favour of an over-all splendour”.⁴¹ He has therefore concluded that these are “representations” of the capital’s population where “ethnic and social differences have been smoothed out in order to achieve an over-all Ottoman quality”.⁴² He further argues that these images reflect a world made up entirely of feast days.⁴³ Indeed, while nineteenth-century paintings show Göksu/Küçükusu overflowing with crowds of women closely attended by men, photographs not tainted by ideological content reveal only local peasants grazing their animals in otherwise empty lawns: “Without the crowds these parklands were ‘without the glitter’”.⁴⁴ In verbal narratives, however, there seems to be stronger evidence. Schiffer takes careful note of, and allows for, the different backgrounds and attitudes of foreign observers in Istanbul. So his words are properly weighted when, in a chapter on the behaviour of the Turks (read Muslims), he sets out how British travellers emphasized the “silence” of male activities such as resting, meditating, and smoking, in contrast to noisier

41 His argument is based on two particular trends at the end of the eighteenth century: an attempt to recreate natural landscape by human effort and a gentlemanly taste expected to know about the picturesque in a dilettante manner: Schiffer continues to say that “the love of natural picturesque landscape went hand in hand with a shift in taste for landscape in painting following the paintings of Claude Lorrain, Nicholas Poussin, and, in Britain, Richard Wilson. As, from about 1794 to 1795, the fashion of the picturesque landscape began to spread rapidly, British and Continental visitors to Istanbul became eager to encounter picturesque scenes on the shores of the Bosphorus”, Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 136.

42 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, pp. 210-11.

43 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 210. In a rare study on the nineteenth-century representations of Göksu, Bohrer, analysing Johann Michael Wittmer’s 1837 painting, *An die süßen Wassern Asiens*, supports the argument that “Orientalist imagery is always incomplete as representation” and claims that in such “festive scenes of domesticity”, it is upper-class families and groups of women who are represented as lounging or strolling about the lawns, accompanied by their servants, elaborately decorated coaches and rugs and *nargiles*. Bohrer goes on to say that “the tone of seemingly upper-class leisure is only heightened by the beggars, dancing waifs, Ottoman servants, and Jewish merchants circulating, at respectful distances, throughout the scene”, Bohrer, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”, p. 125. See footnote 3 above.

44 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, p. 211. Schiffer pointed out that men and women were not intermingling. The very same points were made also in Bohrer, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”, pp. 125, 130-1. Bohrer, based on Miss Pardoe’s description and Bartlett’s delineation, also claimed that the representations were centred on women and “holiday-keeping idlers” enacting the Friday ritual attached to the Sweet Waters of Asia, Bohrer, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”, p. 127; Miss Pardoe, *The Beauties of the Bosphorus. Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs from Original Drawings by W. H. Bartlett* (London: George Virtue, 1838), p. 22. See footnote 3 above.

female activities like dancing and gossiping. This “Oriental calm” served for some as an antidote to “European bustle”, while for others it was “a moral defect”.⁴⁵ Some other foreigners also detected melancholy (*mal-i hülya*) in the Ottoman withdrawal into nature and solitude, whether in parkland settings or in waterfront coffee houses where they watched passing ships and boats.⁴⁶ “Your only promenades are in the burial grounds”, Adolphus Slade prodded.⁴⁷

My point is that quite a few contemporary Ottomanists might benefit from such critical examinations of European constructions romanticizing, generalizing and eternalizing Ottoman realities. The same rigor and mental sharpness, for example could usefully be brought to bear on a famous 1793 Ottoman representation of the Sadabad Palace and its environs.⁴⁸ These days it is the convention to take it as public space, and therefore to hold it up as evidence for the opening up of society in “eighteenth-century Istanbul”. Actually, however, all it shows is palace women in the garden. Hence Théophile Gautier’s “open-air harem” epithet for Göksu-Küçüksu might be closer to the truth.⁴⁹

We do have to keep asking some very basic questions about just when, by whom and for whom these or other images, narrative or visual, were constructed. Unfortunately, instead of such direct penetration of the empirical material a lot of current scholarship tends to seek refuge in grand theorizing about Ottoman early modernity, and about a whole “eighteenth-century Istanbul” in that context. Answers therefore tend to come ready made – about East and West, Sebki-Hindi and Baroque, radicalization and democratization. But if the long eighteenth century is not taken as a single, monobloc entity, instead of

45 Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama*, pp. 214-15.

46 For a recent work exploring melancholy through a genre rooted in the music of the Ottoman court and elite Mevlevi Sufi lodges see Gill, Denise, *Melancholic Modalities: Affect, Islam, and Turkish Classical Musicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

47 Slade, Adolphus, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, &c: And of a Cruise in the Black Sea with the Capitan Pasha*, vol. II (Philadelphia and Baltimore: Carey, Hart & Co., 1833), p. 139.

48 *Hubanname ve Zenanname*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi TY 5502, f. 78a (18 October 1793); *Zenanname*, British Library, Or. 7094, f. 7a. Compare with an engraving by l'Espinasse, d'Ohsson, Ignatius Mouradgèa, *Tableau général de l'empire ottoman 1-111, divisé en deux parties, dont l'une comprend la législation mahométane; l'autre, l'histoire de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1787, 1789, 1820). D'Ohsson took some miniatures and sketches with him to Paris to be engraved. Calvi, Giulia, “Translating imperial practices, knowledge, and taste across the Mediterranean: Giulio Ferrario and Ignatius Mouradgèa d'Ohsson”, in *Women, Consumption, and the Circulation of Ideas in South-Eastern Europe, 17th-19th Centuries*, ed. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 12-46.

49 Gautier presented the Sweet Waters of Asia as an open-air harem where the women had to be protected from the penetration of the Western infidel, after Bohrer, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”, p. 128.

such macro generalizations the diverse urban *cultures* (plural) of the Ottoman capital and the varying *tastes* of individual *patrons* (plural) may be more closely investigated and understood. This may also make it possible to trace cultural and intellectual trends like antiquarianism, entrepreneurialism or cosmopolitanism, which, I believe, truly made Istanbulites part of the early modern world.

So at some point it has to be back to basics, meaning our primary sources. Through the light they shed on courtly pastimes and daily rituals over 1730-1802, *ruznames* (although limited to courtly routines) can help us find ways to study often-hidden interfaces between narrative and visual accounts. Uniquely, they allow us to pursue even minute changes over thin slices of time.⁵⁰

50 Irmak, Yunus, "III. Mustafa Rûznâmesi (1171-1177/1757-1763)", MA Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 1991; Göksu, Süleyman, "Mehmed Hasib Rûznâmesi (H.1182-1195/M.1768-1781)", MA Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 1993; Arkan, Sema, III. *Selim'in Sirkâtibi Ahmed Efendi Tarafından Tutulan Rûznâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993). There are also those recording the daily activities of commoners, even the most ordinary ones, sometimes appended with personal notes, stories, anecdotes, riddles, poems, and some other notes to remember in the future. A curious one is the chronological journal kept by a certain Molla Mustafa Başeski (b. 1730) from Sarajevo (Bosnia), for 50 years from 1757 onwards until 1804-5, Filan, Kerime, "Life in Sarajevo in the 18th century (according to Mulla Mustafa's mecmua)", in *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community: Essays in Honour of Suraiya Faruqi*, ed. Vera Constantini and Markus Koller (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 317-45; Filan, Kerime, *XVIII. Yüzyıl Günlük Hayatına Dair Saraybosnalı Molla Mustafa'nın Mecmuası* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2011).

Caravans and Voyages, Story and Song: Entertaining the Traveler in/to Ottoman Space

Palmira Brummett

... for here is Neither good lodging, proportionable fare, free recourse, gracious entertainment, true religion, secure abiding, allowable pleasure, Orderly government, Or any thing wherein a Noble city is made glorious indeed: Thus much for Constantinople.¹

PETER MUNDY

•••

The desire to see and have that which we love subjects us to many hazards. For that, often enough, we sacrifice all that we hold most dear in the world.²

GUILLAUME-JOSEPH GRELOT

••
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Prelude

Think in this batter'd Caravanserai,
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day.
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp.

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- 1 Mundy, Peter, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, vol. 1, *Travels in Europe, 1608-1628* [Hakluyt Society Series 2, no. XVII], ed. Richard Carnac Temple (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1907), p. 30. Mundy, here, has just favorably compared the size of Istanbul to that of London. When Mundy describes Venice, in contrast, he says it is marked by “The abundance of varyeties and dainties tending to sensualitie, and the liberty thereto...” (p. 98).
 - 2 Grelot, Guillaume-Joseph, *Relation nouvelle d'un voyage de Constantinople. Enrichie plans levez par l'auteur sur les lieux, & des figures de tout ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans cette ville* (Paris: En la Boutique de Pierre Rocolet, 1680), p. 134. The “voir & d'avoïr” here could also be read “witness and experience”. All translations in this essay are mine unless otherwise noted.

Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.
 (Fitzgerald, the best interpreter of Khayyam).³

RICHARD FRYE

Thus, quoting the poet Omar Khayyam, Richard Frye began his classic study of *Persia*, originally published in 1960. But the travelers addressed in this essay, as they worked and rested in foreign city or caravanserai, were doing more than contemplating fate and the fleeting power of kings. They were entertaining themselves and witnessing Ottoman entertainment. And sometimes the two were inextricably mixed.

Of course ‘Ottoman’ entertainment often looked a lot like the entertainment of the Everyman traveler. Sometimes the ‘foreigner’ and the ‘local’ had much in common. In 1655 (or 6), Evliya Çelebi described entertainment for the Ottoman sojourner as he headed down the Tigris on a raft from Diyarbakır to Mosul:

Leaning back upon cushions along the rail..., playing backgammon and chess ... now and then landing at some cultivated settlement and having meals cooked in one’s kitchen-tent, they travel safely in the enjoyment of music and pleasant chatter.⁴

Foreign travelers to Ottoman space, on boats, or in caravans or towns, enjoyed similar types of entertainment. Like Evliya Çelebi’s English counterpart, Peter Mundy, quoted above, they viewed “entertainment” and “pleasure” as key factors for measuring the experience of travel and the worth of “noble” cities (and lesser settlements). They spent their time on their journeys telling stories, eating, drinking, smoking, singing, sightseeing, comparing cultural notes, playing games, watching performances, worrying about their health and wealth, and doing the things men do when they have some leisure, some companions, and are far from home. Options for entertainment were also, of course, conditioned by economics, sociability, and circumstance.

3 Frye, Richard, *Persia* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), unnumbered page of front matter.

4 van Bruinessen, Martin and Hendrik Boeschoten (eds. and trans.), *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbakir: the Relevant Section of the Seyahatname* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 195-7. The authors note that Evliya Çelebi also made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1671 (p. 4). They suggest that his description of his route from Van to Iran and Baghdad “is geographically impossible” (p. 5), although they go on to say that describing his route from Baghdad north through Mosul gives “what is probably the best and most complete survey of Southern Kurdistan in the 17th century”. See also van Bruinessen, Martin, “Kurdistan in the 16th and 17th centuries, as reflected in Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname*”, *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 3 (2000), 1-11, esp. pp. 2-3, on Evliya Çelebi’s Kurdish itineraries.

Typology

To understand how entertainment was construed by travelers in Ottoman space, we need first to look at narrative. In so doing we enter a web of story that links our present to the travelers' pasts. Indeed, storytelling was a very important element of the travel experience for foreigners moving into Ottoman lands. They told their own stories, and listened attentively to the gossip, historical anecdotes, jokes, myths, and local knowledge told by their various hosts. Few were the travelers who did not highlight Biblical or classical associations, rehearse tales of women's wiles, and point out the places where 'spirits' were heard or seen. In some ways, then, storytelling was the basic form of entertainment as the sojourner traversed Ottoman space. And the narratives we have of Ottoman realms are extensions of that storytelling. Travelers related what they heard, saw, and did, sometimes providing a significant dose of fantasy and sometimes revealing very little.⁵

The first question, as we seek to develop a typology of entertainment is: Does Ottoman entertainment mean entertainment by and for Ottomans, or entertainment that takes place in Ottoman space? I am adopting the latter category. I would then suggest a model that involves four (sometimes overlapping) registers of entertainment:

1. Entertainment that foreign travelers engage in by and for themselves en route.
2. Formal entertainment provided by Ottoman hosts for foreign visitors.
3. Mixed entertainments in which foreigners engage with Ottoman subjects in amusements which are often facilitated by various intermediaries, in particular foreign nationals who have become local residents.
4. Entertainments restricted to the locals, the Ottoman *hoi polloi* so to speak, that are witnessed and described by foreign travelers.

There is a brief passage in Pietro della Valle's September 1625 narrative of travel in Cyprus that I find telling when it comes to the notion of travel and entertainment. First of all, della Valle is clearly a sightseer, like so many of his fellow travelers from the Christian kingdoms of Europe. Whether they came to seek out the conditions of Christendom under the Ottoman 'yoke', to record or purchase antiquities, to trade, or to satisfy their wanderlust and curiosity, early modern travelers wanted to see the sights. At Larnaca, della Valle followed the consul's advice and rode out to see a site "noted for its sacred character and

5 See on the traveler's eye, Brummett, Palmira, "Introduction: genre, witness, and time in the 'Book' of Travels", in *The 'Book' of Travels: Genre, Ethnology, and Pilgrimage, 1250-1700*, ed. Palmira Brummett (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 1-35, esp. pp. 33-5.

natural beauty”, a place with a “wonder-working image of the Virgin”.⁶ He made the journey with three Venetians, two other companions, a clerk from a vessel in the harbor, a “Greek called Manoli”, a personal servant, and a “consular janisary”. In the courtyard of the church was a fountain and a shady resting place where the travelers “ate by day and slept by night when the murmur of the water was particularly pleasant”.⁷ The rooms around the courtyard, della Valle notes:

were full of people, men and women, Greek Christians with a few Turks among them, who were there before us. They were playing, singing, dancing, drinking, amusing themselves, and we amused ourselves likewise.⁸

This passage seems to me to indicate a default condition of recreation in Ottoman space. There are “locals” and there are people passing through. But all are drawn to the shade, to the “sacred”, and to the possibilities for amusement. There is thus an element of the universal to this story of shade and song. Nonetheless, there is also an element of the particular here as della Valle’s group keeps its own ‘place’, remaining somewhat apart from the others. Della Valle (and his party) are both participants and witnesses, enjoying with the locals the grotto-church and its “ancient” image but never losing sight of their own identity. Della Valle’s narrative preserved that sense of the “they” and the “we” for his audiences back home.

Observing local customs, rituals, and ethnographies constituted a generic form of entertainment for foreign visitors. So too did drawing, painting, and generally producing non-narrative visions of what was seen. The traveler wanted to satisfy his own curiosity and that of his readers. He sought experiential knowledge in order to certify and reproduce, in word and image, his authority on Ottoman space and society.

The traveler to Ottoman realms had certain stock modes of classifying that space. Some travelers limit themselves to the concerns of the Every-Traveler: access to food, water, safety, comfort, mobility. Others include sometimes lavish, sometimes critical commentary on ‘foreign’ space, its inhabitants, and its cultures, including the recognition that the places and people around you are not ‘you’, or yours. In both cases travel through Ottoman space was colored by the sense of being in a place that was both imperial, and Islamic. Within these

6 della Valle, Pietro, in *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus*, ed. and trans. Claude Cobham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), pp. 212-13. della Valle was a Roman patrician who left Venice in 1614 and returned to Naples in 1626.

7 della Valle, in *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 213.

8 della Valle, in *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 213.

frames, travelers told tales of entertainment: generated by themselves and by the inhabitants of the spaces they passed through (sometimes called “the Turk”, and sometimes not). Their witnessing was conditioned by familiarity: how conversant the traveler was with the culture in which he was embedded.⁹ It was also conditioned by access. Who the traveler knew, who he went to see, what resources he had, and how aggressive or not he was willing to be played a large role in crafting the experience of entertainment. Finally, attitude determined how the traveler viewed Ottoman entertainments. Gerald MacLean and others, for example, have highlighted the difference between travelers who were willing to change their preconceived notions of so-called ‘Oriental’ society and those who were not.¹⁰

Gender, too, could be a powerful factor, if we had the narratives of women travelers to assess. We have a handful, but they are few and far between.¹¹ My analysis here is limited to narrators of the male gender. Such travelers, in general, had a penchant for ‘masculine’ concerns, tasks, entertainments, and an inclination to narrate women in certain rather circumscribed ways. Some do not mention women at all. Male travelers tended to view women as a specific and separate category of the ethno-communal landscape. Thus, although we have a few female narrative voices articulating Ottoman travel space, we have many more male voices telling us just what types of female creature occupied Ottoman realms.¹² In any case, the two authors treated here, the Venetian Ambrosio Bembo (b. 1652) and the Frenchman, Marie-Gabriel Choiseul-Gouffier (1752-1817), although they mention women, for the most part discuss entertainment as an activity shared with other males.

9 On travelers as “guides” see Williams, Wes, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance: ‘the Undiscovered Country’* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 51-92, 183 and 199, on romance and “self-translation”.

10 MacLean, Gerald, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 115-76, for example, points up the differences between the English travelers William Biddulph, and Sir Henry Blount (whom he holds up as an example of the open-minded traveler).

11 The most well-known is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago Press, 2000), wife of the British ambassador to the Porte in the eighteenth century. See also Melman, Billie, *Women’s Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

12 As I have argued in Brummett, Palmira, with Katherine Thompson Newell, “A young man’s fancy turns to “love”?: The traveler’s eye and the narration of women in Ottoman space (or the European male ‘meets’ the Ottoman female, 16th-18th c.)”, in *Other Places: Ottomans Traveling, Seeing, Writing, Drawing the World*, a special issue of *Journal of Ottoman Studies/Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi, Essays in Honor of Thomas J. Goodrich*, 40 (2012), 193-220.

Bembo and Choiseul

Bembo and Choiseul were two different types of early modern traveler. Ambrosio Bembo was a noble, 19-year-old Venetian who set out to see the world in August of 1671.¹³ En route to Iran and India, he spent 15 months in Aleppo, where his uncle Marco Bembo was posted as Venetian consul.¹⁴ After leaving Aleppo, his party travelled up into Anatolia, to Birecik and Diyarbakır. They then headed down the Tigris to Baghdad and Basra, duplicating the journey that Evliya Çelebi had taken some years before. Having sojourned to India and Iran, Bembo returned to Venice, stopping again in Aleppo. On the way, he enlisted the services of the artist, Guillaume-Joseph Grelot (c.1630-?), to document some of those things he witnessed in the course of his travels (Fig. 1). Marie-Gabriel Choiseul was also from a notable family. He was a scholar of ancient Greece who later became French ambassador to the Ottoman Porte (1784-91/92). Traveling to eastern Anatolia in 1776, he chronicled the journey in his *Voyage pittoresque* of 1782, which made his reputation.¹⁵ Choiseul, like Bembo, appreciated the power of images for crafting a vision of Ottoman space. On his sojourn, he brought with him an artist, an architect, and an engineer to help document the sights he witnessed and his modes of travel through

13 Bembo, Ambrosio, *The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo*, trans. Clara Bargellini and ed. Anthony Welch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 2-5, uses the manuscript Bembo, Ambrosio, *Viaggio e giornale per parte dell' Asia di quattro anno in circa fatto* [Italy, c.a. 1676], James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota (Bell 1676 fBe). The Italian edition, also employed here, which provides two different manuscript versions, is Bembo, Ambrosio, *Il viaggio in Asia (1671-1675) nei manoscritti di Minneapolis e di Bergamo*, ed. Antonio Invernizzi (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2012), hereafter, *Il viaggio*. Most of the quotations from Bembo used here derive from Bargellini's English translation, to make the text accessible to the majority of readers. In other instances, as noted, I have provided my own translations from Invernizzi's Italian edition of the Bell Library manuscript.

14 Bembo travelled August 1671-c. ? 1675; and he was in Aleppo from October 1671 to January 1673.

15 Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, 2 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1824). The edition I am using was published after his death. The original of volume 1 was published in Paris in 1782. See also Barbier, Frédéric, *La rêve grec de monsieur Choiseul: les voyages d'un Européen des lumières* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), pp. 35-60, 87-92; Aksan, Virginia, "Choiseul-Gouffier at the Sublime Porte 1784-1792", in *Ottomans and Europeans: Contacts and Conflicts* (Analecta Isisiana, vol. LXXV) (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004), p. 59; Koubourliou, Ioannis, "Autour d'un mystère de l'histoire du livre. Les trois versions du premier volume du Voyage pittoresque de Choiseul-Gouffier", *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 5 (2008), 67-94; and Firges, Pascal, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 26-36 and 42-3.



FIGURE 3.1 “Entry of the [Venetian] Consul into Aleppo”, by Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, Bembo, Ambrosio, *Il viaggio*, Tavola VIII. From the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Ottoman space.¹⁶ The published volume included pictures rendered on the spot and others produced in the ateliers of Paris after Choiseul’s return (Figs. 2-3). In the foreground of Choiseul’s view of the interior of a caravanserai, one sees a circle of men, smoking, relaxing and appearing to be engaged in an act of storytelling (Fig. 4).

While Choiseul’s witnessing is often travel as trope, Bembo’s is more interactive. The Venetian is cool and informed; the Frenchman a combination of curiosity, naiveté, and suspicion. Choiseul was passing through Ottoman territory collecting evidence of antiquity. Bembo was a more long-term visitor,

16 See Apostolou, Irini, *L’Orientalisme des voyageurs français au XVIIIe siècle: une iconographie de l’Orient méditerranéen* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2009), pp. 57-65, 70-88, 119-21 and 293-8; Brummett, Palmira, “Visualizing Ottoman space: Choiseul-Gouffier and the passage through Anatolia, 1776”, in *A Historian of Ottoman War, Peace, and Empire: a Festschrift in Honor of Virginia Aksan*, ed. Frank Castiglione, Ethan Menchinger, and Veysel Şimşek (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).



FIGURE 3.2 “Caravan”, Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1822, vol. 1, plate 104, after p. 164. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.



FIGURE 3.3 “View of the interior of a khan or caravanserai”, Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1822, vol. II, pt. 1, plate 7, before p. 56. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.



FIGURE 3.4 “View of the interior of a khan or caravanserai” (inset), Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1822, vol. II, pt. 1, plate 7, before p. 56. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.

collecting impressions of the present; hence he had more to say about Ottoman entertainment. Choiseul narrates that entertainment with some distaste. Bembo, the participant observer, sought out the experience of Ottoman entertainment, and narrated it with some relish. Both men were ethnographers of sorts. Both employed artists to illustrate their narratives for audiences back home.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the ceremonial acts, in which such foreign visitors engaged, provided entertainment for the various Ottoman locals who watched, participated, enjoyed, critiqued, and were incorporated into text and image as actors and audience.¹⁸

¹⁷ Bembo's artist later published his own illustrated travel journal: Grelot, Guillaume-Joseph, *Relation nouvelle d'un voyage de Constantinople*. Several artists accompanied Choiseul on his journey and others were employed for the later editions of his work. Apostolou, *L'Orientalisme des voyageurs français*, pp. 57-65, 70-88, 119-21 and 293-8, discusses the complex nature of the artistic production and artists engaged for the *Voyage*.

¹⁸ Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 49, suggests that “an infinite number of people, men and women”, came to see the entry of his uncle's party into the city of Aleppo, the “Franks”, and the various delegations that came out to greet them, providing the city's entertainment for the day. Wratislaw, Wenceslas, *Adventures of Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw: What He Saw in Constantinople, in His Captivity, Committed to Writing in 1599*, trans. Albert Henry Wratislaw (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862), pp. 119-22, a Bohemian youth who travelled to Istanbul with a Hapsburg delegation in 1591, noted a rather different entertainment opportunity

Choiseul

Choiseul landed at the head of the Anatolian Gulf of Macri (Fethiye) on June 30, 1776, and journeyed north and west to Eski Hisar, Mylasa (Milas), and (ultimately) Halicarnassus (Bodrum). On the way he was granted an audience with the local lord, Ağa Hasan Çavuşoğlu, at “Moglah” (Muğla). But what concerns us here is Choiseul’s visit to Eski Hisar. That was the setting for his narrative of a “Turk spectacle,” hosted by the local *ağa*, a grandson of Ağa Hasan. When his narrative was published, this festival appeared in a rather benign illustration of music and dance, witnessed by locals sitting together with their visitors (Fig. 5).¹⁹

In the text, however, Choiseul recorded the experience in a very different way. First he told his audience that those gathered for the spectacle were anxious for the performance to begin, despite a musical prelude.

... The Ağa, gracious lord, wished to share in the pleasure with his vassals, who ... made very clear their impatience. [But] It was in vain that one sought to calm them with the music that was so shrill and discordant.

No sooner was I situated next to the Ağa, than one saw a Turk richly dressed enter.... After some prancing around and numerous grimaces, he squatted down in the middle of the square and with an almost frantic air, he began to sing [or recite] a long series of verses: he accompanied himself with the noisy and repetitious sound of a species of guitar that he did not cease to strike with all of his fingers at once.

First he extolled the courage and the victories of the brave Hasan [just], as in Homer, Telemachus listened to the praises sung for his father at the table of Menelaus. These bellicose songs were soon followed by songs more suited to the spectacle being prepared; he celebrated the object of his love, ... and harked back to the misconduct of Anacreon.

After that, four young people [jeunes gens] entered dancing, then enacted a type of farce of an obscenity so revolting that one can scarcely permit oneself even to name it. The enthusiasm of the Ağa, the cheering, and the general intoxication of the people apprised me of that excess the Turks indulge in to a fault, [a quality] that seems hereditary among the inhabitants of these climes.²⁰

for Istanbul’s citizens when the ambassador and his party were arrested in 1593 and hauled off through the streets.

19 Choiseul, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1, plate 77. Barbier, *La rêve grec de monsieur Choiseul*, pp. 99–111, discusses Choiseul’s “ethnographic” witnessing.

20 Choiseul, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1, p. 136. I am inclined to presume that the four “young people” were male; but Choiseul does not specify.



FIGURE 3.5 “Fête turque”, Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1822, vol. 1, plate 77, after p. 136. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.

With this description Choiseul gives us an interesting run down of the types of entertainment enjoyed at a provincial festival: music, dance, epic poetry, and sexual farce. He disdained the music (and the musician) of his Ottoman hosts, and characterized *ağa* and citizens alike as naturally inclined to lasciviousness. His general assessment of the entertainment and people was that they were vulgar.²¹ That is a familiar judgment expressed by early modern travelers from the Christian kingdoms of Europe coming to Ottoman lands; but it is by no means the only possibility. Choiseul tended to judge his hosts based on whether or not they proved useful or threatening. But one suspects that the Frenchman was familiar enough with sex farces; he simply believed that the tastes of his own nation and class were more delicate, or at least more sophisticated.

21 Just so, Giovanni Alcarotti, a cleric from Novara (located west of Milan), who set off from Venice in 1587, criticized as ridiculous the shipboard entertainments of Turks, and others from the “worst nations”, in his account of a voyage to the Holy Land: Alcarotti, Giovanni, *Del viaggio di terra santa* (Novara: Appresso gli Heredi di F.F. Sefalli, 1596), p. 2. Alcarotti also noted that the passengers passed the time by “telling [heroic] stories” (*raccontare i gesti*) (p. 7).



FIGURE 3.6 "Turk tournament", Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1822, vol. 1, plate 110, after p. 170. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.

Choiseul was more sanguine about Ottoman sporting contests. Later on in his journey through eastern Anatolia he witnessed one of the ubiquitous displays of horsemanship that had characterized various Middle Eastern courts and urban centers for centuries, a tournament testing the javelin skills (*cirit*) of mounted participants.²² The traveler described a broad esplanade full of "cavaliers" whose horses were "magnificently equipped", and whose "ardor was inspired" by clamorous music. Choiseul found this contest of strength and dexterity an "interesting spectacle" though he demurred when urged to participate and remained "in the role of spectator". *Cirit*, he noted, was the "favorite exercise of the Turks who are inclined to warfare".²³ Of course neither the inclination to warfare, nor that to aggressive, mounted competitions was a particularly Ottoman quality. But Choiseul, despite his detailed and non-critical description of the javelin play, still seems determined to conclude that description with the expected expression of 'national' difference.²⁴

22 Choiseul, *Voyage pittoresque*, I, pp. 167, 170-1.

23 Choiseul, *Voyage pittoresque*, I, p. 171.

24 In his defense, Choiseul was considerably more 'charitable' than some other travelers. The young Englishman, and contemporary, John Morritt, *The Letters of John B.S. Morritt of Rokeby*, ed. G.E. Marinden (London: John Murray, 1914), p. 224, traveling through Muğla in 1795, described the people as "real Turks", poor, prejudiced, "a quiet, brutish people". Elsewhere in western Anatolia, however, Morritt showed himself more inclined to

Bembo

Our second narrator, Ambrosio Bembo, on the other hand, provides a rather different example of the modes by which a more enthusiastic traveler, with an expansive network of connections, could witness Ottoman entertainment while voyaging by land and sea.²⁵ Bembo had ample time to experience Aleppo and its environs. And he provides a detailed description of its attractions, highlighting the fact that he was not just a witness but an active participant.

First of all, Bembo shows how expatriate communities were firmly integrated into the celebratory functions of the Ottoman city. Bembo was in Aleppo when news arrived on 2 October 1672, of the Ottoman conquest of Kaminiecz in Polish territory. “The order was given”, he writes, “for celebrations throughout the city” for four nights and three days. These included cannon volleys, public prayers, the closing of all shops except “those of the principal bazaars”; a procession of the guilds, and music and dancing in the evening.²⁶ Decorations throughout the city were elaborate, with pavilions set up in each khan for the dignitaries to witness the revels, consume “tobacco, coffee, and sherbet”, and watch the “male dancers and players who went around the whole city, celebrating now in the bazaar and then in the khan, to their profit”.²⁷ The citadel itself, inside the walls, was decorated with “an immense number” of weapons and “antique instruments of war” that the Ottomans had seized when they took Aleppo fortress.²⁸ The “minarets, streets, and principal bazaars were lit by an infinite number of oil lamps”. And, Bembo tells us, “the *subaşı* went all around the city, punishing those he found sleeping and not making merry”.²⁹

One might think that foreign residents like Bembo would lay low while this city-wide conquest party went on. But, quite the contrary, Bembo, “dressed like a Turk”, went out to “see the city”.³⁰ He told his readers that foreign residents (*le nazioni*):

entertainment. En route from İznik to İzmir, he attended a Greek festival. While he had no love for the “dismal Greek tunes”, Morritt and his companions found the wine more to their liking: “so we sat down cross-legged amongst them, and were very merry” (p. 108).

25 Bembo, *The Travels*, pp. 2-5.

26 Bembo, *The Travels*, pp. 77-8.

27 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 78.

28 Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 42.

29 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 43.

30 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 78. Masters, Bruce, “Aleppo: the Ottoman empire’s caravan city”, in *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, Bruce Masters, Edhem Eldem and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 24-5, discusses the Ottoman administration of Aleppo, noting that “native Aleppines” referred to the new class of Ottomans (“Turkish-speaking, soldiers and bureaucrats”) collectively as “*rijal al-Bab* (men of the gate)”.

... made a show of gaiety and decorated the entrances of their houses, displaying sundry pictures of women there [and] attracting a great number of Turks and Christians of those parts who stopped astonished to see such garments and fashions that seemed so charming and more pleasing than the clothes of their own women.³¹

It is not clear from the text what the nature of these “pictures” actually was; and there is perhaps a bit of Venetian chauvinism in Bembo’s assessment of the reaction of viewers of these images. Nonetheless, Muslim and Christian, local and foreigner, mingled as they enjoyed the various public entertainments Aleppo had to offer. The gates of the city were opened to invite in those residing outside the walls. But women, Bembo notes, “were not permitted to leave their houses at night, only in the daytime, and even then veiled as usual”.³² The images of women in the porticoes thus would seem to have replaced the presence of the actual women who were constrained (at least according to Bembo) to remain within the confines of their domiciles.

The consuls, for their part, passed out “candies tobacco, sherbet, coffee, and bread” to “all comers”.³³ Wine was dispensed to some, and in particular to the officers (*comandanti*) charged with punishing those who became too inebriated. All the dancers and players visited the houses of the consuls. And the *ağa* of the janissaries spent two hours at the Venetian consul’s party “with a glass always to his lips, eating olives and cheese from Piacenza, which he liked very much”.³⁴

31 Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 43. Bargellini’s translation, in Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 78, glosses “*pit-ture*” here as “paintings”, rather than “pictures”; but I would suggest that this might refer to various types of image. Both manuscripts mention these decorations consisting of pictures of women. I have not seen reference to such public displays on houses (on the surface it seems unusual); nor has Bruce Masters (personal communication). But who knows? There is clearly much we do not know about the cultural conventions of early modern Ottoman cities. Francesco Sansovino (1521-86), *Dell’historia universale dell’origine et imperio de turchi* (Venice: [Appresso F. Sansovino], 1560-61), p. 78, in his very brief description of festivals in Istanbul celebrating the sultan’s victories, notes that “when news arrived of a victory the city engaged in every sort of merry-making. When it got dark the celebration began with torches, lamps, and other things; and all the houses were decorated with woven draperies, tapestries, and silken cloths...”. The Aleppo celebrations may well have taken at least some of their cues from celebrations at the center; but it is not clear whether or not the various draperies included figural images or whether “Frank” householders displayed different types of pictorial decorations than did the Muslim and Christian locals.

32 Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 43.

33 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 78; Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 43. Masters, “Aleppo”, p. 48, notes the importation and home brewing of alcohol for the European factors in the city.

34 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 78. See Parker, Kenneth (ed.), *Early Modern Tales of Orient: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 132-3, in which the English traveler Fynes

These scenes give a clear idea of the level to which the Venetians and other foreign residents were woven into the fabric of the city, and expected to play their parts. Bembo conveys the habitual nature of social and communal mixing. And though participation in these festivities no doubt cost the shopkeepers and consuls dearly, it was the cost of doing business. Bembo even lauds the populace of Aleppo for the fact that not a single “homicide or wounding” occurred during the festivities, despite the fact that men tended to go armed.³⁵ I do not mean, here, to suggest Aleppo as some utopian vision of intercommunal harmony.³⁶ Bembo was not naive. But he describes such entertainment as an integral part of the day to day business of the city.³⁷ It was also, certainly, an integral part of life in the caravans that linked the commercial cities of the empire like Istanbul and Aleppo. When the French artist, Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, whom Bembo employed, produced his own memoir of travel in Ottoman space, he wrote that sport, dance, song in various languages (Turkish, Arabic, and French), and “jovial” “Turk” companions provided diversion and amusement on the caravan trail.³⁸ Grelot had his own ideas of civilizational hierarchy. But he noted that in every nation and religion, regardless of their place in that civilizational hierarchy, there were “people of particular virtue who undertake with as much solicitude as delight, all the duties of most generous humanity”.³⁹

Moryson, in 1596, described the prosperity of the English nation and consul in Aleppo, noting that “The Christians here, and the Turks (at the Christians’ cost) drink excellent wines”.

35 Bembo, *The Travels*, p. 79. He goes on to note that this is generally the case.

36 Masters, “Aleppo”, p. 47, using travelers’ accounts, suggests that Europeans may have been “simply suffered by Aleppo’s Muslims and that few lasting friendships developed across communal lines”. This may have varied for those resident in Aleppo for long periods who made a point of learning the language. Bembo suggests that the social scene may have been more open. A rather less sanguine vision of Aleppo and its various residents may be found in the 1609 account of William Biddulph, cleric for the English establishment in the city; see Parker, *Early Modern Tales of Orient*, pp. 83-105. Biddulph’s conclusion on travel is that “...misery abroad will make us love our own country the better...” (p. 102).

37 Here we are reminded of Andrews, Walter and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), whose vision of Ottoman-Mediterranean salon culture demonstrates that we have much to learn about Ottoman entertainment and cross-cultural sociability.

38 Grelot, *Relation nouvelle d’un voyage de Constantinople*, pp. 225-6.

39 Grelot, *Relation nouvelle d’un voyage de Constantinople*, p. 224. Grelot here was commenting in particular on the “entertainment ala Turk” that he and some fellow “foreigners” received at the home of a Muslim merchant in Bursa (p. 223). More generally Grelot saw the members of the Turk “nation” as occupied with “necessity, utility, and pleasure” like other men. But he described them as not inclined to arts or sciences, and lacking in those things that provided “divertissement to body and spirit” (p. 300).

A second critical narrative in Bembo's memoir concerns the socialization that occurred around the hunt. We are accustomed to thinking of the Ottoman sultans or Safavid shahs out on hunts with their entourages. But we are less accustomed to seeing the hunt as a mixed ethno-communal form of bonding, patronage, and entertainment. That is a characterization, I think, that we associate more directly with the later era of European imperialism in Asia. Indeed Bembo's description of the hunt invokes much later narrations of English imperial behaviors in the territories they colonized, which became landscapes for the enactment of English cultural rituals.⁴⁰

For Bembo, the hunt is a central element of Aleppan entertainment, one that helps organize society and display the pecking order of foreigner and Ottoman alike. He describes hunting parties hosted by the English consulate and numbering 150 mounted men, including the Ağa of the Customs and some members of his court.⁴¹ The prey are hares; and the "Turks permit" the hunters to hunt only with falcons, and dogs. Hunts are held twice a week in season on Wednesdays and Saturdays. And Bembo tells us that these sporting events have rules:

So that the recreation will be more pleasurable and without disorder, they elect a captain of the hunt and other officials, who arrange everything and stay in office for a year, during which are held two general hunts and two sumptuous banquets.⁴²

Eating and hunting are both, of course, 'manly' pursuits. But one of the things Bembo finds most intriguing about this form of entertainment is its rules, and fines. A hunter can be fined for:

riding one's horse over one of the dogs, dismounting in order to catch the hare, colliding with another horseman, eating hares not taken in the hunt or shot with a gun, and similar things.⁴³

40 For example, McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

41 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 74. See Masters, "Aleppo", pp. 27, 34-5, 43-5, on the English and resident merchant communities in Aleppo. See Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, reprint of 1995 Munich edition), pp. 50, 73, 135, 147-8, 158-9, 226, 276, for insights on Aleppo in the context of life in Ottoman cities.

42 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 73.

43 Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 38. Bembo notes that only members of the English nation are subject to the fines.

These punishments and what happens when someone catches a hare are what makes the game, according to our raconteur, most “fun”:

Whoever catches one immediately cuts [off] its tail and puts [the tail] on his hat, carrying the hare home or making a present of it to some guest [forestiero] by throwing it at the feet of his horse, as is the custom during the hunt. The fun continued until dinnertime. Then, on the customary hill, under a great pavilion with rugs and cushions, was set out the table for the entire party, except for the aga, for whom there was a separate pavilion.⁴⁴

The food, Bembo tells us, was English country style: chicken pies, boiled chickens, roast chickens and entire quarters of beef, ... “Everything”, he points out “was cold”.⁴⁵ Here, as is often the case with narratives of food, Bembo is pointing out his own sense of cultural difference.⁴⁶

The traveler then goes on to note that these hunting parties go armed because “Arab thieves” overrun the countryside.⁴⁷ But what is critical about this passage is the notion of the English mercantile establishment in Aleppo hosting large mixed hunting parties, on a regular basis, comprised of expatriates, locals, visitors, and Ottoman officials. The hunts were then embedded in a whole complex of urban entertainment extending into the night.

Despite the ascent of the English, Bembo still moved through the customary Venetian networks of association. He still spent the majority of his time, at least according to his narrative, with his own countrymen and with a linked set of clerical and commercial officials. But the English now sponsored what Bembo called “without a doubt ... the greatest entertainment” in the country.⁴⁸

44 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 74; Bembo, *Il viaggio*, pp. 38-9, “il gioco fu bellissimo” and “continuo il divertimento sino all’ora del pranzo”.

45 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 74.

46 See, Dursteler, Eric, “Bad bread and the “outrageous drunkenness of the Turks”: food and identity in the accounts of early modern European travelers to the Ottoman empire”, *Journal of World History*, 25/2-3 (2014), 203-28; and Brummett, Palmira, “Ottoman ceremonial rhetorics of submission in the 16th and 17th centuries”, in *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara, 4-8 Ekim, 1999* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002), vol. III, pp. 1741-52.

47 Bembo, *Travels*, pp. 74-5.

48 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 74; Bembo, *Il viaggio*, p. 39, “maggior ricreazione”. Masters, Bruce, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), p. 25, calls the 1680s, shortly after Bembo’s sojourn, the “high water mark” of English broadcloth exports to the Middle East. He notes further that the structure of the English Levant Company “allowed the English merchants to deal collectively with Ottoman officialdom, while permitting the individual factors to take the initiative in their quest for profits” (p. 26).

Twice a week, for some part of the year, this great spectacle was carried out, presumably employing local “Turks” and clearly including various Ottoman officials and their men. Bembo never does tell us how the locals might have reacted to the participants riding about with hare’s tails on their hats. But, like Choiseul, he conveys a strong sense of shared entertainment sponsored by affluent elites and witnessed by various classes of people in the towns of the Ottoman empire. The difference between Bembo and his French counterpart was that one watched and one joined in. Language, personality, familiarity, attitude, and the presence of intermediaries to facilitate entry into entertainments all played a role. Bembo did not claim to be “friends” with the various “Turks” he encountered in Aleppo. But he did suggest the possibility of friendly concourse.

That possibility is illustrated in a coda to my story of Bembo’s journey to the “East”. This particular story highlights the importance, utility, and universality of jokes and tricks as a primary mode of entertainment and sociability for the traveler, both while experiencing the journey and narrating it to various audiences afterwards.⁴⁹ Ambrosio Bembo provides us with an interesting illustration of deception as he sojourned down the Tigris in a river-caravan (or flotilla of boats), from Baghdad to Basra, similar to that Evliya Çelebi had experienced four years before. North of the town of Al-Uzayr, the ethnolinguistically mixed company on the boat tried to evade the tolls levied by the authorities of the town of Vasset: “One of the Turks pretended to be an aga and the Christian Gabriel pretended to be a janissary, and they went to the aga of the town pretending to have been sent by the aga of the boat”.⁵⁰ The town officials, however, were not fooled by this ruse. Coming down to the boat, Bembo tells us, they could tell “from his accent” that this “aga” was not from Istanbul; so they levied a full toll of “six reales”. Undeterred, the travelers tried their deception again further down the river, at the town of Isaacia (north of al-Qurnah). There they found “pleasant amusement” when Gabriel posed as an *ağa* and was accepted

Masters points to the war over Crete of 1669, just before Bembo’s journey, as a turning point after which “Venice could no longer compete with the northwestern Europeans” (p. 26). He also comments on the English consuls and on the relative “isolation” (pp. 78-9) of the English in Aleppo. Bembo’s account seems to suggest that this isolation could at least occasionally be challenged.

49 On Evliya Çelebi (in Aleppo) as a joker, see Dankoff, Robert, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 169-71.

50 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 130. Foreigners (non-Ottoman subjects) paid the highest tolls. Bembo is not very specific about the occupants of the boat. Earlier on he noted five Turks, the son of one of the *kadi*’s officials, two soldiers, six sailors and a cabin boy (employed presumably by the owner of the boat whom Bembo calls an “insolent Arab”); but it is not clear if all of these were still on the boat (pp. 126-7).

as such.⁵¹ No doubt Bembo and his comrades had a good laugh as they continued on to Basra, their purses just a little bit heavier than they might have been. The moral of the story is that, when it comes to identifying who is whom among travelers, not everyone can tell an Ottoman by his accent. When it comes to avoiding tolls, ethno-communal differences may be set aside in the interest of shared fiscal well-being. And when it comes to travel, jokes are a universal form of sociability.

Conclusion

Of course the narratives of Choiseul and Bembo are not commensurate. They were very different men in very different kinds of situation. But the narratives are instructive of the varieties of travel experience, audience, and expectation. Choiseul's audience would seem to have expected tales of the strange in one-time classical space. For Bembo's interlocutors, Aleppo was a familiar political, social, and commercial space; and they wanted to know how easy it was to negotiate the Ottoman, or not-so-Ottoman, spaces beyond. Genre thus comes into play as we sort out the different types of traveler. And it is important to take note that our sources do not suggest a 'natural' evolutionary progression in traveler tales (from merchant, to antiquarian, to Grand Tourer) when we examine the early modern travel narrative.

By comparing Choiseul and Bembo we can, however, begin to suggest a trajectory for the narrative (and genres) of travel and entertainment in Ottoman space. Each traveler brought with him a set of narrative frames, a more or less fulsome knowledge picture, and a sense of audience demands, all of which shaped his story in certain critical ways. We cannot thus assume that the eighteenth-century educated traveler 'tells' Ottoman entertainments in a more knowledgeable or sophisticated way than his seventeenth, or sixteenth, century counterpart. Bembo emerges out of a long tradition of Venetian observation and participation. He is the curious visitor, reminiscent in some ways of the Grand Tourer of the nineteenth century. Choiseul, on the other hand, is the voyageur with the slightly curled lip. The stories he wants to hear are those pinpointing the locations of antiquities. French superiority and an ethnographic tone are his baseline even though he is anxious to learn about the Ottomans. And when it came to entertainment, he would rather not sing, dance, or engage in sport with his hosts.

51 Bembo, *Travels*, p. 131.

Play and Performance in Ottoman Costume Albums

William Kynan-Wilson

This chapter explores sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman costume albums in relation to the theme of entertainment.* There are many approaches to engaging with this topic, of which the most obvious is to examine the rich and varied depictions of entertaining actions and scenes in these albums, including: visions of dancers and musicians, moments of leisure, or representations of celebration such as the men enjoying a ferris wheel to mark the conclusion of Ramazan.¹

The richness of the genre as a whole is manifest through the wide array of images detailing entertainments that are rarely recorded in other sources for the period. Nonetheless, in this chapter, it is my intention to adopt an alternative approach by analysing how these books were *agents* of entertainment. In other words, how could the books themselves entertain people? And, in relation to this question, who created the entertainment?

Reading Ottoman costume albums as a form of entertainment is a novel interpretation. These books have predominantly been characterised as objective and realistic in their iconography, encyclopaedic in scope, and didactic in function.² Save for passing comments by Susan Skilliter and Ulinka Rublack,

* The author thanks Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar for the invitation to contribute to this volume, and for their long-term support of his research. The author is grateful to Lyndsay Coe, Robyn Dora Radway, Maria Sofie Simonsen, and Nedim Sönmez for discussing various aspects of this research, as well as the support of several institutions that have made this work possible, namely: the Skilliter Centre at the University of Cambridge; the Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices Fellowship at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin; and the Institute for Culture and Global Studies at Aalborg University.

1 This final image is from a now-lost album owned by the scholar Franz Taeschner (1888-1967). See Taeschner, Franz, *Alt-Stambuler Hof-und Volksleben: Ein Türkische Miniaturealbum aus dem 17 Jahrhundert* (Hanover: Orient-Buchhandlung H. Lafaire, 1925). See also Kynan-Wilson, William, “Painted by the Turcks themselves’: reading Peter Mundy’s Ottoman Costume Album in context”, in *The Mercantile Effect: On Art and Exchange in the Islamic World*, ed. Melanie Gibson and Sussan Babaie (London: Gingko Library, 2017), p. 46, n. 36.

2 This approach is widely represented by writers including Sertoğlu, Midhat, ‘Introduction’, in *Osmanlı Kıyafetleri, Fenerci Mehmed Albümü: Ottoman Costume Book*, ed. İlhami Turan (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 1986), p. 13; And, Metin, *Istanbul in the Sixteenth Century: The City, The Palace, Daily Life* (Istanbul: Akbank, 1994), p. 9; and Schick, Leslie Marie, “The place of dress in pre-modern costume albums”, in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), pp. 94-5.

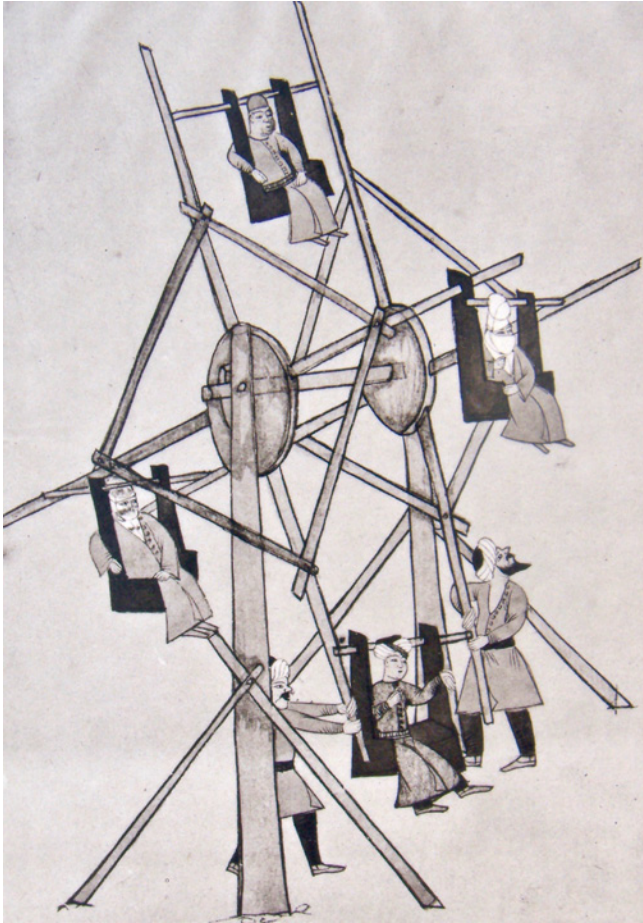


FIGURE 4.1
A ferris-wheel for the festivities of Eid celebrating the end of Ramazan. Original label unknown. Dated c. 1660. Reproduced from Franz Taeschner's now-lost album published in *Alt-Stambuler Hof-und Volksleben: Ein Türkische Miniaturealbum aus dem 17 Jahrhundert* (Hanover: Orient-Buchhandlung H. Lafaire, 1925), plate 46.

there has been little discussion of these albums as items designed to entertain.³ My initial intention, therefore, is to demonstrate through a range of case-studies that Ottoman costume books made by both European and Ottoman artists were, on a fundamental level, created to entertain, and that this is significant in understanding the genre more widely.

3 Skilliter, Susan, *Life in Istanbul 1588: Scenes from a Traveller's Picture Book*, Bodleian Picture Book No. 15 (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1977), pp. 6 and also 3: "entertaining and ephemeral as they [costume books] are, only a few seem to have survived". Skilliter knew of only eight examples. More recently, Rublack said generally of the costume book genre: "It rediscovers appearances as part of a rich symbolic world capable of transmitting compact information that people responded to, misunderstood, had fun with, or fought over", and "readers were entertained through lively urban scenes or amusing pop-ups...", Rublack, Ulinka, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. xix and 13.

In tracing the place of entertainment within these albums it is necessary to reconsider them as material artefacts. Unsurprisingly, previous studies have focused near-exclusively on the rich and vivid figurative imagery collated within these books to the detriment of the examination of their materiality, paratextual properties, and bibliographic codes. The analysis presented here therefore moves beyond a purely pictorial plane: it will consider the interplay between the images, texts, interactive devices, special papers, and the structural forms of these books – and how these elements create various forms of play and performance through reading.⁴ This extensive and inter-connected repertoire of devices is integral to the entertaining experience, and was crafted by both the artist-makers of these books and the owner-makers who purchased them. No single album contained every entertaining device and so the examples analysed in this chapter are intentionally numerous and wide-ranging; indeed, this approach underlines some of the shifting patterns in play and performance found in these manuscripts. In sum, I aim to reveal the *multiple* reading experiences and uses that these objects invite: to catalogue and collect, to instruct, to manipulate, to record and to remember, and – of course – to entertain.

Introduction to the Genre

Clothing, performance, and entertainment have always been deeply entwined. The double play of the word *habit*, denoting both clothing and manner, reveals the deep associations between what one wore and how one acted.⁵ Clothing can transform character as much as appearance, and it thus offered a way of understanding another culture as well as becoming a part of it. With the rise of early modern European exploration and expansion, the costume book genre rose in prominence with examples representing all corners of the globe in addition to discrete regions within Europe. The Ottoman genus of this bibliographic species proved especially popular in both its manuscript and printed forms, although only examples of the former category dating to between 1570

4 By 'structural forms', I mean both the sequence of images and the (differing) dimensions of images within an album.

5 Ilg, Ulrike, "The cultural significance of costume books in sixteenth-century Europe", in *Clothing Culture, 1350-1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 45-7; Rosenthal, Margaret F., "Cultures of clothing in later Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39/3 (2009), p. 463; and Jones, Ann Rosalind, "Habits, holdings, heterologies: populations in print in a 1562 costume book", *Yale French Studies*, 110 (2006), pp. 93-4.

and 1670 – which exhibit a more pronounced sense of play and which were made by Europeans and Ottomans – will be discussed here.⁶ These manuscripts survive in great numbers.⁷ They were admired travel souvenirs which also proved immensely influential sources of iconography and information: artists cut and pasted characters from these books into their canvases and applied them to wall decorations; characters cropped up on crockery; and they informed costumes for theatrical displays. The diverse images were simply one of the first and most effective means via which many audiences envisaged the Ottoman world.

The manuscripts collected pictorially simple yet culturally diverse images of the Ottoman world, with images ranging from the sultan and his court to street-vendors hawking foodstuffs. The earliest examples are attributed to European artists based in Istanbul working for European patrons (princes, diplomats, and later merchants), but they combined European artistic practices with pre-existing Ottoman traditions.⁸ The albums quickly transitioned from large-scale, luxury items labelled in Latin into much smaller and cheaper books annotated in various European vernaculars that were evidently aimed at the increasing number of foreign merchants stationed in Galata. By the early seventeenth century, Ottoman artists began to produce these albums for both European and Ottoman audiences; their work quickly came to dominate the market to the extent that it is rare to find European-made examples by the late seventeenth century.⁹ The popularity of these Ottoman-made albums amongst European travellers is remarkable, and they reflect an early and under-studied example of the reception of Ottoman art in seventeenth-century Europe.

The albums made by Ottoman artists mainly followed the iconographic canon of earlier European-made examples, but notably they shifted in style towards the bold and brilliant colouring typical of Ottoman miniatures. Two

6 Kynan-Wilson, William, “Costume albums”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (Brill: Leiden, 2018/1), pp. 25-7.

7 In 1991 Rudolf Stichel catalogued 117 examples of manuscripts in dozens of international collections. To date, I have identified more than 200 examples, including manuscripts and collections of loose miniatures. Stichel, Rudolf H.W., “Das Bremer Album und Seine Stellung Innerhalb der Orientalischen Trachtenbücher”, in *Das Kostümbuch des Lambert de Vos*, ed. Hans-Albrecht Koch (Graz: Akad. Dr.- u. Verl. Anst., 1991), vol. 1, pp. 31-54.

8 This is an area in need of further analysis; it is briefly discussed by Bevilacqua, Alexander and Helen Pfeifer, “Turquerie: culture in motion, 1650-1750”, *Past and Present*, 221/1 (2013), p. 80.

9 On the contexts of manuscript production and *çarşı ressamları* (bazaar painters) see And, Metin, “17. Yüzyıl Türk Çarşı Ressamları”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, 16 (1985), 40-5; cf. Atasoy, Nurhan and Lale Uluç, *Impressions of Ottoman Culture in Europe: 1453-1699* (Istanbul: Armağan Yayınları, 2012), p. 356; and Kynan-Wilson, “Painted by the Turcks themselves”, pp. 42-4.

travellers to the Ottoman world, the Italian Pietro della Valle (1586-1652) and the Englishman Peter Mundy (c. 1596-1667), independently commented on the loss of realism in Ottoman-made albums, but they also praised the authenticity of owning images of Turks made by Turks themselves, and della Valle explicitly noted the pleasure that his (now-lost) costume book would arouse when viewed in Italy.¹⁰ In contrast, iconographic evolution was subtler than the shift in style. A few types of images were removed, mainly scenes of grim and gruesome punishments that portrayed the Ottomans in a negative light. European travellers still described public executions in prose but they could no longer purchase Ottoman-made images of such events. This probably explains why Peter Mundy sketched a scene of various public executions with his own hand; no images of punishment feature in Mundy's Ottoman-made costume book and he attached his sketch to his travelogue entitled *Itinerarium Mundii*.¹¹ This is a useful reminder that the patrons of these books often had little or no say in the imagery contained within these albums and that they were dependent upon the choices of the artist.¹² In turn, this clarifies the need to distinguish between different types of makers working at different moments in the production of these objects: (i) those who produced the images in these albums and (ii) those who owned and materially altered these books. The phenomenon of owner as maker is one of the unique elements of Ottoman costume books, and it remains a neglected facet of the genre.

The Album-Maker at Play

This opening section explores how the makers of these albums used a series of devices – pictorial, physical, and structural – to inculcate play and performance within these albums; their intention in so doing was to entertain. Unfortunately little is known about the original makers of these books aside from a few early exceptions such as the work of the Flemish artist Lambert de Vos in

10 della Valle, Pietro, *The Pilgrim: The Travels of Pietro della Valle*, trans. George Bull (London: Hutchinson, 1990), p. 14; Temple, Richard C. (ed.), *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667* (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1907), vol. 1, pp. 26-7; and Schick, Leslie Meral, "Ottoman costume albums in a cross-cultural context", in *Art turc – Turkish Art. 10th International Congress of Turkish Art*, ed. François Déroche (Geneva: Fondation Max van Berchem, 1999), p. 627, n. 10.

11 Temple, *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, pp. 54-5.

12 There are a few possible exceptions, but the power of the European patron over the Ottoman artist has previously been overstated.

the second half of the sixteenth century.¹³ As briefly sketched above, when Ottoman artists began to make these books their artistic style changed quite notably whereas the iconographic canon remained largely stable. This change in manufacturers also resulted in different patterns of play and playfulness. This section will focus on four issues that frequently inter-relate to one another: (i) the order of images; (ii) the use of special papers; (iii) the pictorial playfulness of Ottoman artists; and (iv) the use of interactive devices. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it shows the range of entertaining elements present within these books.

Order and Procession

It is a truism to state that an album has a beginning, middle, and an end. Yet this basic observation reminds us of the need to investigate costume albums as material artefacts. This is particularly apparent when one appreciates the value afforded to the structure of these books, the order in which images were placed, and the cumulative aesthetic experience that this created as the reader travelled through a foreign land by turning pages. As Elisabeth Fraser has said of later travel books: “the book itself [is] a metaphor for travel”.¹⁴ This process of turning pages as an act of travel is played upon in several examples of Ottoman costume books.

Not every album remains in its original binding, but those that do generally follow an established order. The opening images of an album commonly represent the sultan and his court before cataloguing the strata of Ottoman society: officials and merchants, soldiers, servants, craftsmen and vendors, and later a string of different ethnic groups resident in Istanbul (typically Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Russians). For example, an album (Qatar, Doha, The Orientalist Museum, OM.749; dated c. 1580) originally belonging to Bartholomäus Schachman (1559-1614) from Danzig proceeds in this manner before concluding with various characters from Mediterranean islands as well as the Holy

13 Four such albums can be attributed to de Vos or his studio: (i) Athens, Gennadius Library, MS A. 986; (ii) Bremen, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, MS Or. 9; (iii) Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.17.2 (known as the ‘Freshfield Album’); and (iv) Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Od. 2. For more about de Vos see Huvenne, Paul, “Lambert de Vos uit de vergeethoek”, *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten-Antwerpen* (Antwerp, 1978), pp. 7-24.

14 Fraser, Elisabeth A., *Mediterranean Encounters: Artists between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, 1774-1839* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), p. 28.



FIGURE 4.2 Turkish woman walking to a bath house. Dated c. 1580. Kassel, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4° MS hist. 31, fol. 172r. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution - ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Land and Egypt.¹⁵ On other occasions the hierarchy is reversed so that the reader concludes with the imperial court or a panorama of the cityscape of Istanbul, as is the case with the Dryden Album (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS. R.14.23; dated c. 1580) and a related manuscript in Kassel (Landesbiblio-

¹⁵ Nefedova, Olga (ed.), *Bartholomäus Schachman (1559-1614): The Art of Travel* (Milan: Skira, 2012).



FIGURE 4.3 Exterior of the bath house. Dated c. 1580. Kassel, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4° MS hist. 31, fol. 174r. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution – ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).

thek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4° MS hist. 31; dated c. 1580).¹⁶

16 I have named the Cambridge album after its first known owner, Jonathan Dryden, in order to distinguish the manuscript from the Freshfield Album (in the same collection). Dryden came up to Cambridge as a Scholar of Westminster and matriculated as a pensioner from Trinity College on 14 May 1656. He is not to be confused with John Dryden (1631-1700), the famous poet, who also matriculated as a pensioner at Trinity on 18 May 1650.



FIGURE 4.4 Interior of the bath house. Dated c. 1580. Kassel, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4^o MS hist. 31, fol. 176r. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution – ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).

A neat illustration of how the ordering of images invited play and crafted a narrative is found in the Kassel manuscript. Mid-way through the album a series of pages reveal the habit of the Ottoman *hamam* (bath house): a veiled Turkish lady in a pistachio green outfit (fol. 172r) is shown walking on the street and carrying a container that would have held various linens, soaps, make-up, and other items essential for a day of bathing. Her posture is compelling: she is one of only 13 characters (of a total 159 images) in the entire album to move

from left to right on the page and her physical movement further directs the reader to turn over the page. The act of turning displays the stone-clad façade of a *hamam* (fol. 174r).

There is a sense of anticipation as the viewer gazes at the threshold of this stark structure with its distinctive roof. Another turn of the page (fol. 176r) reveals the interior of the *hamam*, but the scene is unexpected: the woman, whose journey the reader has followed, is not depicted languidly bathing (as the viewer may have hoped for). Instead, a muscle-bound and moustachioed man gleefully walks (by way of massage) over a naked man sprawled upon the floor. These three associated scenes neatly convey the ritual of processing to the *hamam* and they afford the reader a purposefully playful role in this process.¹⁷ There is also added humour in the way the artist confounds the reader's expectation by replacing the anticipated bathing Turkish woman with two burly naked men.

The final image of life inside the *hamam* reflects a broader cultural trend in which certain private and exclusive spaces in the Ottoman world fascinated European audiences. As discussed later, access to the sultan and his imperial court was closely guarded, costly, and a rare privilege – it unsurprisingly features heavily in travel imagery and travel literature in the early modern period. The Englishman Thomas Dallam (c. 1575- in or after 1630) vividly records his time at the imperial palace and, above all, in a quite fantastical piece of prose, he remembers spying upon concubines in the harem.¹⁸ Domestic Ottoman spaces similarly intrigued European travellers. Several costume books contrast veiled Ottoman women walking upon the streets with unveiled Ottoman women sitting on carpets in their own homes. European travellers would never have been afforded access to these private spaces. Indeed, male Ottoman artists would not have entered female *hamams* either, but they play upon their perceived powers of access by including the first depictions of half-naked women inside the *hamam*; this staple of nineteenth-century Orientalist imagery was mainly an invention of Ottoman artists rather than their European counterparts. The revelatory nature of the costume book therefore allowed one to play at entering these unknown places which were rarely accessible in reality.

17 Many analogous scenes of women and children walking to the bath house are to be found in both European- and Ottoman-made albums. A fine example is found in the Lewenklaue Album (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 8615; dated c. 1586) which depicts a troupe of women and children at the bottom of the page travelling to the *hamam*, the structure of which is depicted at the top of the page (fol. 126r).

18 Bent, James Theodore (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1893), pp. 74-5.

Pacing Procession

The sense of anticipation and procession within these manuscripts is frequently enhanced by various graphic and material devices. One such mode is by interspersing figurative imagery with different special papers, which were a speciality of Ottoman craftsmen. Examples commonly include marbled paper, silhouette paper, tinted paper, and cut-paper work (*Kat'i*).¹⁹ The first three types of special papers appear in albums produced by Europeans whereas cut-paper work is more commonly found in albums made by Ottoman artists. The role of these special papers has received little commentary in comparison to the figurative imagery that they feature alongside and frequently outnumber. The appeal of these papers is seemingly straightforward: they were beautiful, distinct, and authentic arts that were unavailable in Europe during this period. However, it is also important to view them as more than merely decorative; their various functions within the reading experience merit attention. These papers were used as frames, symbolic markers, and devices that paced the act of viewing: they could announce the opening and close of albums, draw attention to particularly significant characters, or mark the conclusion of a thematic passage.

The Dryden Album is a fine example of how these papers could add rhythm to the reading experience. For every two pages of figurative imagery the reader finds a series of special papers that become increasingly richer in their visual splendour.²⁰ The opening folios are examples of dribble paper (also known as 'tree-root' marbled paper), which appear to have been made by a European hand unaware of the specialised technique of creating real marbled paper. The pages have been decorated by allowing the dye to run or dribble along the page at different angles; it attempts (with limited success) to recreate the swirling abstract beauty of genuine marbled paper.²¹

As one progresses further into the album richer types of special papers appear. The viewer finds sheets of monochrome coloured paper specked with silver which has since discoloured: the opening papers are light brown, then brilliant red, and finally white with now dark dots. Deeper into the album, the

19 For introductions to these arts see Sönmez, Nedim, *Ebru: The Turkish Art of Marbling* (Hückelhoven: Verlag Anadolu, 1996); and Çağman, Filiz, *Kat'i: Cut-Paper Works and Artists in the Ottoman World* (Istanbul: Aygaz, 2014).

20 There are only five exceptions and two of these are extended fold-out images. A digitized copy can be accessed here: <<http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1117>> (accessed 8 April 2018).

21 Sönmez, Nedim, "Le papier turc dans les albums du xvi^e siècle: deux exemples à la Württembergische Landesbibliothek de Stuttgart: l'album de Georg Ringler et l'album de Johannes Weckerlin", in *Alter Ego: Amitiés et réseaux du xvi^e au xxi^e siècle* (Strasbourg: Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg, 2017), p. 166.

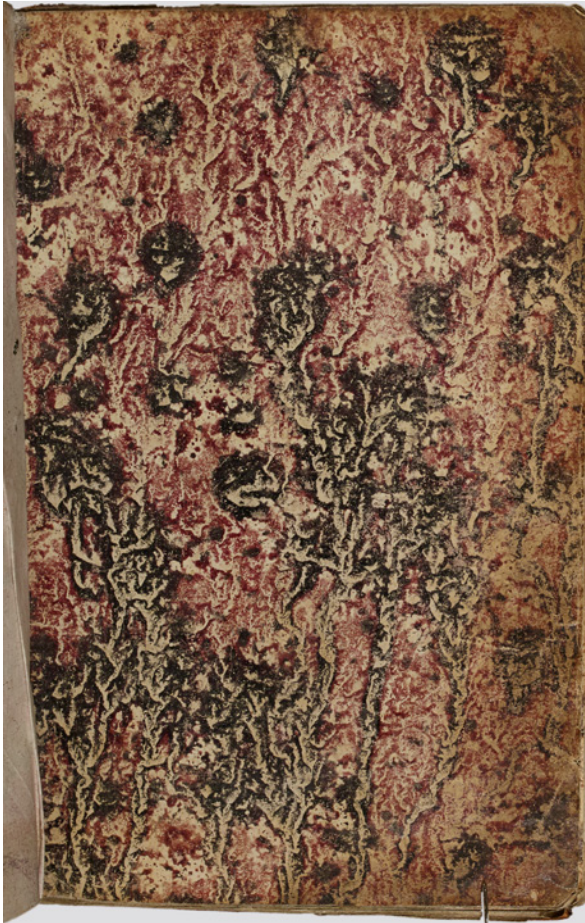


FIGURE 4.5
An example of dribble paper (also known as 'tree-root' marbled paper), which seeks to imitate marbled paper. Dated c. 1580. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS. R.14.23 (The Dryden Album), flyleaf fol. 2r.

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viewer encounters the bold beauty of marbled paper. Each example patterns the page uniquely. Some folios are dotted with red blobs on a sea of blue. Others resemble the blue and white of a good Stilton cheese (fol. 14 interleaf 2r). There is a striking contrast between the terse aesthetics of characters against a plain background and the burst of abstract colour and movement that meets the reader's eye in these examples of marbled paper. The final and most rare type of special paper in this specific book, which the viewer has to work hardest at finding, is silhouette paper.²² The pages are imprinted with various patterns that mimic Turkish carpets and textiles, flowers and kiosks. One example echoes the design of a carpet with a floral border (fol. 17r interleaf 4v) while another (fol. 49 interleaf 4v) resembles the tiger stripes and crescents of imperial Ottoman kaftans.

22 For more on silhouette paper see Sönmez, "Le papier turc", pp. 160-4.

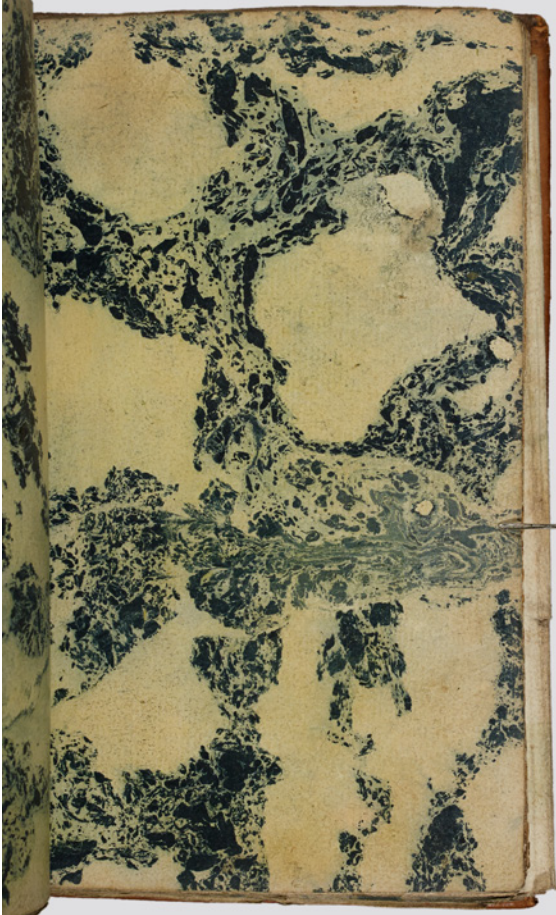


FIGURE 4.6
 An example of marbled paper.
 Dated c. 1580. Cambridge,
 Trinity College, MS. R.14.23
 (The Dryden Album), fol. 14
 interleaf 2r.
 © THE MASTER AND
 FELLOWS OF TRINITY
 COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

The Dryden Album is as rich in its special papers as it is in figurative imagery; it is far from unique in this regard. These special papers of great beauty are worthy of meditation; they pace the reading process through rhythm and foster a heightened sense of anticipation by controlling how the viewer moves through the manuscript. Here, the non-figurative dimension to the manuscript is a crucial yet forgotten element of the pleasure that it can invoke.

Pictorial Playfulness

The way in which an artist could control the movement of a reader through the manuscript is further apparent through various pictorial devices. In European albums one finds an attention to three-dimensionality, perspective, and physiognomic modelling of the characters. The work of Lambert de Vos in the 1570s,



FIGURE 4.7
An example of silhouette
paper. Dated c. 1580.
Cambridge, Trinity
College, MS. R.14.23 (The
Dryden Album); fol. 49
interleaf iv.
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COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

for instance, is grand in scale and of the highest quality: each figure is rendered in immense detail, elaborate needlework on clothing is painstakingly recorded, and facial features are carefully modelled.²³ Yet a decade later other anonymous European artists produced demonstrably cheaper and less refined pictures, which partly explains their scholarly neglect. These images occasionally stray towards stiffness and repetition – they are not first-class works of art by great artists, but herein lies a further reason for their significance as records of popular culture in their day.

In contrast, Ottoman-made books do not attempt to surpass their European counterparts in realism. The imagery comprises vivid blocks of colour, a bold

23 See n. 13 above. For example, the Bremen album may be accessed here: <<http://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/ms/content/pageview/1616770>> (accessed 8 April 2018) and the Genadius album here: <<http://gl.onlineculture.co.uk/ttp/>> (accessed 8 April 2018).



FIGURE 4.8 Image of a dwarf (*cüce*) at the imperial court. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Rål. 8:o nr 10 (Rålamb Album), no. 52. Reproduced under the Creative Commons CCO 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

handling of line, minimalist context and a preponderance of blank page. Yet the images are frequently invested with a pictorial playfulness, by which I mean a desire to toy with the two-dimensional conventions of miniature painting. The genre adhered to a largely unchanging set of visual principals that are recognisable whether one is admiring a late sixteenth-century book or one from the close of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Figures stand against a plain background, framed with a simple border and are identified through their clothing, props, and a brief label. Rules are there to be followed, but they can also be subverted and broken – and Ottoman artists (more so than their European counterparts) repeatedly exhibit a willingness to play with these conventions in a manner that I contend was intended to elicit pleasure. This may, partially,

24 By way of comparison, a fine late example of the genre is now in the New York Public Library (MS Arents 96-355; dated 1808-26): <<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/album-of-turkish-costume-paintings#/?tab=about>> (accessed 8 April 2018).

explain the success of Ottoman artists in dominating the market for these travel souvenirs in the seventeenth century.

An album (Stockholm, National Library of Sweden, Cod. Rål. 8:o nr 10) purchased by the Swedish diplomat Claes Rålamb (1622-98) in Istanbul illustrates several of these points.²⁵ The manuscript contains 121 images (of an original 137) and was made by an Ottoman artist in around 1657-8. The first example (page 52) taken from this manuscript is intentionally shown within its material context as experienced by a reader. The composite nature of the artefact is apparent: identifying inscriptions (for the previous image) are visible on the left-hand side, while on the right-hand side the reader views a complete page and also half of the following folio at the same time. The pages in this book alternate quite significantly in size with the result that the viewer is always conscious of the next character to appear.

In this specific example, we see the dwarf who was employed at the sultan's court in an entertaining capacity. The figure's minute stature is accentuated by the pared down aesthetics of the page: he swims in a sea of blank paper and, unlike the other images in this album, is placed in the centre of the page rather than resting on the lowest line of the red border. This contrast is further accentuated by the half-view of a janissary on the following folio whose legs are the same size as the dwarf in his entirety. The janissary's feet even break the border, thereby underlining this character's height and the dwarf's incredible shortness. The tabulation of the folios performs several functions: it exaggerates the character's diminutive height, sparks a visual and comic dialogue between the different characters on each page, and it augments the album's inherent sense of procession. The physical format of the album constantly compels the viewer to turn the page and to travel through the Ottoman world.

The playfulness of the miniaturist is apparent elsewhere in this manuscript. Another court entertainer, a mute man (no. 94), is shown standing frontally as opposed to in profile.²⁶ In the context of the manuscript and the wider genre this is a remarkable posture to assume: every other figure in the album is shown standing in profile, but here the figure stares at the viewer.²⁷

25 Majda, Tadeusz, "The Rålamb Album of Turkish costumes", in *The Sultan's Procession: The Swedish Embassy to Sultan Mehmed IV in 1657-1658*, ed. Karin Ådahl (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2006), pp. 196-265.

26 Another image of a mute is depicted in the same album (no. 35); the man again points to his lips but in this example he stands in profile.

27 The same iconography is found in a Berlin album (Lipperheidesche Köstumbibliothek, Lb 17, fol. 15; dated c. 1648-87).



FIGURE 4.9 Image of a mute (*dilsiz*) at the imperial court; labelled in Latin *mutus*. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Rål. 8:o nr 10 (Rålamb Album), no. 94. Reproduced under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

This man, who is unable to speak, points upwards towards his lips. There is a newfound immediacy to his communication with the reader through his pose and direct gaze which breaks the barrier of the pictorial frame or 'fourth-wall'. Through these details the artist has deftly painted silence. These examples show the deliberate subversion of the usual positions, frames, and postures of characters, a mode of pictorial playfulness that is typical of and unique to Ottoman-made albums during this period.

The Performance of Revelation

The careful ordering of images and special papers manifested itself in various ways, but in each instance it allowed the viewer to partake in a procession that gradually revealed Ottoman life. The reader could look at a series of Ottoman characters in a manner reminiscent of Philippe du Fresne-Canaye's people-watching in Istanbul; he wrote in 1573: we sat "by the door of our house, and



FIGURE 4.10 The second court at the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul (with closed flap). Dated c. 1580. Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4° MS hist. 31, fol. 116r. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution – ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).



FIGURE 4.11 The second court at the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul (with open flap). Dated c. 1580. Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, 4° MS hist. 31, fol. 116r. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution - ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).

there lazily we watched the foreign costumes of those who passed by; we derived so much pleasure from this". The Frenchman claimed that he had thereby successfully trained himself to distinguish different status groups.²⁸

28 du Fresne-Canaye, Philippe, *Le Voyage du Levant: de Venise à Constantinople, l'émerveillement d'un jeune humaniste (1573)*, ed. and trans. M. H. Hauser (Paris: Ferrières Editions de

The physical format of the album similarly played upon the performance of voyeurism. In some cases this was augmented by inserting a series of interactive elements within these albums that allowed the reader to manipulate and reveal Ottoman society in an even more active and self-conscious manner. A number of European-made albums dating to the late sixteenth century include foldout pages that invite further interaction. They invariably represent the same stock scenes and characters, typically: imperial weddings, the sultan and his entourage en route to the mosque for Friday prayers, and a group of women with children travelling to a *hamam*.²⁹ These examples are associated with European-made albums and a series of late sixteenth-century manuscripts associated with German-speaking owners make especial use of interactive flaps and folds. In contrast, I have been unable to identify any flaps or foldout pages in Ottoman-made costume books from the seventeenth century onwards. Like the pictorial playfulness traced above, this is one of the marked differences in the vocabulary of play when comparing European-made albums with Ottoman-made examples. Thus, just as the iconography of these books became standardised, so too did their physical properties.

The Kassel Album is a prime example of using paper-flaps to reveal elements of Ottoman society. A scene at the Topkapı Palace (fol. 116r) shows rows of resplendent janissaries standing to attention. At first, the viewer is looking in from the outside at this most exclusive of spaces: a grey structure dominates the left-hand side of the image and dozens of janissaries stand with their backs to the reader in a posture that underlines the reader's exclusion. There is little of immediate interest to attract the eye. Yet on closer inspection the reader can find a paper-flap. Ever so delicately, and with enjoyable suspense, this flap can be lifted to reveal the interior of the monument in which the sultan grants an audience. The viewer has now traversed the janissary-filled courtyard and accessed one of the most exclusive sites in the imperial capital.

Obtaining an audience with the sultan was the ultimate honour for European diplomats to the Ottoman court; it was a moment of great expense and import, as well as of drama and performance.³⁰ Here it is replicated in miniature form. This special moment is further accentuated through context: it is

Poliphile, 1986), p. 76; Schick, "The place of dress", p. 99; and Rublack, *Dressing Up*, pp. 13-14.

29 Examples include the Lewenklaue Album, the Dryden Album, an album at Oxford (All Souls College, MS 314; dated c. 1580-90), and the example in Jerusalem (L.A. Mayer Library, Inv. 7930; dated 1587).

30 Skilliter, Susan A., "The Stately Porch of the Grand Signor at Constantinople: The Ottoman court as seen by Elizabethan travellers – comparisons and contrasts", in *Europäische*

the only folio containing an interactive flap in the entire manuscript.³¹ The original owner of this specific manuscript is unknown, but it is appealing to consider whether he sought to commemorate and re-perform the day he achieved an audience with the sultan, or whether this is a scene reflecting the owner's aspiration.³²

The Owner-Maker at Play

As with the makers, or artists, of these albums, little is known about the majority of the original owners. Their names are rarely attached to extant albums although it is possible to glean information from the details, language, and rhetoric of the labels added by the owners. Despite the limited evidence, this section will examine the crucial yet ill-explored role that owners had as makers. This is most discernible in relation to the bibliographic devices and the paratexts of each album: the materials, labels, titles, scholarly references, special papers, and so on, which all framed and inscribed the manuscript with private meaning. In this way the owner could transform an often unchanging and repetitive iconographic tradition into a personal narrative.

Every album contains some evidence of the owner-maker's hand. During this period (c.1550-1700), there is no evidence that the artist ever labelled the images and so it was the owner who would inscribe the pictures as they saw fit or as they were instructed by others to do so. Consequently, some books – like the Dryden Album – oscillate between accurate and erroneous labels, as well as telling blank spaces when a character eluded identification by the owner.³³ This act of inscription was symbolic as well as pragmatic, and it will be shown

Hofkultur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert, ed. August Buck (Hamburg: Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung 8, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 81-92.

- 31 There appears to have once been a second flap on the far right-hand side of this scene. Other albums that use interactive flaps to represent the imperial palace and its structures of exclusion and revelation in a similar manner include an album in Dresden (Sächsische Landesbibliothek, MS J.2.a; dated 1581-2) and the Lewenklaus Album in Vienna. For reproductions of the latter album showing such scenes see Necipoğlu, Gülru, *Architecture, Ceremony, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: AHF and MIT Press, 1991), plate 33 a-q.
- 32 For an introduction to European diplomats commissioning visual representations of their Ottoman postings see *At the Sublime Porte: Ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire (1550-1800)* (London: Hazlitt, Gooden and Fox, 1988).
- 33 Kynan-Wilson, William, "Souvenirs and stereotypes: an introduction to Ottoman costume albums", *Heritage Turkey*, 3 (2013), 35-6.

here how it played a crucial role in enhancing the entertaining nature of these manuscripts.

Inscribing the City

An exceptional example of the owner as maker is an Oxford album (Bodleian Library, MS Or. 430) dated to 1588. The original owner is unknown, but appears to have been a German-speaker who labelled the album in Latin.³⁴ Most of the iconography is typical of the period: it corresponds with several examples previously discussed in this paper, including the Dryden Album, the albums in Jerusalem and Kassel, as well as the manuscript belonging to Schachman. However, the Bodleian book also includes some quite original and highly personalised images (of a largely maritime nature) that reflect the wishes of the patron and reveal their own agency as owner and maker.

The hand of the owner is clearly seen in the album's most impressive fold-out page which is a view of the Bosphorus and the communities straddling the European and Asian shores of the Straits (fol. 2). The anonymous European artist has exploited the large-scale format of this folio (422 × 215 mm) in order to enhance the performativity of reading.³⁵ The viewer must carefully unfold Istanbul, with certain communities, such as the Topkapı Palace, Üsküdar (Scutari), Galata and the entire European shoreline only appearing when folds in the paper are unpacked. Many European travellers first approached the city by sea and travelogues recount the gradual appearance of the city: the same process of the city appearing piecemeal is mirrored here in the movement of the paper-city. Once fully extended, the paper-city opens before the viewer as imagined from above, a manner in which a visitor of 1588 could never have experienced the real city of Istanbul.

The unknown owner of this book actively and carefully added to the performance of the paper-city. A series of labels identify geographic sites, historical monuments, and personal acquaintances. The annotations range from allusions to classical culture to Biblical references to Ottoman history writing to personal observation.³⁶ The textual component of this image thus displays the owner's knowledge, erudition, and social contacts. The positioning of the text also invites performance through the act of looking since the arrangement of the labels prohibits a single vantage point of readership. The viewer must ro-

34 Skilliter, *Life in Istanbul*, p. 4.

35 By way of context the volume ordinarily measures 210 × 155 mm.

36 Skilliter, *Life in Istanbul*, pp. 4-5.

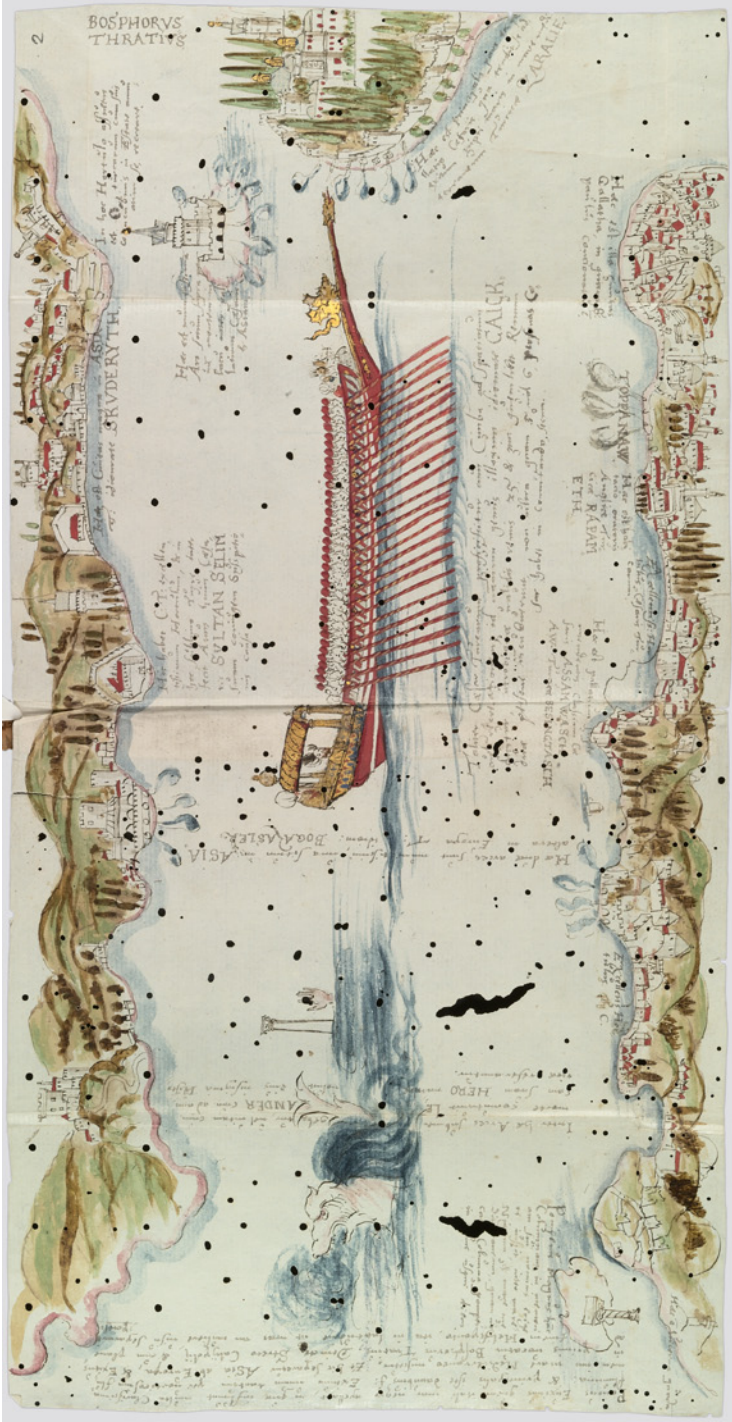


FIGURE 4.12 The Straits of the Bosphorus. Dated 1588. Bodleian Library, MS Or. 430, fol. 2.
© BODLEIAN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.



FIGURE 4.13 Image of a Turkish lady, identified by Mundy as a musician and singer, flanked by cut-paper flowers. The image is dated c. 1618, but the composition of the page and its text probably post-dates 1640. London, British Museum, MS 1974.0617.0.13 (Peter Mundy's album), fol. 49. Image © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

tate the album or (more likely, owing to the impressive size of the folio) move their body around the book in order to read the city in its entirety.

This fold-out panorama thus reflects various layers of performance in its making, both by the artist who painted and folded the image and then by the owner-maker who later inscribed the city. The act of reading this scene remains inherently playful and performative: there is immense tactile joy as Istanbul intricately unfolds before the reader; the city's soundscape jumps out at the viewer via the phonetic spellings of Turkish words rendered in capitalised letters;³⁷ the sultan's golden *kayık* (caiique) glints and glimmers in the light; and the reader must journey around the page in order to fully comprehend the

37 Another impressive fold-out scene in this manuscript (fol. 131r) depicts the Süleymaniye Mosque and includes a phonetic rendering of the *müezzin's* call to prayer, see Skilliter, *Life in Istanbul*, p. 7.

layered ancient city depicted on paper. As Susan Skilliter remarked, this panorama “sets the scene for the procession of citizens to come”.³⁸

A further example of lending voice through inscription is found in another late sixteenth-century album (Jerusalem, L.A. Mayer Library, Inv. 7930) containing 46 images of Ottoman life produced by an unknown European artist. The album is typical of the genre during this period, closely corresponding iconographically and stylistically to the group of manuscripts dating to the 1580s and 90s. The opening of the book, however, is unique in directly speaking to the viewer in the first-person: “Le 25me de Jun 1587 Je suis este fait en Constantinople” (The 25th of June 1587 I was made in Constantinople).³⁹ The adoption of the first-person lends an emphatic immediacy and sense of presence to the images that follow: it is not simply that this manuscript was made in Istanbul but also that it is *of* Istanbul. These words do not merely convey information; they speak to the viewer in a compelling manner that fosters interplay between artefact and reader. The claim of verisimilitude (that well-worn trope of travel literature and travel imagery) is a demonstrably exaggerated claim since the manuscript follows an established iconographic canon, but these words evince one way in which an owner actively empowered their album and sought to engage with future readers.

Curating and Remembering

A final illustration of the significant yet complex role of the owner-maker is the example of Peter Mundy, an English merchant working for the Levant Company in Istanbul (1617-20).⁴⁰ While in Istanbul, Mundy purchased 59 miniatures depicting Ottoman characters, acquiring them either as individual folios or (more probably) as a ready-bound volume in 1618 that he later dismembered.⁴¹ Mundy pasted these images into a European-made album (London, British Museum, MS 1974.0617.0.13).⁴² He collated the images, framed them

38 Skilliter, *Life in Istanbul*, p. 4.

39 Kurz, Otto and Hilde Schueller Kurz, “The Turkish dresses in the costume-book of Rubens”, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 23 (1972), 275-90.

40 Palmer, Philip S., “By my owne experience or the Most probablest Relation off others’: manuscript travel writing and Peter Mundy’s “Relation” of Constantinople (1617-20)”, in *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*, ed. Linda McJannet and Bernadette Andrea (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 123-38; and Holmberg, Eva Johanna, “Writing the travelling self: travel and life-writing in Peter Mundy’s (1597-1667) *Itinerarium Mundii*”, *Renaissance Studies*, 31/4 (2017), 608-25.

41 Kynan-Wilson, “Painted by the Turcks themselves”, pp. 40-3.

42 Titley, Norah M., *Miniatures from Turkish Manuscripts: A Catalogue and Subject Index of Paintings in the British Library and Museum* (London: British Library, 1981), pp. 20-3. Mundy’s connection to this manuscript is largely unknown, see Temple, *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, p. 27, n. 1; Palmer, “Peter Mundy’s “Relation” of Constantinople”, p. 133; cf. Holm-

with cut-paper flower decorations (by an Ottoman artist), and appended a detailed travelogue that combines his own observations of the Ottoman world with those of published authorities.⁴³ The reproduction of folio 49 illustrates the cumulative and varied aesthetics of pictures, prose, and special papers.

The same confluence of visual, textual, and material elements is apparent in the aesthetic inventiveness of Ottoman *murakka* during this period; indeed, I suspect that the desire for such diverse aesthetics within Ottoman albums helped to inform the varied collections of images, texts, and special papers acquired by Europeans in the same years, although more research into this artistic dialogue is required.⁴⁴

Mundy's album illustrates several issues relating to entertainment. The ordering of characters, for instance, demonstrates his knowledge of and indebtedness to the conventions of the genre. He was free to position each figure as he sought fit, but he followed the established pattern by beginning with the sultan and his court and concluding with images representing various ethnic minorities within Istanbul. Indeed, the final miniatures depicting Armenian and Persian figures were, in his own words, unfamiliar characters that he did not personally encounter in Istanbul.⁴⁵ Mundy's knowledge of the genre thus informed his own making practices and he partook in a picturing of Ottoman society pre-determined by an Ottoman artist.⁴⁶ The established order and sense of procession, discussed earlier, evidently appealed to Mundy and it informed his understanding of Ottoman society as is reflected through his careful system of labels that show a particular fascination with Ottoman hierarchy. But he also curated these stock-characters in a personal style. The accompanying travel narrative projects his personal voice onto the page. He frames each character with cut-paper flower decorations and visually punctuates his prose by the large cut-paper motifs that mark the end of thematic sections within the album. The artistry is the work of others, but Mundy's manipulation of these

berg, "Writing the travelling self", p. 612; and Kynan-Wilson, "Painted by the Turcks themselves", p. 41.

43 The travelogue in the costume book is unpublished; it corresponds with but differs from his published account of the Ottoman world.

44 Emine Fetvacı has done much to elucidate the diverse aesthetics of Ottoman *murakka*. For instance, see Fetvacı, Emine, "Enriched narratives and empowered images in seventeenth-century Ottoman manuscripts", *Ars Orientalis*, 40 (2011), 243-66; and Fetvacı, Emine, "The Album of Ahmed I", *Ars Orientalis*, 42 (2012), 127-38.

45 Alongside an image labelled 'A Persian woman' (no. 51), Mundy notes: "Of these [figures] I can nothing at all [say] having never seen any...". Similar remarks are found alongside images of a Persian man (no. 50), an Armenian man (no. 57), and an Armenian woman (no. 58).

46 Kynan-Wilson, "Painted by the Turcks themselves", p. 41.

various elements reflects how he curated and choreographed the Ottoman world.⁴⁷

The chronology of Mundy compiling this album illuminates another facet of entertainment, namely how memorialisation could be a performance. The material evidence suggests that Mundy purchased the miniatures in 1618, but he only collated and framed the images towards the end of his life decades later. Several labels in his costume book reference his travels once he had left Istanbul in 1620; in particular he cites his experiences in India (1628-34, 1635-8, and 1655-6), Russia, and the Baltic (1640-47). Therefore several, if not all, of the textual components in his costume book must post-date 1640 at the very earliest.

Following a life of constant travel, Mundy settled in England after 1647 and spent the following seven years working on the textual account of his travels known as the *Itinerarium Mundi*. Mundy's writing is permeated with an alienation and melancholia reflective of his newly static existence.⁴⁸ It is probable that in these same years he also worked on his Ottoman costume book by ordering, framing, and cataloguing the images he bought some three decades previously. The act of *making* thus becomes one of remembrance and a mode of vicarious travel; it may have provided a nostalgic and possibly therapeutic form of entertainment that brought him pleasure. Equally, the subsequent act of reading and using this manuscript, either alone or with others, would provide other ever-shifting forms of performance and entertainment as his youthful travels were recalled.⁴⁹

Conclusion: The Performance of Reading

Let us hope that for the few years that it [the album] was in private ownership this charming little book served pleurably the purpose for which it was made – ‘Would you like to see my pictures of Istanbul?’!⁵⁰

47 On Mundy as curator, see also Collaço, Gwendolyn, “Dressing a city’s demeanour: Ottoman costume albums and the portrayal of urban identity in the early seventeenth century”, *Textile History*, 48/2 (2017), pp. 248-67.

48 For instance his account of walking through St James’ Park in London. See Holmberg, “Writing the travelling self”, p. 623.

49 In the preface to his *Itinerarium Mundi*, Mundy records his motivations in writing about his travels; they surely mirror his intentions in the creation and crafting of his Ottoman costume album, at least in part: “What I Did Was some Whatt aswell to keepe my owne remembrance on occasion off Discourse concerning particularities off thes voyages, As alsoe to pleasure such Freinds (who mightt come to the reading thereof) Thatt are Desirous to understand somwhatt off Forraigne Countries”. Temple, *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, p. 3.

50 Skilliter, *Life in Istanbul*, p. 6.

These words from Susan Skilliter, describing the Bodleian album, are the only previous discussion of Ottoman costume books as forms of entertainment. This paper has sought to draw attention to this neglected issue by demonstrating just how integral entertainment was to the production and use of these albums. This is not to deny them other potential functions – such as instruction or memory – but instead to broaden our understanding of how these books could be used in multiple and intersecting ways. There is simply no single static mode of reading, using, and playing with these albums.

This chapter is by no means a full account of every element of play or performance within these manuscripts. It has purposefully presented an expansive overview of the genre within a hundred-year period that illustrates the range of entertaining devices employed by European and Ottoman artists. It has been necessary to select examples from several manuscripts because no single album contains every device discussed here. Other books include caricatures of Europeans and Ottomans, playful and provocative imagery ranging from the fantastical to the gruesome to the erotic, and the addition of further devices such as doodles (for example, the Dryden Album), musical notation (St Petersburg, The Hermitage, Inv. No. 152891, fol. 136), and, in later centuries, pasted pieces of textiles that all hold the potential for various modes of play and performance.⁵¹

The wide-ranging survey adopted here has allowed me to trace some of the patterns in playfulness within the genre. European examples from the 1580s (and particularly from German-speaking contexts) were especially interested in the possibilities of interactive paper-flaps and folding pages, whereas Ottoman books contain no such devices. Equally, Ottoman examples have a distinctive sense of pictorial playfulness largely absent from European-made albums. Indeed, even when two books were made in the same years following near-identical iconographic templates, it is possible to identify unique and personal narrations that were crafted by the owner-maker. The variety of play and performance is striking.

The reception of these books and the process of reading in the early modern era across a diverse geographic area is also a vast and fraught topic. No two readers read in the same way and so it remains difficult to know precisely how individuals responded to certain images or particular scenes. We can only imagine the ways in which an individual, like Mundy, may have used an album

⁵¹ Early examples include few caricatured images of the Turk, but one notable example is the work of Jacopo Ligozzi in the late sixteenth century. See Kynan-Wilson, William, “The Ottoman imagery of Jacopo Ligozzi”, in *The Medici and the Levant: Interlacing Cultures from Florence to the Eastern Mediterranean (1532-1743)*, ed. Maurizio Arfoli and Marta Carosco (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 101-11.

and how the performance of using this book as a record and a prop of travel narration could have manifested itself in many different combinations. With this in mind, one aim of this chapter has been to consider the different actors at play, including the artists and album-makers, the patrons and album-owners, and the wider unknown readers. Significantly, this material shows a complex and multifaceted visual tradition that Ottoman artists actively played *in* and played *with* as much as their European counterparts.⁵²

The material record of the manuscripts offers a partial glimpse into how play and performance may have manifested themselves in these books. It is hoped that further studies of the genre will examine these elements as much as the vivid figurative imagery of these books and come to more fully recover and explore the *agency* of these objects. Happily this task is aided (albeit imperfectly) through the increasing number of digitised manuscripts that are available.

This chapter has sought to give a flavour of the rich reading experiences invoked by these books, by which I mean the process of moving through the album: turning the folios; rotating the pages; reading the labels; pronouncing phonetic spellings of new Turkish words; lifting the flaps within images to reveal interiors; marvelling at the marbled papers that divide the manuscript; and manipulating the gold-leaf rendering of a sword towards the light so that it shimmers and moves before the eye. Using these albums was – and still is – an inherently playful and performative process designed to entertain.

52 For early modern examples of ‘the Turk’ as a static and malleable entity which western Europeans played with see Parlak, Ömer Fatih, “Antagonist images of the Turk in early modern games”, *Middle East – Topics & Arguments*, 8 (2017), 87-95.

Fun and Games in Ottoman Aleppo: the Life and Times of a Local Schoolteacher (1835-1865)

James Grehan

Na'um Bakhkhash (d. 1875) was a schoolteacher from nineteenth-century Aleppo. You will look in vain for his name among the histories of this period. He was not famous in his own time, and led a fairly quiet and respectable existence. The only reason we know anything about him at all is that he left behind – not deliberately, mind you, but quite accidentally preserved for posterity by one of the second-hand book markets of Aleppo – a set of notebooks that recorded, in fairly exact detail, what he was doing from day to day and week to week. Of the five original volumes, three have survived, covering a three-decade period (1835-65) from the mid-nineteenth century.¹ As an unwitting diary, it is a rare treasure from a society where, much like the rest of the Ottoman empire, few people could read and write, and hardly any of those fortunate enough to be literate bothered to keep such personal records.

Prying into these notebooks – where Bakhkhash would certainly never have allowed our eyes – we have an unauthorized peak into the social routines of a single individual. We have the means to enter urban life as few other sources from the Ottoman period (or earlier, for that matter) permit.² He introduces us to an active social scene which, like our good schoolteacher himself, has faded almost entirely into obscurity. Few individuals from this sprawling cast of characters ever acquire much flesh. They appear as little more than names flitting in and out of his weekly recollections. Far more vivid are the social

1 Bakhkhash, Na'um, *Akhbar Halab* [henceforth AH], 3 vols., ed. Yusuf Qushaqji (Aleppo: Matba'at al-Ihsan, 1985-7). First to edit and publish sections of the manuscript was Ferdinand Tawtil, a Syrian Jesuit and scholar; AH, I, pp. 8-9.

2 Among the few biographical studies of 'ordinary' townspeople in the Ottoman Middle East are Dumont, Paul, "Said Bey – The everyday life of an Istanbul townsman at the beginning of the twentieth century", in *The Modern Middle East: a Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip Shukry Khoury and Mary Christina Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 271-88; Fortna, Benjamin C., *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Kafadar, Cemal, "Self and others: the diary of a dervish in seventeenth-century Istanbul and first-person narratives in Ottoman literature", *Studia Islamica*, 69 (1989), 121-50; Sajdi, Dana, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

routines in which he and his family and friends were entwined. We can get quite a good view of what they were doing in their spare time.

This is quite a windfall. Most of what we know about leisure habits in the Ottoman Middle East has to do with specific occasions and places. Historians are used to writing about the revelry of public holidays or the more sedate diversions of the local coffee house.³ Missing is the everyday sense of leisure which would show us how people moved about and spent their time over the full course of a day. Our good schoolteacher provides this information in spades. Indeed, he had quite a lot of time on his hands and was very much preoccupied with his social life. As it happens, historical circumstances made him an excellent guide. Among those who could indulge leisure to the fullest were affluent Christians, the main beneficiaries from the new world economy, with whom our schoolteacher mixed regularly.

As we glance over his shoulder, we can begin to place his experiences within a more properly global perspective on the nineteenth century. Most historical studies to date have dwelled on the experience of the industrializing societies of Western Europe and North America, where urban society found new

3 On the celebration of public holidays, see for example Atıl, Esin, *Levni and the Surname: the Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival* (Istanbul: Koçbank, 1999); Demirel, Yücel, "Performative conceptions of social change: the case of Nevruz celebrations in pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Anatolia", in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014), pp. 465-80; Faroqhi, Suraiya, "Research on Ottoman festivities and performances", in *Celebration, Entertainment, and Theater in the Ottoman World*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (London: Seagull Books, 2014), pp. 24-68; Georgeon, François, *Le mois le plus long: Ramadan à Istanbul* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2017); Mestyan, Adam, "Upgrade?: power and sound during Ramadan and 'Id al-Fitr in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Arab provinces", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 37 (2017), 262-79; Nutku, Özdemir, "Clowns at Ottoman festivities", in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014), pp. 195-202; Terzioğlu, Derin, "The imperial circumcision festival of 1582: an interpretation", *Muqarnas*, 12 (1995), 84-100. On leisure in coffee houses, see for example Açıkgöz, Namık, *Kahvename: Klasik Türk Edebiyatında Kahve* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1999); Desmet-Grégoire, Hélène and François Georgeon (eds.), *Cafés d'Orient revisités* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 1997); Evren, Burçak, *Eski İstanbul'da Kahvehaneler* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1996); Hattox, Ralph, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: the Origins of a Social Beverage* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Kırılı, Cengiz, "Coffeehouses: public opinion in the nineteenth-century Ottoman empire", in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 75-97; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Ali's Description of Cairo of 1599*, trans. Andreas Tietze (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975); Sajdi, Dana (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Tuschscherrer, Michel (ed.), *Le Commerce du café avant l'ère des plantations coloniales: espaces, réseaux, sociétés (XV^e-XIX^e siècles)* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2001).

possibilities for leisure. Bourgeois circles entertained themselves with parks, libraries, museums, clubs, department stores, opera houses, and theaters. The working class found new solace in cabarets, music halls, and sporting associations that promoted organized recreation.⁴ In Aleppo, such novelties were hardly imaginable to Bakhkhash's generation. In spite of the upheaval of the mid-nineteenth century – generated by European imperialism, economic disruption, and sectarian violence – he and his contemporaries partook of a lifestyle which would have been instantly recognizable to their parents and grandparents. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, Aleppo remained loyal to established values and habits, and seemed in no hurry to search for alternatives.

Quick Portrait of a Schoolteacher

Lest the reader's expectations rise too high, we should first clarify what we can expect to find. The notebooks are not, to put it bluntly, a literary tour de force. The Arabic is clipped and colloquial, riddled with misspellings, and full of words and constructions from the local dialect. Perhaps we should not be too hasty in passing judgment. After all, he never intended to show them to anyone – least of all, overly inquisitive historians. Scribbling his account for the week, it must have been easier and more natural to use the casual language of the streets.

He seems to have reserved time for his notebooks each week (except when he was too ill to write), and usually had something to say about his routine for each day. The organization is consistent. He never passed into unnecessary detail, and contented himself with weekly summaries of events and news. The reading is not dramatic. Only here and there do we find references to big political events, the equivalent of 'headline news' that he and his fellow townspeople would follow as closely as possible.

4 See for example Abrams, Lynn, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany* (New York: Harper Collins Academic, 1991); Berlanstein, Lenard, *The Working People of Paris, 1871-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Bailey, Peter, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Methuen, 1987); Gay, Peter, *Pleasure Wars* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Haine, Scott, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Lees, Andrew, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002); Meller, Helen, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (Boston: Routledge and Paul, 1976); Rearick, Charles, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

His early entries are set against the backdrop of the occupation of Syria (1832-40) by Mehmed Ali, the rebellious governor of Egypt (r. 1805-49). He occasionally reports on troop movements and notes the arrival and departure of İbrahim Paşa (Mehmed Ali's son and deputy) and other Egyptian commanders. Among other political gossip were the celebrations that the Egyptian authorities staged from time to time, either for the public at large or for European consuls whose favor they were courting. Almost no political commentary passed into his journal. He watched the Ottoman-Egyptian struggle with marked impassivity. When the Egyptians were finally forced to withdraw (1840), he offered up no more than a few lines about the return of the Ottomans, as if nothing of great import had really changed.

Beneath this apparent nonchalance was an awareness of the greater geo-strategic contest in which the Ottoman political system now had to operate. He had some knowledge of foreign affairs, gained perhaps from social proximity to Christian merchants who were acting as agents of European commercial firms. He was able to follow, in fairly garbled fashion, the distant political upheavals in Europe during the revolutions of 1848 and the Crimean War (1854-56), the latter of which, in particular, gave rise to wild rumor-mongering. The biggest disturbance to shake his world was unquestionably the anti-Christian riot of October 1850, which, by official accounts, took the lives of 20 Christians.⁵ Reminders of this violence wafted into his journals with reports about the civil war on Mt. Lebanon (1858-60),⁶ which evolved into a sectarian conflict between Maronite Christian and Druze militias, and the subsequent anti-Christian riots in Damascus (1860),⁷ which produced far more bloodshed than what Aleppo had witnessed a decade earlier.

Despite the evident anxiety that these incidents provoked, Bakhkhash does not write like someone who expects his familiar world to end at any moment. In the larger scheme of things, he was an Ottoman subject. The Sublime State,

5 The British consul reported 18 deaths. The Maronite archbishop put the final tally at around 70. See Masters, Bruce, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 169-70; Masters, Bruce, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: the Roots of Sectarianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 158. See also Krimski, Feras, "The 1850 Uprising of Aleppo: reconsidering the explanatory power of sectarian argumentations", in *Urban Violence in the Middle East*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Nelida Fuccaro, Claudia Ghrawi and Nora Lafi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 142-58; Masters, Bruce, "The 1850 events in Aleppo: an aftershock of Syria's incorporation into the capitalist world system", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22 (1990), 3-20.

6 On news of the Druzes's victory over the Maronite insurgency, AH, III, p. 200.

7 He first heard the news from a "Muslim stranger" who had called on him one morning, AH, III, p. 202. On further reports about the destruction and subsequent trials of leading rioters, AH, III, pp. 203, 208-9.

as the empire referred to itself, was the indisputable framework in which he sought to order his life. Like other Christians, he partook of the Ottoman victory celebrations after the Crimean War. With evident satisfaction, he recorded the birthday of the sultan, and proudly recorded the honorary medallions awarded to the patriarch of his church and other Christians.⁸

What the reader sees throughout his journal, week after week, is a man who is very much settled in his routines. Most pages are full of mundane observations: accounts of births and deaths in the neighborhood, ailments suffered by family and friends, rumors and news from around town. He has his own litany of colds, toothaches, stiff necks, and intestinal complaints. He jots down friends and places that he has visited – in most entries, nothing more than a bare notation, devoid of narrative and frequently reduced to a personal shorthand or code. One will search in vain for extensive ruminations on existence, for confessional gushing about his inner feelings and dreams, or for anything like character portraits of family and friends. We get a basic sketch of the patterns of his life, a calendar of activities and accomplishments. The interior man lurks, for the most part, behind an impenetrable facade.

Even with unimpeded access to his journals, we actually know very little about Bakhkhash. A few facts are indisputable. He was a Christian, a member of the Catholic Jacobite (Syriac) community in Aleppo. (Most Jacobites from Aleppo had joined his Uniate church, affiliated with Rome, by the early eighteenth century).⁹ He had five sisters, no brothers. One of his sisters died in 1837 after having married twice and watched both her husbands precede her to the grave.¹⁰ Three sisters were married, and the fourth one lived as a spinster. Our schoolteacher himself made the rather unusual choice of never taking a wife. He never hints at why he has defied social convention. Unburdened with a wife and children, he lived under the same roof, in a house in the largely Christian quarter of al-Judayda, with his parents and unmarried sister.

As a young man, he had opened his own school in the very same neighborhood in 1827.¹¹ He taught basic reading and writing to young students – in most years, anywhere from 50 to 70 at a time – who were drawn almost entirely from local Christian communities. His methods were like any other teacher's in town: instruction through dictation and memorization. For the

8 For a reference to the birthday of Abdülaziz (r. 1861-76), AH, III, p. 396. On medallions, see AH, II, pp. 52, 133. For the reading of a benediction to the sultan in local churches, AH, II, p. 345.

9 On the historical background to this conversion, see Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, pp. 82-3.

10 AH, I, p. 65.

11 AH, I, p. 65.

indifferent and obstreperous, he would also act as disciplinarian, administering the bastinado and other punishments.¹² Along with these young charges our schoolteacher would occasionally take on adult students in private lessons. Among his paying clients were several women from affluent Jacobite families; and as a tribute to his learning, an Ottoman scribe once studied Arabic under his guidance.¹³ He was willing to put his skills at the service of others, writing letters for the illiterate.¹⁴ So fine was his hand that wealthy families, not to mention church officials, would hire him for calligraphic work in Arabic and Karshuni (i.e., Arabic in Syriac script).¹⁵ Every New Year, he received his customary tribute of sweets, jams, oranges, arrack, and other gifts from students' families. He was the Jacobite community's teacher, presiding over its school, and basking in a cultural prestige that few other Christians could match.

He tried to live up to this lofty image. He attended mass at least once every week and made confession – always indicating the latter by spelling it backwards, which served throughout the journals as his secret token of shame. He was unquestionably pious, and found solace in prayer. He once credited his supplications to St. Philemina with restoring his voice, which he had temporarily lost during an illness (January 1837).¹⁶ Church officials publicly recognized his piety. One of his proudest accomplishments was elevation (June 1854) to assistant deacon, an honorary lay position.¹⁷ He evinces no doubt about his own qualifications. One entry (1847) applauds the public instruction that his fellow parishioners received – rather ungratefully, he sniffs – on the proper technique for confession.¹⁸ He had already mastered what others would need to learn.

We can guess that the Bakhkhash family lived somewhat more comfortably than most Aleppans. They had acquired something like 'middle-class' status, confirmed by their payments for the religion tax levied on all non-Muslims: the authorities, both Egyptian and Ottoman, assessed him and his father at the middle rate.¹⁹ In other words, they could afford to live quite respectably, but like all middle-class families, could never forget the limits of their means. Our schoolteacher's journals abound with vigilant bookkeeping. He had enough

12 AH, I, pp. 130, 219, 234, 243, 309; II, pp. 20, 22, 25, 55, 117, 120, 135, 139, 174, 195, 414, 417.

13 For women taking private lessons with him, see for example AH, II, pp. 77, 246-7. On the scribe, see AH, II, p. 185.

14 See for example AH, II, pp. 345-6, 374.

15 See for example AH, I, pp. 117, 139, 202; II, pp. 138, 156, 159, 164, 260, 272, 275, 292, 303.

16 AH, I, p. 56. In the same entry, he recounts miracles that her icon once performed. For an occasion on which he credited prayers with easing a toothache, AH, II, p. 376.

17 AH, II, p. 378. He renders the term "ipodiakon" straight into Arabic.

18 AH, II, p. 45.

19 AH, I, pp. 146, 251; II, pp. 188, 276.

spare capital to act as a small-time moneylender, and yet had his own debts to manage carefully. His family minded its pennies too: hence the sorrow of his sister, who lost (1854) a purse containing 22 piasters – not a very large sum for the time – and “wanted to cry” about it.²⁰ In fleeting references to mislaid money, he gives himself up to quiet bouts of self-reproach of the sort that preoccupied all middling townspeople, who had acquired a certain self-sufficiency, but never stood too far above the threadbare budgets of the far more numerous working population.²¹ As a testimony to the uncertainties which haunted his social world, we find a sporadic litany of bankruptcies – local merchants who had lost everything – that drifted into our schoolteacher’s news about town.²²

Bakhkhash and his family had nonetheless accumulated enough resources to indulge in a few luxuries. He had the means to call a carpenter and install a sofa (*diwan*)²³ inside his house; and he later put a wooden railing (*drabzun*)²⁴ on the courtyard staircase, and had a ‘crystal’ pane fitted in his door,²⁵ expenditures that few families could contemplate. No doubt fellow townspeople, observing him in the street, could surmise his relatively fortunate lifestyle at a single glance. Perhaps they would notice his diamond ring, a source of heart-break when he lost it after having briefly taken it off at a party organized for his students.²⁶ He must have made a comparable statement with the foreign fashions that he occasionally adopted. The umbrella that he began to take on fishing expeditions and strolls through local gardens was not something that an ordinary Aleppan would have owned.²⁷ He tried coffee with milk, in the European style, and had the chance to drink chocolate, a luxury still largely

20 AH, II, p. 379.

21 For other references to lost money, AH, II, pp. 141, 164, 379.

22 See for example AH, I, pp. 42, 241, 267, 302, 312; II, pp. 25, 320, 321, 427.

23 AH, I, p. 236 (January 1843). One catches a further attempt at comfort with the installation of mosquito netting (*namusiyya*) around his bed, AH, I, p. 299.

24 AH, I, p. 160 (February 1841). Perhaps he made this improvement with a view to his aging parents. His journal is full of reports of neighbors falling from staircases, windows, and roofs, sometimes with fatal consequences, see for example AH, I, pp. 160, 218, 297; II, p. 325.

25 AH, III, p. 216. Another noteworthy expense, not at all inconsiderable, would have been the installation of two new doors on his school, AH, III, p. 386.

26 AH, II, p. 191. On his travails with the mounting for the diamond, which occasionally came loose and fell off, see AH, I, pp. 307, 319. Rings appeared on the hands of many friends in his social set. For one friend who also lost a ring, see AH, II, p. 58.

27 AH, I, p. 124; II, p. 320. In later years, he began to use the Arabic word, *shamsiyya*, AH, III, pp. 232, 240. On fashions from the eighteenth century, which made no use of the umbrella, see Russell, Alexander, *The Natural History of Aleppo*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1794), vol. I, p. 100.

unknown in the eastern Mediterranean.²⁸ Already privileged in owning his own water-pipe (which he lost on more than one occasion in the gardens), he eagerly placed himself on the cutting edge with the cigarettes that he was already smoking (1864), several years after European traders had first introduced them to Syria.²⁹

The new fashions were not merely foreign. From the 1830s onwards, the Ottoman state was beginning to promote its own self-consciously modern sartorial statements. Bureaucrats and army officers would have to wear European-style jackets and pants.³⁰ Most distinctively Ottoman was the fez (or *tarbush*), the Ottoman headgear which signified membership in the modernizing state apparatus. By the late 1840s (and perhaps earlier), well-to-do Christians were contemplating the same switch, which simultaneously signaled loyalty to the Ottoman order and cultural identification with modernization. For many Christians, as well as Muslims, the donning of the fez was a memorable moment, leading to a partial social reinvention of themselves as modern Ottomans. Our schoolteacher was one of them, and kept watch as many of his friends cast off their turbans as well.³¹

Bakhkhash could follow all these fads because he moved among a comfortable set, and could even spend brief moments approaching the summit of Aleppan society. By dint of his education and profession, he had many friends among the affluent Catholic merchants, occasionally mingled with patriarchs, and could find himself one afternoon (1843) in a riding party with an Ottoman official.³² Most exclusive perhaps was contact with Europeans like Mrs. Barker, wife of the British consul, to whom he was once introduced (1848) at a picnic, or the Austrian consul, for whom he once wrote out a petition in Turkish.³³

28 Aleppans did not traditionally take milk with coffee, Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 119. On Bakhkhash drinking coffee with milk, AH, II, pp. 159, 221, 356. On drinking chocolate, AH, II, p. 88.

29 On his water-pipes, see AH, III, pp. 94, 296. For a reference to losing cigarettes, AH, III, p. 390. On the first appearance of cigarettes in Aleppo (1856), see al-Tabbakh, Muhammad Raghīb, *l'lam al-nubala' fi Halab al-shahba'*, 3rd ed. (Aleppo: Dar al-Qalam al-'Arabi, 1988), vol. III, p. 355.

30 On Ottoman sartorial reforms in the nineteenth century, see Esenbel, Selçuk, "The anguish of civilized behavior: the use of western cultural forms in the everyday lives of the Meiji Japanese and the Ottoman Turks during the nineteenth century", *Japan Review*, 5 (1994), 145-85; Quataert, Donald, "Clothing laws, state, and society in the Ottoman empire, 1720-1820", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29 (1997), 403-25.

31 AH, II, pp. 66, 133, 191. For a reference to his own turban, AH, I, p. 263.

32 AH, I, p. 238.

33 On the picnic with Mrs. Barker, see AH, II, p. 116. On paying another visit in a garden, AH, I, p. 270. The social connection, or at any rate the memory of it, must have endured, for he received, many years later (in 1864) a gift of coffee and sugar from her, AH, III, p. 375. He

Were he and other local Catholics slowly becoming Europeanized? We should not exaggerate this exposure, which was fleeting and ensured that nearly all his news about Europeans would have to be gathered at second hand. Like other Aleppans, Christian or otherwise, he retained local customs and tastes, even when Europeans had ideas about implanting some novelty. Confronting this cultural barrier was the carnival parade (1858) that the French consulate staged with ‘men and women’ in full costume. About 25 revelers, including several of the local Christian youth, descended upon his neighborhood one evening before Lent.³⁴ Bakhkhash’s sisters refused to stay. They could not bear the mock swordplay, whose strangeness had unnerved them. The following year passed without any attempt to repeat the spectacle.

Seasonal Time and Leisure

Within his thoroughly respectable milieu, our schoolteacher was quite a social butterfly. From week to week, often day by day, his notebooks confide all the highlights: meetings, excursions, parties, entertainments. Every occasion counted and earned a dutiful mention. From amid this active, though never hurried, social schedule we can make out a sort of perennial calendar, rooted in the observance of religious holidays and the turning of the seasons.

Religious time conferred a cyclical structure on many of our schoolteacher’s activities, and served as his main temporal framework. As a Catholic Jacobite, he marked the years and months throughout his notebooks according to the Gregorian calendar. He also knew the Orthodox calendar – partly because most of his students were Orthodox – and never failed to note their celebrations and fasts, sometimes joining with them instead of following his own Latin rite.³⁵ Nor did Bakhkhash enclose himself within an entirely ‘Christian’ sense of time. He was familiar with the Jewish calendar,³⁶ and with even great-

seems to have also known the Austrian consul, for whom he once wrote out a document, AH, I, p. 195. These services did not, however, propel him into the innermost diplomatic circles. For news of a reception, which he did not attend, thrown at the citadel for the Austrian consul, Raphael Picciotto, AH, I, pp. 39, 41. See too the concert performed for Europeans in one of the city’s gardens, see AH, II, p. 252; and for a “ball” organized for the French consul (April 1861) by leading Christian families, AH, III, p. 236; also AH, III, pp. 37-8, 42, 91. Contact with foreigners was intermittent, and more easily staged with those of lower rank. For a dinner at a friend’s house, where a “French captain” joined them, AH, II, p. 277.

34 AH, III, p. 110.

35 See for example AH, I, p. 271.

36 See for example his references to Sukkoth (*al-Mazalla*), the Feast of the Tabernacles, AH,

er regularity, year after year, would indicate the Muslim New Year, which followed a lunar calendar. When he hailed the beginning of the year 1260 —corresponding to 21 January 1844 — he offered all the salutations that he would use for any Gregorian New Year.³⁷ Many entries appear with dual dating, Christian and Muslim, to no particular fanfare. Moving back and forth between the two systems seems to have been quite effortless. After all, it would have been impossible to overlook Muslim festivals, which, amid the mostly Muslim population of Aleppo (about 80 percent of the total), became communal celebrations. His notebooks betray not the slightest animus. “Saturday was the holiday of the Muslims, God is great” (*al-sibt 'id al-muslimin, Allahu akbar*), was the perfunctory formula for the Feast of the Sacrifice in 1846.³⁸ Every year he would dutifully record the beginning of Ramadan and the entry of Muslim pilgrims into town.³⁹

Over the arc of the year (whether Muslim or Christian), religious holidays intensified social exchanges. Mattering most to Christians were the two high holiday seasons corresponding to Christmas and Easter. Our schoolteacher routinely turned them into a double holiday: once for the (earlier) Catholic observances, and again for the Orthodox dates (mainly because, as he freely admits, his Orthodox students tended to stay at home).⁴⁰ Other holidays — most notably the major saint days kept by the church — prompted a less rigorous devotion. He might, at most, let his students out early, as he was wont to do on the spring holiday of Nayruz (Nevruz),⁴¹ or the Feast of the Virgin every August.⁴² A flurry of social visits would immediately ensue. Bakhkhash had such a busy Easter in April 1846 that, from early morning onwards, he returned home only once, briefly changing clothes in the evening before heading on to the next social engagement.⁴³ Muslim holidays had their own animating effect. With the festive air and illumination of the markets, Christians might hold their own evening parties to coincide with the general celebration and would customarily exchange visits with Muslim friends.⁴⁴ Bakhkhash liked to

II, p. 155; III, pp. 256, 349. On the visits which were customarily paid to Jews on this holiday, see Russell, *Natural History*, II, p. 68.

37 AH, I, p. 249. See also AH, I, p. 160; II, pp. 128, 286, 300; III, pp. 194, 378.

38 AH, I, p. 282; II, pp. 32, 250. See also AH, I, p. 93; II, p. 298.

39 See for example AH, I, pp. 88, 210; II, pp. 26, 241, 286; III, p. 378. On the entry of pilgrims, see for example II, p. 85.

40 For Christmas closures, AH, III, p. 145.

41 AH, III, pp. 70, 188, 370.

42 See for example AH, II, pp. 245, 389, 398. For a closure on St. Elias' Day, AH, III, p. 384.

43 AH, I, p. 330.

44 See for example a sleepover on the opening of Ramadan in January 1837, AH, I, p. 56. On

order trays of baklava, whose supply crested in Ramadan.⁴⁵ Among the baklava trays exchanged during one Ramadan (1852) was one sent by a Muslim friend who had sheltered him during the anti-Christian riots of 1850.⁴⁶ Such holiday courtesies were indifferent to religious identity.

It is easy to dwell too long on the annual cycles of religious holidays. Leaving a deeper, more indelible imprint on leisure culture was the turning of the seasons. Aleppans longed for the good weather which would allow them to escape to the many gardens which lined the outskirts of town. The damp and chill (and occasional snow) of Mediterranean winters prevailed from November to February. Spring and fall were quick transitions, respectively in March and October, framing the long summer, divided by the June harvest. The warm weather opened up a social world of green spaces which were central to routines of relaxation and escape. Each garden was a distinct refuge which had its own name and well-defined boundaries, usually set off by low walls.⁴⁷ Within these verdant precincts, Aleppans might find refuges for intimacy and repose which were impossible in the dense warren of homes, streets, and shops in their neighborhoods.

Bakhkhash's notebooks testify to a heartfelt appreciation for the natural world. On particularly fine days, our good schoolteacher could hardly contain himself. In October 1837, he led his class to a garden for the entire day; they were joined in the evening by the children's families. As he declared to his notebook, "We had a great time" (*inbisatna katir*).⁴⁸ It was this promise of fun and relaxation, as much as the tranquility and greenery, which lured so many townspeople to the edge of town.

In reality, they had few other choices. Aleppo had no venues like theaters, clubs, or concert halls. Completely extraordinary was the evening (February 1861) that Bakhkhash attended a "comedy" (*kumidiyya*) about the Biblical legend of Joseph and his brothers – a complete novelty that he had to render with

social visits between Muslims and non-Muslims at the end of Ramadan, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 190.

45 See for example AH, II, pp. 193, 330, 377.

46 AH, II, p. 289. For the Feast of the Sacrifice in December 1845, he received a tray of baklava from the father of one of his students, who was a Muslim, see AH, I, p. 316.

47 Visitors were wise not to transgress these well-marked boundaries, see for example AH, II, pp. 38, 48.

48 AH, I, p. 67. See also AH, I, pp. 51, 58, 62, 67, 76, 79, 84; II, p. 84. In later years, the experience may have become wearying. A class trip to another garden in May 1848 put him in a different mood: "We had a great time – except me". He does not explain what went wrong, AH, II, p. 99. For appreciation of gardens in other towns, see for example Hamadeh, Shirine, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), esp. ch. 5.

this unfamiliar loan word. Along with the other spectators, about a hundred strong, he crowded into the Jacobite patriarchate, one of the few places that could hold them all.⁴⁹ But this was an oddity, a one-time spectacle that we do not see again in his social schedule. For organized entertainment, the main destination was undoubtedly the local coffee house. Though a distinctly male space, it had an undeniable multiplier effect on leisure culture. As our school-teacher testifies, it was more than a matter of sipping a few cups of coffee. Coffee houses hosted storytellers and musicians, held puppet theater shows, and fostered an air of unapologetic recreation and amusement. The biggest establishments, usually located in extramural gardens, had the space to put on out-sized shows.⁵⁰ He was very fond of these spectacles, which might also be staged in residential neighborhoods. One acrobat so charmed him that he attended his show for several weeks.⁵¹

Among the open spaces of the gardens one might very well hear music in the air. Nearly all these performances were private: either small ensembles playing for their own amusement, or galas organized by well-to-do families who could afford to hire musicians. In July 1842, notables organized the equivalent of a public concert to which they invited the British consul and approximately 150 guests; another 300 music lovers showed up as 'gatecrashers' and thronged the garden where it was being held.⁵² At small parties, too, social boundaries might gradually dissolve. During one spring outing in May 1838, Bakhkhash and a few of his friends found themselves watching a party of Kurds performing a *dabka*, a kind of folk dance found throughout Syria. One of his friends leapt up and joined the dancers.⁵³ Urban culture smiled upon these outgoing gestures as a token of warmth and conviviality.

Like other Ottoman towns, Aleppo had no parks or public squares. Townspeople therefore turned to the gardens as one of their only outlets for physical recreation. The most energetic revelers might play games of chase and hide-

49 AH, III, p. 228.

50 See for example the acrobatic performance that he missed at one such establishment in November 1849, AH, II, p. 160.

51 For one set of shows that stretched over eight weeks in Bakhkhash's neighborhood, see for example AH, I, pp. 37, 139, 142, 144, 145, 146. One might come across such spectacles in nearly any Ottoman town. See for example the acrobat from a notebook kept by an *imam* in early nineteenth-century Istanbul, Beydilli, Kemal, *Osmanlı Döneminde İmamlar ve Bir İmanın Günlüğü* (Istanbul: Tatav Yayınları, 2001), p. 116. Their maneuvers thrilled a mixed audience of men and women. For a specific reference to the presence of women, as well as men, see AH, II, pp. 128-9.

52 AH, I, p. 204. See also AH, II, pp. 147, 155. Whenever private shows were held in plain view, passersby might linger and watch, see for example AH, I, p. 103; II, p. 121.

53 AH, I, pp. 78-9.

and-see.⁵⁴ During one afternoon excursion in a local garden, Bakhkhash came upon a group of North Africans who were performing their own gymnastic feats, standing on each other's shoulders.⁵⁵ Most visitors favored sedentary activities. Popular among nearly all social classes were picnics, which might be supplemented with fruits, herbs, or flowers gathered nearby.⁵⁶ In November 1838, for instance, our schoolteacher accompanied his friends, the Wakil family, to a nearby garden where they passed the time in conversation, snacking on radishes.⁵⁷ Only the affluent might amuse themselves with long rides. Through his acquaintance with leading merchant families, our schoolteacher seems to have become quite at ease on horseback – even if personally owning a horse was out of the question. Left to his own funds, he would usually rent a mule, which he found increasingly indispensable with the onset of middle age.

Those most eager to project status might own a summer house (*qasr*), used as a bucolic retreat during the warmest months. Well-heeled families might stay for weeks at a time, away from the stifling closeness of the residential quarters. To help pass the time, they happily invited guests, who might themselves stay for days.⁵⁸ Proximity to high society opened some of these exclusive doors to our schoolteacher. In September 1845, he spent an entire week with the Kuba family at their garden retreat.⁵⁹ Invited to the *qasr* of the Salim family in July 1849, he took his mattress and kept it there for several days.⁶⁰ Why bother bringing it back? Everyone understood that the visit would be leisurely, with no need to return home too hastily.

The gardens beckoned both men and women. Among family and friends, the sexes mixed easily in the relaxed social setting. In August 1838, Bakhkhash accompanied the Wakil family, along with the widow of another friend, to a garden on the edge of town. Neither he nor anyone else in the party saw anything unseemly about their afternoon eating peaches.⁶¹ So comfortable were

54 On one outing, in August 1847, we learn how Bakhkhash and a small party of friends relaxed in the evening by watching a nearby group of Muslims play at *sikkat al-qird*, a game in which contestants would take turns with a rope and stick. Another game, very much like blind man's bluff, had one player, with eyes shut, call out and chase the others by following their voices. Another with similar rules was *'ammi 'amish*. See respectively AH, II, pp. 147, 361; III, p. 28.

55 AH, II, p. 314.

56 See for example AH, I, pp. 82, 85, 138, 188; II, pp. 292, 293, 330. On the sedentary nature of Aleppans (as observed in the eighteenth century), see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 50.

57 AH, I, p. 88.

58 See for example AH, I, pp. 201, 275.

59 AH, I, p. 307. For a two-day sleepover, see AH, I, p. 80.

60 AH, II, pp. 146, 148.

61 AH, I, p. 84. To take the summer of 1838 as a sample of his ramblings: he joined several

women in his social circle that they might join him for walks unaccompanied by a chaperone. Social contact was, of course, freest wherever men and women were already acquainted: that is, among neighbors from the same quarter or families who had close ties and saw each other regularly. Intangible factors like reputation and respectability mattered as well. In Bakhkhash's case, we have to account for his individual social standing: upright (soon to be an assistant deacon), educated (the community's beloved schoolteacher), and very much confirmed as a middle-aged bachelor (mitigating the suspicions which would normally hover over younger, unmarried men). This accumulated social trust probably explains why he was allowed to escort the daughter of a deacon (*shidyag*) to a nearby garden one Sunday in March 1839.⁶² On two consecutive days (September 1845), he was able to take the wife of a friend for a long walk because "it was good for her to get out". Here we can detect a note of familiarity, as if Bakhkhash were privy to family affairs and had perhaps known that she was bored and restless.⁶³ Nothing in his notebooks betrays the air of an improper tryst.

He certainly knew of the potential for scandal. He once found himself strolling (July 1838) in the company of women from three separate households. "Pardon me!" (*la mu'akhadha*), as he exclaimed, with evident awkwardness, to his notebook.⁶⁴ He was only slightly more comfortable, 14 years later (July 1854), during an afternoon outing which brought together the men and women of two different families. He breathed a sigh of relief that "nothing untoward happened" (*ma sar saqat*), even as he admitted that they had all enjoyed themselves immensely.⁶⁵ We might read these anxieties along an index of trust and familiarity. The public setting in a garden, where lapses would be harder to cover up, must have intensified the hand-wringing.

Respectable opinion had to contend equally with all-female sociability. Women might, as a matter of long-established custom, hold their own picnics and gatherings.⁶⁶ Hence Bakhkhash could record, without any surprise or re-

excursions which included the men and women of a family, see AH, I, pp. 80, 81, 84. See also AH, I, p. 308.

62 AH, I, p. 94. It passed no differently than his day in a garden (October 1838) with the wife of a friend, which raised no eyebrows, AH, I, p. 86.

63 AH, I, p. 305.

64 AH, I, pp. 81-2.

65 AH, II, p. 381.

66 So renowned was their fondness for green spaces that local authorities had long tried – always unsuccessfully – to regulate their visits or limit them to Mondays and Thursdays. On attempts at regulation in the eighteenth century, see Marcus, Abraham, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 231, 272; Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 254.

proach, his mother and sisters going out to a garden one holiday afternoon.⁶⁷ Like other women, they moved through their own social circuits, and relished the chance to get away and talk amongst themselves. Men were not necessarily welcome at these sessions. When Bakhkhash showed up one afternoon at the summer house of a merchant family, he found a group of women in conversation. As he tersely related, “they did not seat me”.⁶⁸ He took the hint and left. They had not turned him out for lack of trust or suspicion of unwholesome motives; as he quickly surmised, he had stumbled into something like a coffee-klatzsch, where the women wished to be left alone.

Casting a shadow over these social freedoms were, more than the strictures of moralists, perennial anxieties about safety and security. From time to time Bakhkhash reports on incidents of theft, prostitution, and violence around the outskirts of town. For all their verdant glory, gardens were still marginal zones in the social imagination. Urban lore spoke of local toughs and marauding bedouin who might prey on the unsuspecting and defenseless. When three Christian women disappeared from one garden in June 1847, the governor himself intervened and warned local Christians against allowing their women to sleep outside town. If any more were killed, he would make their husbands pay blood-money.⁶⁹ Embedded within this proclamation was a double acknowledgement. Women were not always under direct male supervision. Within the morally approved boundaries of their own social networks, they might stay away from home overnight (or much longer, if they were affluent and had a cottage), outside the security of their residential quarters. Counter-balancing this open secret was a statement of the official patriarchal ideal, which envisioned them under male custodianship. Navigating between these two poles, women joined the seasonal cycles which, to one degree or another, pulled all the people of Aleppo into the green spaces at the edge of town.

Everyday Time and Leisure

Within the turning of the seasons, Bakhkhash's life followed the steady short-term rhythms of the day and week. His routines did not obey anything like a precise schedule. Perhaps the most lasting impression made by his notebooks is the sheer extroversion of his life. When he was not teaching his students, he

67 AH, I, p. 63.

68 AH, II, p. 399.

69 AH, II, p. 57. Visitors would often know exactly when they were leaving a garden and entering someone's property. These boundaries were customarily marked by walls and other barriers, AH, III, pp. 38, 48.

was eager to fill up his time with the warmth of companionship. In the pages of his journal, one will not find any pining for hours of meditation and introspection. The prevailing assumption throughout urban society was that no one would willingly want to be alone. Solitude loomed as a hardship, not as a liberating moment for self-reflection or personal freedom.

The week had a fairly even distribution of social activities. Though Sunday was the official day of rest for Christians, he showed little interest in deferring his pastimes or storing up his leisure for a single day. Nearly every day might feature some social outing or another. Rare was the day, like the one in June 1848, when he confessed, "I had no company today and went nowhere".⁷⁰ His companions appear, for their part, to match his appetite for conversation and fellowship. Gregariousness was the unquestioned norm for everyone.

Our good schoolteacher kept what we might call a flexible schedule that he could adjust according to the needs of the season or even his own whims. His door always seemed open, with plenty of leeway for spontaneity. One day in April 1838, he received an acquaintance, the son of a well-to-do merchant, early in the morning.⁷¹ Their chat would go on to last till evening, even though it seems to have begun on the spur of the moment. If any business was pending, he certainly thought that it could wait. The day, one gathers, did not need to follow a plan. Any chance encounter might be welcomed and drawn out. Returning from a visit to a friend late one Monday afternoon in August 1847, Bakhkhash came across two other friends. They had little difficulty in persuading him to tag along and pass the evening together with a bottle of arrack.⁷² He had no pressing engagements, and saw no reason to think twice about this social detour.

The notion of time as a resource, to be counted and carefully apportioned, was utterly foreign to him. This may seem hard to explain because, unlike most Aleppans, he owned a watch and could have easily tracked time throughout the day.⁷³ If he used his watch out of habit, he does not give many indications. On at least one occasion he complained of losing it, and on another confessed to his irritation at having mislaid the watch's chain and key (for winding).⁷⁴ Yet he makes only scattered references to hours and minutes (always according to

70 AH, II, p. 99 ("Ma sar-li rafaq, ma ruht la-makan").

71 AH, II, p. 77.

72 AH, II, p. 61.

73 On the loss of his watch, AH, I, p. 272. He must have quickly replaced it. For a reference to calling a watch repairman, AH, II, p. 279.

74 AH, III, p. 385 (July 1864).

'Ottoman time', which began the day at sunset).⁷⁵ Did he really have a need for better timekeeping? In everyday speech, it was enough to divide the day into three loosely defined intervals: morning, afternoon, and evening. As late as the nineteenth century, townspeople needed nothing more accurate.⁷⁶

Evening was the high tide for socializing. Relatives and friends, or even entire families, might arrive for dinner parties or visit after eating at home. On one fairly typical occasion with his parents and aunt (1839), he explains, "we spent the evening" (*saharna*) with the Kuba family – a recurring phrase which meant that they had stayed up, often for several hours, and passed the time together.⁷⁷ The nocturnal exchange of visits between families and neighbors was a deeply ingrained custom, which helped to reinforce the warmth and social familiarity of the back streets. So active was the social traffic that it inspired its own anxieties about illicit trysts under cover of darkness, exploiting the absence of spousal or parental supervision.⁷⁸ Everyone knew that the streets were not quite empty after dark.

75 His usage must have corresponded to the 'Alla Turca' system that Ottoman reformers adopted in the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike traditional timekeeping, in which the length of the two sets of hours varied according to the season, the reformers started their watches at the beginning of each day (i.e., at sunset) and let them run for two sets of even hours. They would then reset their watches at the next sunset. See Wishnitzer, Avner, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), ch. 1. Bakhkhash's lack of interest in recording precise time reflects older attitudes in Ottoman culture. See Sariyannis, Marinos, "'Temporal modernization' in the Ottoman Pre-Tanzimat context", *Études Balkaniques*, 53 (2017), 243-7.

76 An initial scheme to place a public clock on the citadel (1860) came to nothing. The Ottoman government installed the first clock tower – part of a late nineteenth-century policy of building such monuments – only in 1898 at Bab al-Faraj. On the history of Ottoman clock towers, Kreiser, Klaus, "Les tours d'horloge ottomans: inventaire préliminaire et remarques générales", in *Les Ottomans et le temps*, ed. François Georgeon and Frédéric Hitzel (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 61-74; Mikov, Liubomir, "Cultural and historical profile of clock towers in the Bulgarian lands (17th-19th centuries)", *Études Balkaniques*, 46 (2010), 104-26; Uluengin, Mehmet Bengü, "Secularizing Anatolia tick by tick: clock towers in the Ottoman empire and Turkish republic", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010), 17-36.

77 AH, I, p. 100.

78 In Bakhkhash's neighborhood, the elders once had to proclaim (February 1856) that no one should venture into the streets after dark without a lantern or torch. They were not thinking, first and foremost, of physical safety; they were responding, rather, to reports that a stranger had been spotted entering the house of Na'um Asyum, a neighbor (whose name he scribbled backwards, again to denote scandal) who lived down the street and had been away that evening on a visit to friends. The night watch placed a rope across the door until the men of the house could return and investigate, AH, III, p. 30. On Ottoman anxieties about the night, see for example Kafadar, Cemal, "How dark is the history of the night, how black the story of coffee, how bitter the tale of love: the changing measure of

Only the affluent kept late social hours. We know that Bakhkhash was one of those who enjoyed late visits because he could be unusually precise about this point. One wedding in January 1841 lasted till “eight o’clock Ottoman time”, which would have put it ending past midnight. And much longer evenings were possible as well. One night at his aunt’s house in January 1854 did not end until “nine o’clock” – in other words, early in the morning.⁷⁹ Most striking about his exact recollection of the time is that his journals tended not to mark it for anything else. (Only reports about childbirths earned such reliable ‘time stamps’ – perhaps for astrological purposes). Far from instilling a work discipline rooted in a stricter sense of time measurement, Bakhkhash was using his watch to track leisure.⁸⁰ No expression of regret or guilt accompanied these entries. What it really seems to underscore is a dual message: the fond remembrance of good times, together with the implicit social statement about the late celebrations that only the better set would attend.

The ultimate extension of these visits was the sleepover. Any occasion might do for an invitation, which could be easily improvised. One evening in March 1853, Bakhkhash’s sister was paying a call on a friend. When heavy rain prevented her from leaving, her friend suggested that she spend the night, probably because it was unseemly, as well as dangerous, for women to venture onto the streets after dark.⁸¹ More common were sleepovers arranged in advance, whether for summertime fun or in the aftermath of some family celebration like a wedding. Bakhkhash relays a report, for example, about his aunt and sister sleeping over for an engagement party.⁸² Holidays might touch off their

leisure and pleasure in early modern Istanbul”, in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Öztürkmen and Vitz, pp. 243-69; İleri, Nurçin, “Allure of the light, fear of the dark: nighttime illumination, spectacle, and order in fin-de-siècle Istanbul”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 37 (2017), 280-98; Wishnitzer, Avner, “Eyes in the dark: nightlife and visual regimes in late Ottoman Istanbul”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 37 (2017), 245-61.

79 AH, II, p. 357. For other late endings, see for example AH, I, pp. 91, 157, 193, 219; II, p. 98. One eighteenth-century observer wrote that most townspeople returned home relatively early and went to bed “between nine and ten at night”, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 143-4, 177.

80 On the origins of modern time discipline, see Landes, David S., *Revolution in Time. Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Thompson, E.P., “Time, work discipline, and industrial capitalism”, *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), 56-97; Voth, Hans-Joachim, *Time and Work in England, 1750-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

81 AH, II, p. 317. On women leaving the streets after dark, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 144.

82 AH, I, p. 220. For other family sleepovers, see AH, III, pp. 130, 135, 139, 391. For a “musical sleepover” at a friend’s house (June 1864), AH, III, p. 381.

own round of extended visits. At the start of 1847, he had a friend stay overnight twice: once for New Year and a week later for Orthodox Christmas.⁸³ Our good schoolteacher seemed always to look forward to these occasions. One week alone in July 1838, he found time to spend the night with two different families.⁸⁴ Within the bosom of the family, moreover, such overnight visits were utterly routine. Indeed, all of urban society looked forward to them. Sleepovers among relatives ranked among the most cherished social exchanges, redolent with the warmth of family bonds.⁸⁵

Throughout Aleppan society, relatives saw each other frequently. As a matter of principle, families were eager to make time not only between parents and siblings, but among the wider network of cousins and in-laws. Bakhkhash was close to his father. The two often went to the gardens together for hunting and fishing, and he watched with sorrow as his father was reduced in his final months to hobbling on crutches.⁸⁶ After the death of his parents (his father in 1852, and his mother the next year), Bakhkhash faithfully kept up social ties with his three sisters and called on them nearly every Sunday. More than a social obligation, it was a family ritual that only extraordinary circumstances could interrupt. With the same fondness, too, he welcomed family gatherings with cousins, nephews, and nieces, either at home or in excursions to the gardens.

Beyond family, the next ring of sociability encompassed the religious community. His closest friends were overwhelmingly Catholic Jacobites like himself. This tendency, we should note, did not come about from anything like spiritual motives. What one sees, on closer inspection, is the social role of religion. Across Aleppan society, religious identity reinforced a network of acquaintances and social contacts, which were enacted in communal rites of passage: baptism (Christians), circumcision (Muslims and Jews), and burials in separate cemeteries (for all religious communities). Generating the biggest flurry of social activity was marriage. Bakhkhash's journal is full of news about betrothals and weddings, and invitations to these events clearly ranked among the high points of his social life. Particularly for the grand affairs hosted by leading Christian families, he might dismiss his students early or even shut the doors of his school for the day.⁸⁷ Some families would prolong the celebra-

83 AH, II, pp. 37, 83. For a party that his sisters attended for someone recently returned from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, see AH, III, p. 79.

84 AH, I, p. 82. For other sleepovers that year, see AH, I, pp. 83, 89, 90. In good summer weather, the custom was often to pass the night chatting and sleeping on the rooftop, where the party could escape the stifling heat of the interior, see for example AH, III, p. 382.

85 See for example AH, I, pp. 89, 283; III, pp. 130, 135, 139, 391.

86 On the making of the crutches, AH, II, p. 322.

87 AH, III, pp. 78, 120, 301, 306, 382.

tions. One week after the wedding itself, the groom would call back guests from his wife's family for a separate party (the so-called *sbu'*); affluent families might make these gatherings nearly as extravagant as the original festivities, complete with music, banquets, and overnight stays. A musical show (*nuba*) always made the grandest social statement. The liveliest events might carry on well into the wee hours of the morning.⁸⁸ Our schoolteacher could not hide his longing for these galas. When his family failed to inform him (February 1849) about a musical party at a neighbor's house, he confessed to feeling anger about the oversight.⁸⁹ Through these festivities, religion promoted a living sense of community, regularly renewing social bonds, and implicating individuals, from birth, in networks not of their own choosing.

Two further rings of sociability embraced friends from the same neighborhood and workplace. In the case of our schoolteacher, these largely coincided with the same social sphere as the religious community, helping to ensure yet again that, with a few exceptions, his closest friends were Catholic Jacobites. Looking more carefully, we can immediately see why this would be so. To address one persistent myth: his choice of friends was not the result of shared 'faith' or culture. He spent little time talking about religion in social settings; and like all Christians, his food, clothes, manners, and tastes were virtually indistinguishable from those of Muslim or Jewish townspeople. Social factors were most decisive in guiding his selection of friends. He lived, after all, in the Christian quarter of Aleppo, which, though never entirely Christian, reduced his chances of meeting Muslims or Jews close to home. The nature of his work, as a Christian schoolteacher, further narrowed the scope of his social encounters during much of the day. Nearly all his students came from Christian families.

Away from the core rings of sociability – religion, neighborhood, and workplace – one was much less likely to make close friends. But as Bakhkash's journals confirm, it might still happen. He was never shy about mingling with Muslims or Jews, who would have unavoidably crossed his path anyway. He showed a particular fondness for a Muslim café owner (*qahawati*) who worked in the garden of 'Ayn al-Tall. When passing nearby, he would always make of point of seeing him. As a token of their close friendship, he would sometimes

88 He uses a Turkish expression, "open-headed" (*açık baş*), for the most uninhibited parties. For one event which finished nearly at dawn, AH, II, p. 356. See also AH, II, pp. 138-9, 287. On wedding festivities in eighteenth-century Aleppo, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 287-9.

89 AH, II, p. 124. He stayed away from another party at a friend's house only because he was too sick to go; AH, I, p. 180. For one party at the home of the "cook of the Greek consulate", AH, II, p. 139.

take dinner to him during Ramadan.⁹⁰ Even after his friend's death, he kept in touch with his family.⁹¹ Another close Muslim friend, al-Hajj Taha, was a garden-keeper (*bustani*). Visits to him and his wife, Fatuma, were one of our schoolteacher's favorite excursions, in which he was sometimes joined by other Christian companions.⁹² Taha was, as we may guess from the entries, a fairly modest laborer. He was happy to take up odd jobs at Bakhkhash's school, repairing his grape trellis before every spring. When he grew older, he sent his sons to do the work. Bakhkhash always received them cheerfully.⁹³

How representative were these cross-communal friendships? Bakhkhash drops casual hints about their pervasiveness. At one social gathering in October 1854, he bumped into a long-time friend, a fellow Christian from Birecik, a small town north of Aleppo. His friend had brought along a Muslim friend, with whom he was staying overnight.⁹⁴ The next month Bakhkhash attended a lunch party with the Kuba family, who had invited two Muslim friends from Idlib, a town southwest of Aleppo.⁹⁵ This was not the companionship of the weary, who had resigned themselves to the distasteful necessity of befriending infidels. Their relations showed real trust and affection. There was no hint of reproach, either in what Bakhkhash wrote or in anything that townspeople said about them. Even as sectarian tensions crested during the 1850s, Muslims and Christians could carry on with everyday relations. In May 1860 – only weeks before the anti-Christian riots in Damascus – Muslim and Christian craftsmen in Aleppo together staged a demonstration against high taxes.⁹⁶ The violence that peaked in these years sprang mainly from vast political and economic realignments, not from any innate religious antagonism.

90 AH, II, pp. 144, 146, 290; III, pp. 166, 251. For an entry in which he sought out this friend and could not find him one evening, AH, II, p. 295.

91 On the friend's death, see AH, III, p. 333. On news from his friend's family, AH, III, p. 357.

92 AH, I, pp. 81, 88, 107, 290; II, pp. 88, 377, 380. The relationship was undoubtedly warm. Fatuma's death in 1841 received a separate notice among other news, AH, I, p. 171.

93 AH, I, p. 255; II, pp. 87, 366; III, p. 28. The only cross remark about Muslims in Bakhkhash's entire journal was a complaint in the summer of 1848 that they were prolonging an epidemic of the plague by continuing with the Ramadan fast, AH, II, p. 104.

94 AH, II, p. 394.

95 AH, II, p. 397. For a party to which one of his friends had invited Muslim guests, AH, III, p. 296. In September 1843, he counted Hasan Ağa, director of the local quarantine office, as one of the guests at a riding party in a garden. This official earned notice not so much for being Muslim as for his status as a local dignitary, which must have been a point of pride in our schoolteacher's journal, AH, II, p. 238. On his sister attending a party for Muslim women who had recently returned from the pilgrimage, see AH, III, pp. 91-2. Jews, too, might receive social invitations. See for example AH, I, p. 268; II, p. 326.

96 AH, III, p. 196. The worst of the sectarian feeling, as recorded by Bakhkash, spiked around 1860, see AH, III, pp. 127, 192, 202, 221.

The essential point to grasp is that members of different communities were long used to interacting with each other. Hence the easy spontaneity that attended chance social encounters. During a downpour one afternoon in October 1856, Bakhkhash took shelter in a coffee house and spent the better part of an afternoon with a party of Jewish friends who were playing checkers.⁹⁷ The next August, as he and a few friends were amusing themselves in a garden, two Muslims joined them. The group spent most of the day playing backgammon together.⁹⁸ These friendly gatherings sprang from a shared urban culture in which members of different religious communities already knew quite a lot about each other. Throughout Bakhkhash's journal, the circulation of news and gossip from across neighborhood and sectarian boundaries is obvious. When a soothsayer from the Jewish community announced in June 1837 that an earthquake was imminent, Bakhkash and his family slept outdoors in a garden, along with many other townspeople.⁹⁹ The city-wide hysteria paid no heed to religious distinctions.

Masculine Pursuits

A game of backgammon or checkers, played in front of friends, conjures up stereotypical images of Middle Eastern recreation. Was our schoolteacher a dedicated aficionado? What did he actually do with his spare time – of which he seemed to have so much? Across three decades, his notebooks reveal a rich leisure culture with no shortage of outlets for fun and amusement. Having tracked the social rhythms of his life, we can now try to identify his favorite diversions.

The first observation to be made is that Bakhkhash did not have a habit of recreational reading, even though he was well equipped to pursue it. Kept home by quarantine in July 1848, he passed the time by copying lines from a medieval manual on Arabic rhetoric.¹⁰⁰ But this seems more like an effort to practice a famous text that he often assigned to his students. Reading for fun

97 AH, III, p. 49. For another occasion on which Bakhkhash joined a party of Jews in a garden, see AH, II, p. 295.

98 AH, II, p. 338. For another example of Muslims spontaneously joining his company at a garden, see AH, II, p. 333. For local soldiers treating Bakhkash and friends to coffee, see AH, II, p. 272.

99 AH, I, p. 63.

100 It was the famous *Maqamat* of al-Hariri (d. 1122), AH, II, p. 103. For another occasion on which he copied out texts, see AH, I, p. 65. For an eighteenth-century observer of reading habits, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 178: "The Osmanlis, who in general derive little of their knowledge from books, rarely talk on subjects of a literary kind".

never occurred to him, even when he reports being alone with a book. And what could he have possibly read? There were no newspapers, journals, or narrative fiction.¹⁰¹ Nearly all books had some religious, legal, or professional purpose.

What our schoolteacher reveals in his notebooks is that he and his friends were in the habit of making their own entertainment. Here again, we find the seasons dictating many of their choices. Especially during the winter months, as families huddled indoors after sunset, they might turn to music and games. So enamored of music was Bakhkhash that he played as an amateur on the *kamanja*, a single-stringed violin.¹⁰² He sometimes sang, too, with friends, though in respectable social circles, this was a strictly male pastime.¹⁰³ One evening in January 1855, the women in the party, to his great dismay, openly trampled on this rule by joining in the chorus. True to form, he wrote the news backwards in his journal, as if to shield his eyes from the indelicacy.¹⁰⁴ As an alternative to musical entertainment, the liveliest parties might feature social games. On one cold evening with friends in January 1844, Bakhkhash and his friends staged a mock wedding for a neighbor who had joined the group.¹⁰⁵ At another gathering, our schoolteacher and his friends played a clowning theatrical game in which they tried to bring each other to laughter.¹⁰⁶

Most indoor entertainments were quite sedentary and sedate, usually over a board. If we examine our schoolteacher's preferences, we find that nothing surpassed his passion for checkers (*dama*), at which he happily passed many hours with friends. Devotees evidently went out of their way to find each other: and so we find a long-running rivalry with two friends, 'Abdullah Basil and the merchant "Kwaja 'Azuz".¹⁰⁷ Long winter nights were particularly ideal for such grudge matches. As he reported on one occasion (December 1849), he played

101 For an overview, see Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity*, ch. 6.

102 AH, II, p. 409. He and a few friends would sometimes play together. They might gather for music at lunchtime, or pass an evening making music at someone's house, see for example AH, I, p. 272; II, pp. 406, 408. In good weather, they might head to a nearby garden and play in the open air, see AH, II, pp. 281, 375. His ensemble was fairly standard in instrumentation: in addition to his *kamanja*, he was accompanied on *kanun*, flute (*ney*), and tambourine. Unusual was the guitar that he presented as a birthday gift to his Maryam, who apparently had her own musical interests as well, AH, II, p. 366.

103 AH, I, p. 219.

104 AH, II, p. 407.

105 AH, I, p. 250.

106 The game was called *muharrijin*, AH, II, p. 409.

107 On his rivalry with these friends, AH, II, pp. 72, 73, 74, 75, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 122, 135, 136, 156, 157, 159, 165. For other references to playing checkers, see for example AH, II, pp. 51, 164, 171, 191; III, pp. 44, 49, 52, 53, 56, 153, 162, 236, 295, 296, 306, 329.

with friends until well past midnight (“9:00 Ottoman time”, i.e. about two o’clock) before returning home.¹⁰⁸ Animating many matches was a competitive spirit, which in the most heated moments, might actually flare into quarrels.¹⁰⁹ So engrossing were these contests that, as the anti-Christian riot of October 1850 broke out, Bakhkhash only learned of it while hunched over a game of checkers at a friend’s house. When a friend burst in and asked, “Are you still playing?” our bemused schoolteacher could only respond, “Why shouldn’t we?” The news had not yet reached them.¹¹⁰

Only backgammon came close to matching this devotion. Scattered throughout his journal are notations about matches played at home or on visits, both day and night, sometimes over long stretches in which he did not seem to watch the time very closely.¹¹¹ One morning in September 1862, he reports an early morning backgammon duel with a cousin, interrupted only by the necessity of having to teach at school. By evening the two of them were back together at the board.¹¹² He was almost as keen about a local game, *al-tab wa al-dakk*, in which the “movement of the pins on the board [were] determined by casting four small flat sticks, white on one side and black on the other”.¹¹³ Other games – *manqala*,¹¹⁴ dominos¹¹⁵ and “cups”¹¹⁶ – appear with much less frequency.

What was certainly new in Bakhkhash’s circles were games with cards, known in the eighteenth century only among the bored merchants of the European community, holed up in their caravanserai.¹¹⁷ Probably from commercial contacts, the habit had later spread among the Christian merchants of the town. Bakhkhash and his friends were among the new enthusiasts. Retaining the local horror for gambling, they usually played for nothing more than pistachios.¹¹⁸ Only on a few occasions did they test the limits of gamesmanship and

108 AH, II, 165. For at least one other late-night session, AH, II, p. 171.

109 AH, III, p. 278.

110 AH, II, p. 205.

111 See for example AH, I, pp. 123, 312; II, pp. 83, 93, 117, 191, 221, 386; III, pp. 44, 57, 107, 201, 278, 280, 295, 296, 305, 306, 329, 356, 364, 375, 396, 402, 403.

112 AH, III, p. 296.

113 See for example AH, II, p. 156. For other references to this game, AH, I, p. 261; II, pp. 36, 89, 155, 156, 259, 275, 317, 368; III, pp. 237, 271, 273. The quotation comes from Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 142-3.

114 AH, I, pp. 184-5; III, p. 381.

115 AH, III, pp. 408, 410.

116 Known as *la'b al-fanajin*, AH, II, p. 162.

117 Russell, *Natural History*, II, p. 12.

118 He usually signaled the innocent stakes at these games with the same expression: *la'b al-waraq bi'l-fistiqa*. See for example AH, I, pp. 248, 312; II, pp. 30, 76, 117, 120, 124, 208, 217, 218;

actually bet at cards. Our staid schoolteacher could not overlook (1856) one gambling session at the home of a close friend, Ilyas Dahir – his name written backwards in reproach. He was still squeamish seven years later when he found himself once again gambling with money supplied by the same Ilyas Dahir – a true impresario of naughtiness, earning another notation with his name backwards. Bakhkhash's disapproval did not keep him from staying for the whole afternoon.¹¹⁹

Gambling was clearly beyond the pale. Other entertainments generated, at best, only an undercurrent of guilt. Townspeople were used to hearing the warnings of moralists, who decried pastimes like backgammon, chess, and checkers as a waste of time and distraction from more serious pursuits.¹²⁰ Our schoolteacher, always striving for a pious life, was susceptible to these stern appeals. In one entry for February 1864, we find a sorrowful admission that he had played checkers – written backwards, as always, to indicate shame.¹²¹ He repeatedly tried to swear off backgammon, making it a special example of his attempt to rededicate himself to a less frivolous life. First in July 1861, and again in February 1864, he admits his failure.¹²² Was our schoolteacher responding to something like a mid-life crisis of conscience? Perhaps we should not make too much of these spiritual struggles. After all, members of the Jacobite clergy were among his sporting adversaries. Was it not his own archbishop (April 1865) who summoned Bakhkhash for a game of dominos – an invitation repeated later the same month?¹²³ Like other townspeople, members of the religious establishment felt the same pull towards recreational outlets. And our schoolteacher seems not to have raised any moral objections in the prelate's presence. He would gladly sit for a game himself.

Perhaps the most diverting recreation was the consumption of alcohol, which carried its own moral complications. The setting had everything to do with the precise measure of turpitude. Most unsavory were the taverns, universally scorned as dens of vice, rough company, and drunkenness. The non-Muslim proprietors catered to a mixed clientele, as attested by the murder of a

III, pp. 28, 56, 261; III, pp. 28, 56, 261. On the local distaste for gambling (at least in the eighteenth century), see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 143.

119 See respectively AH, III, pp. 58, 352.

120 Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity*, pp. 229-31.

121 AH, III, p. 367.

122 AH, III, pp. 249, 364. For a similar expression of guilt about playing checkers – also written backwards – see AH, III, p. 367.

123 AH, III, pp. 408, 410. See also the afternoon of backgammon with the patriarch and several members of his entourage, AH, III, p. 402. For other examples of games played with clergymen, see AH, III, p. 396.

Muslim in an establishment near Bakhkhash's home in March 1852.¹²⁴ Our schoolteacher was not himself a patron, and always preferred to drink privately with friends. As affluent townsmen, they could afford to make their own arrack, the favorite drink of tipplers throughout Syria, and proudly offered bottles to one another as gifts.¹²⁵ They drank at each other's homes, sometimes in small groups, but were leery of excess. Forgivable was one friend, 'Abdullah Khuri, who came over (September 1846) and became "merry" (*mukayyif*); positively scandalous was the New Year's party (1855) which ended in a scuffle and broken furniture.¹²⁶

As an educated man, Bakhkhash stood for a self-restrained urbanity. Men ought to curb their aggressive impulses, which could easily escalate into distasteful episodes of shoving and brawling. Set against these high ideals was the necessity to save face and defend personal honor and manhood. If threatened or slighted, men would not hesitate to resort to personal violence. Even in Bakhkhash's social circles, where expectations about civility had more purchase, quarrels among friends might ignite fisticuffs.¹²⁷ Though he personally disdained such belligerence, he too might yield to this unspoken code of hyper-masculinity. One friend provoked him into a fistfight by playing rough with his hands (*la`b al-yad*).¹²⁸ So the hold of good manners was far from absolute. At extreme moments, 'polite society' might still allow physical retribution.

124 AH, II, p. 272. The censure against drinking in Islamic law ensured that taverns operated in a legal twilight which made them subject to the whims of officials. For the closure of a tavern in Bakhkhash's neighborhood (June 1841), AH, I, p. 156. On Muslim drinking in the eighteenth century, which was "thought to be on the increase", see Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 182-3.

125 Bakhkhash kept regular track of his purchases of grapes and raisins to be distilled into arrack, and marked the "cooking" throughout his journals, see for example AH, I, pp. 106-7, 113; II, pp. 25-6, 283, 287, 302, 394; III, pp. 171, 211, 214, 373, 374, 410, 411. For bottles of arrack presented as gifts, AH, II, pp. 321, 337; and some of his customary gifts for the New Year, offered by the families of students, took the form of arrack. For an example of arrack being used to cancel a debt, AH, II, p. 285.

126 For the former, AH, II, p. 27. On the latter altercation (*khatifa*), "a thing which was unacceptable", AH, II, pp. 404-5. For another reference to friends drinking to excess, AH, III, p. 349. Drinkers were aware of the potential harm from over indulgence. For a reference to the death of an alcoholic, see AH, I, p. 251.

127 See for example AH, II, pp. 94, 356; III, p. 107. For reports about other fights and assaults, see for example AH, II, p. 408; III, pp. 242, 283. Tempers could flare on a hair-trigger. One of his friends, a well-to-do merchant, was riding his donkey and stopped to talk with an acquaintance. When the donkey bit his hand, he immediately drew his knife and stabbed it to death. Bakhkhash clucked about his friend's rashness and profligacy, AH, II, p. 383. On the quickness of "common people" to take offense, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 223-4.

128 AH, I, p. 287. For another fight, started when someone hit one of his students, see AH, I,

Far preferable to this demeaning pugilism was the channeling of masculine self-regard into outdoor recreation. Like many of his affluent friends, Bakhkhash was an avid sportsman, hunting and fishing throughout the year with an irrepressible gusto. Nothing else fired him with the same enthusiasm, which completely belies the bookish image of a schoolteacher. Especially in his younger days, he took to the fields and gardens at least once a week – almost automatically every Sunday – and usually far more often. He was not easily deterred. The notebooks testify to a hardy outdoorsman who was indifferent to all but the worst weather. “We ate rain” (*akalna matar*) was one recurring refrain in the winter months, which were never cold or damp enough to keep him indoors entirely.¹²⁹ If the rain came down hard, he would simply don wooden clogs and carry on.¹³⁰ Almost nothing could keep him away. During the height of a locust infestation in April 1863, he showed enough concern to cancel the customary Sunday visits to his sisters; that same afternoon, he found time for fishing.¹³¹

Hunting was the sport of first choice. Affluent aficionados were not, of course, struggling to put food on the table. What they really sought was to demonstrate their marksmanship and cut the right figure as they strolled through the gardens.¹³² Like his fellow hunters about town, Bakhkhash mostly bagged different varieties of small birds – pigeons, crows, thrushes, and many others – each carefully identified from page to page.¹³³ Only rarely did he seek boar or larger game, or perhaps opportunistically shoot at rabbits.¹³⁴ Earning particular enmity were the dogs which skulked along neighborhood streets and garden lanes. Bakhkhash and his friends did not hesitate to pull the trigger.¹³⁵

p. 154. Lower on the scale of personal altercations was the heated quarrel that he had with his father, AH, I, p. 140.

129 See for example AH, II, pp. 266, 279; III, pp. 216, 232.

130 See for example AH, III, p. 240.

131 AH, III, p. 326.

132 Equestrian games had, for the most part, died out earlier in the Ottoman period. Symptomatic of this trend was the evolution of the janissaries into a paramilitary faction which proved quite willing to absorb civilians who had little training with weapons and mounts. By the eighteenth century, martial contests like *cirit* (conducted with lances on horseback) had lost most of their popularity, Russell, *Natural History*, I, pp. 221-2.

133 Taking down a falcon one afternoon (March 1863), he made a gift of his trophy to a friend, AH, III, p. 320. On the lack of interest in dining on fowl, see Russell, *Natural History*, I, p. 175.

134 AH, I, p. 108. The party in question was held in September 1839.

135 See for example AH, III, pp. 64, 207, 373.

Townpeople did not keep dogs as pets, and were far more likely to regard them as dangerous pests that might attack and bite without provocation.¹³⁶

Next to hunting, fishing was, by broader Aleppan standards, a secondary pastime that only local Christians seemed intent on pursuing with any special devotion. They may have acquired the taste for it from European merchants. Bakhkhash, for instance, took care to order his tackle from European contacts, perhaps conceding with this choice that local equipment was not so suited for a sportsman.¹³⁷ Whatever the case, he could hardly contain his ardor for the stream. It was not a Catholic matter of obeying fasts and replacing dietary meat with fish. He roamed the banks of the Quwayq River throughout the year.

Across Bakhkhash's journals, we see that hunting and fishing were the occasion for masculine fellowship. A sporting day might conclude with conversation in a coffee house or give way to hearty feasting. On one fishing expedition, Bakhkhash and his friends had carefully planned ahead, frying their catch in eggs and butter that they had carried with them.¹³⁸ In good weather, they might cool bottles of arrack in a stream for refreshment.¹³⁹ We get glimpses of playful jesting and song.¹⁴⁰ There was barely concealed competition as well. Many lines in his journal are little more than a tally of fish and game that he and his friends caught for the day. A big haul was an occasion for quiet pride, whereas bad outings were announced with disappointment. "This week I was [fishing] at al-Na'ura [a garden], and there were very few fish. Where they went I don't know".¹⁴¹ Coming up empty after a hunting expedition, in which he had borrowed a gun from a friend, he resorted to the consolation of many a frustrated hunter: "I couldn't hit a thing. The gun is useless!"¹⁴² He and his friends were not, one readily gathers, expert marksmen. Their errant shots occasion-

136 For references to neighbors being bitten, see AH, I, pp. 62, 286, 304, 309; II, pp. 150, 181, 285, 362.

137 AH, I, p. 314; II, p. 100.

138 AH, II, p. 425.

139 See for example AH, II, p. 303; II, pp. 27, 225, 275. Though drinking by non-Muslims was licit under Islamic law, they might still have to exercise discretion. During the mid-century sectarian tensions, tempers might boil over whenever pious Muslims objected. For the case of one Christian who was beaten to death (1863) while trying to cool his bottle of arrack in a stream, see AH, III, pp. 336-7.

140 See for example AH, II, p. 145. Male bonding could occasionally turn into rough play. One game played even in Bakhkhash's circles was *balq*, a contest of quickness in which each man tried to strike the other's palm, see for example AH, II, p. 397. Physical jostling could easily escalate into fisticuffs, AH, II, pp. 94, 356; III, p. 107.

141 AH, II, p. 280. This was taken from May 1852.

142 AH, I, p. 249.

ally wounded, or even killed, innocent bystanders.¹⁴³ With hunters prowling the gardens in nearly all seasons, these incidents must have occurred with a certain horrific predictability.

That a rather middle-class figure, like a schoolteacher, should hunt so freely indicates the prevalence of gun ownership throughout urban society. Our schoolteacher was clearly enamored of firearms. One of his favorite pastimes was watching, often in the company of friends or students, the military parades and exercises that troops staged in the fields outside Aleppo.¹⁴⁴ Sharing his exuberance were other Christians, like the Orthodox parishioners who inadvertently terrified the Christian quarter when they fired off guns at their church during Easter celebrations (April 1860).¹⁴⁵ Startled residents briefly feared that their city had once again plunged into riots. Most striking is the freedom with which Christian townsmen could so openly flaunt their possession of firearms. The arrival of the Egyptian administration in the 1830s led to the abolition of many formal legal restrictions applied to non-Muslims, one of which had forbidden them from carrying guns. Rural Christians had long flouted this policy.¹⁴⁶ Only by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, one may infer, did their urban counterparts gain this same unimpeded liberty.

Conclusion: Leisure, Social Status, and the Question of Emulation

Our schoolteacher's passion for field and stream challenges any images that we might be tempted to have about the overly sedentary tastes of townsmen. The man who emerges from the pages of his journal was more sportsman than in-

143 On one hunting expedition, in May 1836, Bakhkhash aimed at a dog and instead struck a nearby child. The parents lodged a complaint, and he and his friends had to pay legal damages, AH, I, p. 47. For a friend who accidentally shot and killed his own son, and another who died in a hunting accident, see respectively AH, I, p. 166; III, p. 144.

144 For the occasion on which he took his students to watch a military supply column, see AH, III, p. 78. For other military drills that he watched, AH, II, pp. 45, 156, 314, 393; III, p. 99. For crowds watching the arrival or departure of governors, see for example AH, III, pp. 27, 93. On taking students to watch an arriving grain caravan (March 1865), AH, III, p. 403. On gun ownership in Ottoman Syrian towns, see Grehan, James, *Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Damascus* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), pp. 204-5; Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, "Mazahir min al-haya al-'askariyya al-'uthmaniyya fi Bilad al-Sham min al-qarn al-sadis 'ashar hatta matla' al-qarn al-tasi' 'ashar", in Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, *Buhuth fi al-tarikh al-iqtisadi wa al-ijtima'i li-Bilad al-Sham fi al-'asr al-hadith* (Damascus: n.p., 1985), p. 92.

145 AH, III, p. 191.

146 Volney, C.F., *Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1785* (London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1788), vol. II, pp. 18-19.

tellektual. He showed more passion for fish and game than any of his endeavors with pen and book. How, then, can we explain these rustic attachments?

Here we first need to recognize his relatively privileged social status. Hunting and fishing were not pastimes that most townsmen could cultivate with the same ardor that he showed for them. One needed two things which were hard to secure: the equipment (with guns as the most notable expense); and perhaps more precious, the time to set aside for using it. The historical conjuncture favored Bakhkhash and his friends. By the mid-nineteenth century, political and economic winds were at the backs of leading Christians. Christian merchants, in particular, benefited from their ties to European consulates and commercial houses, and grew visibly – and provocatively – wealthy. They and other prosperous Christians, found in disproportionate numbers among the Catholics of Aleppo, were now freer than ever to acquire the trappings of wealth and social prestige. With his love of hunting and fishing, strongly identified in the popular imagination with a life of leisure and ease, our school-teacher very much fitted into this mold.¹⁴⁷ His outdoor pursuits – or more accurately, his assiduous idleness – were the very badge of an urban gentleman.

Bakhkhash never dwelled on the question of lifestyle in his journal. We find no direct ruminations on the concept of leisure. He was not self-consciously trying to conform to some model of comportment. Nor could he, if the desire had ever arisen, consult manuals which might have guided him. Ottoman authors from this period never took up this subject as something to be studied and refined.¹⁴⁸ His leisure appears fairly uncomplicated. Only an occasional stirring of guilt – aggravated by periodic warnings from religious authorities – tugged as a restraint. Apart from a few mid-life pangs of conscience about checkers and backgammon, he reveled in sport and play, and was not afraid to admit it.

These easygoing attitudes faced no real challenge. Neither in Bakhkhash's observations nor in the legal and moral pronouncements of his own day do we see new anxieties appearing on the horizon. We find nothing like the sterner

¹⁴⁷ In nineteenth-century Damascus, it was the “men of leisure” (*al-mutaraffahun*) who were conspicuous in hunting and fishing around local rivers, al-Qasimi, Muhammad Sa’id, *Qamus al-sana’at al-shamiyya*, ed. Zafir al-Qasimi (Damascus: Tlasdar, 1988), pp. 276-9.

¹⁴⁸ There was nothing like the ‘invention of leisure’ that Peter Burke has proposed for early modern Europe. For Burke’s ideas, together with a searching critique, see the following exchange: Marfany, Joan-Lluis and Peter Burke, “The invention of leisure in early modern Europe”, *Past and Present*, 156 (1997), 174-97. On the absence of debates about ‘leisure’ in Ottoman letters, see Sariyannis, “‘Temporal modernization’ in the Ottoman context”, pp. 234-5.

time management which was ascendant in industrializing Europe or the more precise distinction between work and leisure that modern bourgeois culture would come to champion. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the gradual imposition of a new economic and political order had still done little to disrupt older mentalities. Was this stability really so extraordinary? The temptation in looking at the nineteenth century is always to hail the new and dismiss the old and settled as outmoded and ready to fall away of its own accord. Contemporaries did not see this inevitability. They lived under imperial social orders which seemed secure, permanent, and natural. Prevailing values and attitudes maintained their relevance and luster. Our schoolteacher, along with others of middling status and comfortable means, saw no other manners and mores to which they might aspire, and felt no urge to contrive their own.

Was Bakhkhash really so different from comparable figures elsewhere? When British clerks went off to serve in India and other dominions, they discovered, much to their delight, that they could afford to hunt, and cultivated this sport as a mark of distinction which would have been far beyond their means back home.¹⁴⁹ Even among the upwardly mobile and respectably employed, then, a lingering deference expressed itself in unapologetic emulation. In his own provincial milieu, our schoolteacher also lived with ideals for the good life drawn from a reservoir of received opinion and sensibility. Not until the final decades of the nineteenth century would a modern middle class, promoting new political and cultural creeds, really begin to explore new forms of urban sociability.¹⁵⁰

149 See Collingham, E.M., *Imperial Bodies: the Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 124-7; Tosh, John, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 185-6. Note, too, the aristocratic appeal of hunting among the bourgeois of nineteenth-century France, Harrison, Carol E., *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 4.

150 On Aleppo in particular, see Watenpaugh, Keith, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Among other studies dealing with the rise of new lifestyles are: Bussow, Johann, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Duben, Alan and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Khater, Akram Fouad, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Hanssen, Jens, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: the Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Russell, Mona, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Between Tradition and Modernity – Entertainment in Late Ottoman Rusçuk

Svetla Ianeva

The chapter examines the various aspects and elements of entertainment in the provincial capital of the *vilayet* (province) of Tuna, Rusçuk (modern Ruse), during the second half of the nineteenth century. Following a micro-historical approach, it analyses the available data on entertainment in this city (advertised at the time as the window of the reforms) in a comparative perspective with contemporary data on entertainment in other localities of the *vilayet* and tries also to establish a few parallels with some areas of entertainment in the Ottoman capital. The focus is on the correlation between traditional and modern during this period of important social transformations in Ottoman society. The chapter studies the main actors and social spaces of entertainment, the institutions involved, the different agents of change and exchange, as well as the different kinds of publics, their participation in and reactions to entertainment. It also tries to find out to what extent the attitudes to particular forms of entertainment depended on age, gender, social status, educational level, mentality, professional or ethno-religious belonging. Several aspects of the interrelations between the Ottoman authorities and their subjects, related to entertainment, are also considered.

For this chapter, a variety of sources have been used: written sources such as travelogues, consular reports, nineteenth-century official and private newspapers, memoirs and diaries of local people and of foreigners, *salnames*, the statute and the register of the Bulgarian *kraathane* in Rusçuk as well as visual testimonies such as engravings and drawings. From a methodological point of view, it should be first stressed that the focus on the correlation ‘traditional’ – ‘modern’ in entertainment in this study does not derive from the intention to place our research in the framework of the so-called ‘modernizing theory’, but from the language, perceptions and attitudes of the contemporaries, revealed by the sources, who widely used the term ‘modern’ or ‘*alafranga*’ (“modern horo”, “modern music” etc.) to designate new forms or aspects of entertainment (and, more generally, of everyday and intellectual life) that followed a European pattern.

Balls, Music and Dances

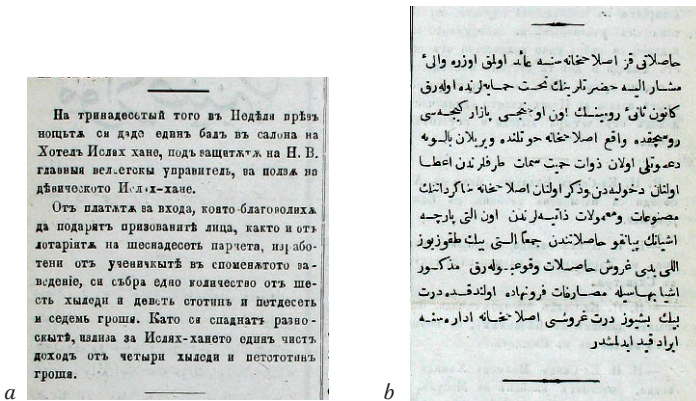
While examining the printed press from that period, one can see that among the 'modern' forms of entertainment in late Ottoman Rusçuk, balls were particularly in fashion. They were regularly organized between 1867 and 1877, either by the local Ottoman authorities or by the Bulgarian community in the city. The balls in Rusçuk were usually advertised as a notable event on the front page of the provincial official newspaper *Tuna (Dunav)* and later reported in details, sometimes not only in the local press but also in newspapers published in Bulgarian in the Ottoman capital and in Bucharest.¹

The balls took place in the hall of the fashionable hotel with the symptomatic name *Islahhane* (House of Reforms), with one exception – the ball, organized in 1871 by Maria-Luisa Fana in the Victoria Hotel, on which, unfortunately, we do not have any further information.² The usual attenders were the local *vali* and other important Ottoman officials (such as the *defterdar* of the *vilayet*, *mutasarrıfs* and the censors, for example), people from the provincial administration, the local 'aristocracy' (notable members of the local *millets* – of the communities of the Bulgarians, the Turks, the Jews, the Armenians and the Greeks), the foreign consuls and agents of the consulates, as well as Ottoman citizens and foreigners working for the railways, for the postal offices, the telegraph, for insurance companies, in the administration of the local state factories, physicians, architects, pharmacists and so on (thus mostly people practicing new professions and involved in modern communications and services). This clearly indicates that the balls were not only perceived as a modern form of entertainment *per se*, but that they were aimed at advertising modernization and reforms and involved people sensitive to this agenda. At the same time, the attendance at the balls could become an issue in the interrelations between the authorities and the subjects. The presence, or absence, of particular members of the local communities at the balls organized by the *vali* seem to have been interpreted, at least in some circumstances and by some of their co-nationals, as a sign of support for or, on the contrary, as keeping a distance from the official Ottoman policies at the time and thus to have carried a political connotation.³ It is hard to judge from the documents available, furthermore, whether, and if so to what extent the "Bulgarian balls", organized by the local young Bulgarian intellectuals (some of whom had a quite radical national

1 *Svoboda*, I, issue 14, 5 February 1870, p. 110; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VIII, issue 744, 17 January 1873; *Tuna (Dunav)*, IX, issue 843, 23 January 1874; *Tuna (Dunav)*, XI, issue 1035, 7 January 1876; *Napredak*, IX, issue 47, 21 June 1875; *Napredak*, XI, issue 119, 18 February 1877.

2 *Turcia*, VII, issue 12, 8 May 1871, p. 4.

3 *Nezavisimost*, IV, issue 16, 2 February 1874, p. 130; *Svoboda*, II, issue 3, 17 January 1871, p. 22.



FIGURES 6.1a, b Information in the official provincial newspaper *Tuna* on the ball which took place in the Islahhane Hotel under the auspices of the *vali* (governor) of the *vilayet* on 13 January 1874, *Tuna (Danav)*, IX, issue 843, 23 January 1874, reproduced by permission of the National Library “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, Bulgarian Historical Archives.

agenda) were perceived as a kind of alternative to the official balls organized by the authorities. In any case, the local Ottoman authorities were invited to and attended these balls.

Some of the foreigners and of the non-Muslims came *en famille*, with their wives or daughters, thus indicating that the balls in Rusçuk were not a form of entertainment reserved only for men, even though some of the observers regret the small number of women attending the balls. Although several of the balls had charitable purposes, mainly the collection of funds for the support of the local educational institutions, the advertisement for the ball organized by the Bulgarian community in 1868, for example, announced free entrance for every attender accompanied by two ladies, trying obviously thus to stimulate female participation in the balls. Some of the local women teachers regularly participated in the charitable balls. The presence of Miss Amalia, teacher in the *islahhane*⁴ for girls, and of the headmistress of the main Bulgarian school for girls, Magdalena Tzareva, at the charity ball which took place on 10 January 1876 and was aimed at collecting funds for the Ottoman educational institutions in the city, for example, was explicitly mentioned in a correspondence to the press.⁵ Furthermore, according to one of the testimonies, the women from

4 The *islahhanes* were state boarding schools for orphans and poor children, opened during the Tanzimat period.

5 *Napredak*, X, issue 78, 24 January 1876.

the harem of the *vali* were also 'present' at the balls, but only as spectators, observing the performances from a special room above the big dance hall, hidden by a wooden grid.⁶ Some of the balls, as for example the one which took place on 6 February 1876, were masked balls and were probably the origin of a post-Ottoman form of entertainment in Rusçuk, the carnival processions, which became quite popular at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷ The secretary of the Russian consulate Ivan Krilov wrote in one of his reports that the participants who chose to disguise themselves as "elegant Turkish women" at this ball were checked at the entrance in order to make sure that they were in fact not. He also claims that "licentious" women from the hotels and city suburbs were also part of this entertainment, which lasted all night long, but the rest of the sources do not support this information.⁸ The balls as a form of public, but not mass, entertainment, since they were destined rather for the local elites, also took place in other large cities of the *vilayet* of Tuna, such as Şumnu (modern Shumen) (1850), Tulca (1865, 1875), Varna (1867), Tarnovo (1871)⁹ as well as in the Ottoman capital.¹⁰

At the balls in late Ottoman Rusçuk, "European music", played by small light orchestras (five to six violinists, accompanied by women singers in 1868 or by musicians 'imported' from Rumania in 1870), and modern dances were combined with the performance of folk music by villagers, amateur players and folk dances, mostly *horo* (folk roundelay).¹¹ Lotteries for charitable purposes and abundant buffets were other elements of the entertainment at these balls.

6 Memoirs of Nikola Obretenov, collected by Asparuh Emanuilov and preserved in the State Archives in Ruse, partially published in Antonova, Vesselina, *Възрожденското читалище "Зора" в Русе* [The Revival Kiraathane "Zora" in Ruse] (Ruse: Avangard print, 2010), pp. 58-9.

7 *Napredak*, x, issue 81, 14 February 1876; Antonova, *Възрожденското читалище "Зора"*, p. 63.

8 Krilov, Ivan, "Русчук и неговото значение за международната търговия" [Rusçuk and its significance for international trade], in *Документи от архива на външната политика на Руската империя за дейността на генералното консулство на Русия в Русе (1865-1877 г.)* [Documents from the Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire on the Activities of the Russian General Consulate in Ruse (1865-1877)], ed. Ivo Jeynov (Ruse: Avangard print, 2009), p. 212.

9 *Turcia*, I, issue 33, 6 March 1865; *Gaida*, II, issue 20, 27 March 1865; *Macedonia*, v, issue 16, 20 April 1871; *Otechestvo*, II, issue 87, 30 April 1871; *Svoboda*, I, issue 12, 22 January 1870, p. 93; Antonova, *Възрожденското читалище "Зора"*, p. 58.

10 *Tzarigradski vestnik*, III, issue 104, 10 January 1853, issue 106, 24 January 1853; *Balgarski knijitzi*, x, issue 469, 6 February 1860; *Tzarigradski vestnik*, XII, issue 5, 27 January 1862, issue 8, 17 February 1862; *Vremia*, I, issue 24, 22 January 1866; *Macedonia*, IV, issue 13, 31 December 1869; *Turcia*, v, issue 6, 29 March 1869; *Svoboda*, II, issue 11, 13 March 1871, p. 85.

11 Antonova, *Възрожденското читалище "Зора"*, pp. 58-63.

This symptomatic combination of traditional and modern music and dances was typical for public as well as for private entertainment in Rusçuk and in the other big cities of the *vilayet*. At private celebrations (such as marriages, for example) and parties as well as in public locations such as coffee houses, restaurants, hotels, public gardens, in the central city square of Şumnu on Fridays, at fairs and so on, popular folk music and dances mixed with “modern” “European” music and dances in varying proportions, depending mainly on the consumers’ tastes but also on the presence or absence of active agents of change of these tastes. In the period examined, such agents of change were some of the local intellectuals, mainly teachers, students in European universities when they came home for vacations or after finishing their studies, the directors and musicians of the military orchestras of the Ottoman garrisons as well as foreign residents including the European consuls and members of their families, the Hungarian and Polish immigrants after the Revolution of 1848-49, wandering musicians and Europeans who settled for business in Rusçuk. They introduced new tunes, mainly light music by Strauss, Offenbach, Verdi, Bellini, Puccini and other Italian composers, new instruments such as the guitar, the flute, the contra bass, the piano, as well as new dances, the waltz, quadrille, chardash, mazurka and polonaise which soon became fashionable, especially among the young local citizens, officers and clerks but were qualified as “devil dances” by some people with more conservative views.¹² In 1866 Eduard Wais from Vienna was advertised in the newspaper *Tuna* as a “professor in dances” who would give lessons of “modern *horó*” in the Islahhane Hotel; this definition was probably used in order better to match the mentality and the vocabulary of the local public.¹³ And in 1875 Rumanian officers, who were invited to the celebrations for the anniversary of the accession to the throne of Sultan Abdülaziz, very much impressed the locals by their abilities in dancing.¹⁴ Other advertisements in the provincial newspaper show that the local young people had other opportunities too to get familiar with “modern music”: they were offered private pianoforte lessons by “a lady who finished her studies in Berlin”¹⁵ and by a music teacher, who arrived from the Ottoman capital in 1871.¹⁶ Since the early 1870s a “Choral society”, organized by Todor Hadjistanchev

12 Chilingirov, Stilian, *Маджари и поляци в Шумен. Принос към историята на българската цивилизация* [Hungarians and Poles in Shumen. Contribution to the History of Bulgarian Civilization] (Sofia: Ogledalo, 1999), pp. 37-9; *Tzarigradski vestnik*, issue 32, 28 April 1851; *Bulgaria*, 11, issue 64, 8 June 1860.

13 *Tuna (Dunav)*, 11, issue 130, 30 November 1866.

14 *Napredak*, IX, issue 47, 21 June 1875.

15 *Tuna (Dunav)*, V, issue 389, 29 June 1869.

16 *Tuna (Dunav)*, VI, issue 547, 31 January 1871.



FIGURE 6.2 Photograph of the orchestra of Mihai Shafran, Shumen (Şumnu), 1851, ДА–Шумен, ф. 33К, оп. 3, а.е. 1 [State Archives–Shoumen, f. 33К, оп. 3, а.е. 1], reproduced by permission of the Archives State Agency of Bulgaria.

(who had studied in Karlovac), and an amateur string orchestra under the direction of Nicola Sakelariev (a graduate from Galatasaray Lycée), contributed to the entertainment of the Rusçuk elites at private parties, at the balls and during the *entr'actes* of the theatre plays.¹⁷

As for the social attitudes to the new fashions in music and dances, it usually took some time before they were considered acceptable. In Şumnu, for example, where a Hungarian immigrant after the Revolution of 1848-49, Mihai Shafran, founded in 1850 an amateur orchestra playing European music,¹⁸ the

17 Bakardjieva, Teodora, *Русе. Градът и хората (от края на XIV в. до 70-те г. на XIX в.)* [Ruse. The City and the People (From the End of the Fourteenth Century to the 1870s)] (Ruse: Avangard print, 2013), p. 301.

18 Mihai Shafran, *frenk terzi* (tailor of modern clothes) and amateur musician, founded and conducted an amateur orchestra in Şumnu between 1850 and 1853, before becoming Kapellmeister of the Edirne military garrison. The orchestra in Şumnu, composed of 11 young local people, used to play “European music” (“something from *La Norma*, *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore*, waltz, quadrille, chardash, mazurka and polonaise”) at private parties and also on public occasions and at public locations. Particularly famous were the parties at the house of Anastas *çorbaci*, where young people of both sexes, sons and daughters of

women who took part in the modern dances were designated by the local conservatives with a newly coined word *shafrantia*, meaning loose women, either derivative from his surname or from the Turkish *şurfintü* (common woman). And the word *shafrantia* was still in use and kept this meaning even in the twentieth century, when nobody remembered anymore where it came from.

At the Theatre

As in the Ottoman capital, modern theatre became a fashionable and favourite form of entertainment in Rusçuk, as well as in several other cities of the *vilayet* such as Şumnu, Lom, Tarnovo, Zıştovi (Svishtov), Sofia, Pleven, Razgrad and Lovça. These theatre shows were a novelty and seem to have been among the most notable and enjoyable events for the local population since they were widely reported in the press from the mid-1850s onwards.¹⁹ Unlike in the capital, where professional, foreign as well as local, theatre companies were predominant, in the *vilayet* of Tuna this kind of show was organized and presented by amateurs, mainly young Bulgarian intellectuals, mostly teachers and students. On a very few occasions foreigners living in the province took the initiative over the presentation of theatre plays and became thus intermediaries between modern European drama and the local public. Thus the Italian Robelli, who was living in Rusçuk, staged a performance in the Islahhane Hotel hall in January 1871²⁰ and the Hungarian and Polish immigrants in Şumnu organized at the very beginning of the 1850s a theatre show, the latter destined

the local elite, despite the disapproval of part of the local population with “partiarthal education”, used to dance together “some devil dances, putting their arms round their waists”. Some of these young people, both boys and girls, also learned to play different instruments and continued the musical activities in this city through the performances of an orchestra and a choir in the 1860s and 1870s. See Chilingirov, *Маджари и поляци в Шумен*, pp. 39-42.

19 *Tzarigradski vestnik*, VII, issue 317, 23 February 1857; *Bulgaria*, IV, issue 23, 17 September 1862, p. 181; *Macedonia*, IV, issue 15, 10 January 1870, issue 16, 13 January 1870, issue 27, 21 February 1870; *Pravo*, V, issue 46, 11 January 1870; *Turcia*, V, issue 47, 13 January 1870; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VI, issue 536, 20 December 1870; *Svoboda*, I, issue 15, 12 February 1870; *Macedonia*, V, issue 50, 14 December 1871; *Pravo*, VI, issue 1, 1 March 1871, issue 9, 26 April 1871, issue 10, 3 May 1871; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VII, issue 642, 12 January 1872, issue 645, 23 January 1872, issue 650, 13 February 1872; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VIII, issue 864, 14 June 1872; *Chitalishte*, III, issue 70, 2, 1873, p. 8; *Nezavisimost*, IV, issue 34, 8 June 1874, p. 276; *Napredak*, IX, issue 29, 15 February 1875, p. 115; *Den*, II, issue 8, 21 February 1876; *Napredak*, X, issue 81, 14 February 1876.

20 *Tuna (Dunav)*, VI, issue 540, 6 January 1871.

however mostly to entertain and raise the morale of the immigrants and their families.²¹

The plays presented in Rusçuk and in the other cities of the *vilayet* were either modern modern dramas, melodramas and comedies by European authors such as *Hernani* (by V. Hugo), *Le medecin malgré lui* and *L'avare* (by Molière), *Die Räuber* (by F. Schiller), *Genoveva* (by L. Tieck), *Emilia Galotti* (by G. Lessing), or original plays by contemporary Bulgarian authors with plots based in Bulgarian Medieval history, such as *Ivanko* (by Vassil Drumev) and *Kardam the Formidable* (by the local teacher Todor Hadjistanchev), or dedicated to current social issues and matters of interest, such as *Malakoff* (by Petko Slaveikov) and *The Civilization Misunderstood* (by Dobri Voinikov). The European plays were not only translated but quite often adapted, the names of the protagonists being changed to local names and the plots adjusted to the mentality, level of education, expectations and interests of the local public. The theatre shows in Rusçuk took place in the Islahhane Hotel hall (with prices varying between seven and 15 *kuruş* per seat), or in the hall of the Bulgarian school for girls (with prices from five to 12 *kuruş*). All the parts were usually performed by men, but a few female amateur actresses, usually teachers or relatives of the male 'actors' or 'directors', also acted with notable success. Such were, for example, Dimka Blaskova starring as Amalia in *Die Räuber* by Schiller in February 1876,²² the teacher Miss Mariola Stancheva in *Rujitza* (an adaptation of *The Rose from Tazenberg*, by Christoph Schmidt) in December 1870, and Todorka Mizarchieva as *The Princess Raina* in February, 1872.²³

The theatre shows became extremely popular and attracted a large audience of all ages, both sexes and all social strata, of several nationalities and with the highest Ottoman authorities always invited and always present. Why did the latter attend the plays so regularly, not only in Rusçuk, but all over the *vilayet*? The answer, we would argue, is because these shows were an important event in the cultural and social life of the cities, out of personal curiosity, because theatre was a fashionable and modern form of entertainment, concordant with the modernizing agenda of the reforms, and also, probably, out of the concern to apply the philosophy and politics of the Tanzimat to support the initiatives and activities of all the *millets*. Obviously, the theatre shows

21 Korn, Philip, "Кошут и унгарците в Турция" [Kossuth and the Hungarians in Turkey], in *От Карпатите до Балкана. Дневници и мемоари за България от унгарски емигранти 1849-1850* [From the Carpathians to the Balkan. Diaries and Memoirs of Hungarian Emigrants 1849-1850], ed. Dord Arato (Sofia: Ogleдалo, Ungarski kulturen institut, 1999), p. 272-3.

22 *Napredak*, x, issue 81, 14 February 1876.

23 Antonova, Vesselina, "Русенският възрожденски театър" [The revival theatre in Ruse], in *Алманах за историята на Русе*, vol. 1 [Almanac on the History of Ruse] (Ruse: Darjaven arhiv, 1996), pp. 118, 122.

БЪЛГАР. ЧЕРК. ПЪВЧЕСКО ДРУЖЕСТВО
Въ Руссе

Знаа чeстѣта да извѣсти на достопочитае-
мѣтѣ публикѣ, че на $\frac{1}{13}$ -ый Априлиѣ ще даде

ТЕАТРАЛНО ПРЪДСТАВЛЕНИЕ
драмата на
МНОГОСТРАДАЛНА ГЕНОВЕВА,
(въ петъ дѣйствіѣ.)

Слѣдъ която ще ся прѣдстави и една
комедія подъ заглавіе:

ГЛУПАВАТА ФАНТАЗІЯ.
(въ четири дѣйствіѣ.)

Прѣдставленіето ще бжде въ салонѣтъ на
Хотелъ Ислах-хене, и ще почне вечерьта
часѣтъ на 2 (по Турскы).

Цѣната за влизаніето е:

1- ^o мѣсто	2- ^o мѣсто
гр. 15.	гр. 10.

Билетитѣ за влизаніе ще ся продаватъ
при г-на Михаль Х. Костовъ, въ Пяцѣтъ
срѣщу Василадельското казино, а въ четвър-
тъкъ вечерьтъ въ салонѣтъ.

Като извѣстѣва това, дружеството ся
обѣщава, че ще ся труди, колкото е възмож-
но по добръ да задоволи любопытството на
посѣтителитѣ си, и ласкае ся да вѣрва, че
трудѣтъ му ще ся почетѣ съ присѣтствіето
на многобройнк публикѣ, както и въ дру-
гитѣ му дадени прѣдставленія.

Руссе 27 Марта 1871.

Настоятелството.

FIGURE 6.3 Advertisement in *Tuna* for the performance of the drama *Unhappy Genoveva* and of the comedy *The Foolish Fantasy* in the Islahhane Hotel hall on 1 April 1871, reproduced by permission of the National Library "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", Bulgarian Historical Archives.

ИЗВЪСТІЕ.
ТЕАТРАЛНО ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ:
 КРИВОРАЗБРАНАТА
ЦИВИЛИЗАЦІЯ
 (КОМЕДИЯ ВЪ ПЕТЕ ДѢЙСТВІА),

Коего ще се даде въ салонъ на *Хотелъ-Шалах-хане*, на 26-ия Октомврия (Димитровъ-денъ), отъ

БЪЛГ. ЧЕРКОВ. ПЪВЧЕСКО ДРУЖЕСТВО

Представленіето ще започне часътъ на 2¼ вечеръта, по Турски.

ЦѢНАТА ЗА ВИЗАНІЕТО Е:

I МѢСТО	II МѢСТО	III МѢСТО
гр. 15	гр. 10	гр. 7

Отъ членоветъ на Дружеството ще се зима половина плата за II и III мѣсто.

Билетитъ за визаніе се продаватъ въ дюгана на Г. Михалъ Х. Костовъ, при Цицхъта сръщу Василекевото газино, а въ Вторникъ вечеръ, — въ салонъта.

Дружеството като извѣстява това, обича да вѣрва, че трудътъ му и този платъ ще се почете съ посѣщението на достопочитаемата публичк.

Настоятелството.

Руссе 20 8/врія 1871.

FIGURE 6.4 Advertisement in *Tuna* for the performance of the comedy *The Civilization Misunderstood* (by Dobri Voinikov) in the Islahhane Hotel hall on 26 October 1871, reproduced by permission of the National Library "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", Bulgarian Historical Archives.

were not exempt from censorship; we find several testimonies in the sources of prohibitions on the presentation of plays. Such, for example, was the case with the planned presentation in Rusçuk of *The Accession to the Throne of Krum the Formidable*, a historical drama by Dobri Voinikov about a famous Bulgarian king from the ninth century. According to an article published in *Turcia* in January 1873, the local censor Ernest Efendi did not authorize the presentation of this play in the city; despite the arguments by the organizers that the play was approved in the capital, he claimed that the authorization referred to the text of the drama and not to its staging.²⁴ His decision was probably based on

²⁴ *Turcia*, VIII, issue 48, 15 January 1873.

the understanding that a presentation on stage would have a much greater effect and influence on the audience than the written text. Generally, at least some members of the Ottoman provincial authorities seem to have been aware that the growing taste of their Bulgarian subjects for history dramas, recalling their “great” past, had to do with growing national feelings and even aspirations to independence and were therefore not particularly favourable to the presentation of such plays. The same applied also to plays which involved battle scenes and the use of weapons on stage, generally considered as undesirable. Nevertheless, such plays were sometimes staged, even on occasions with the active support of the local authorities. In another city of the *vilayet* of Tuna, Lovça, for example, according to the testimonies of a participant in the performance of *The Princess Raina* in 1872, not only was the play authorized, but the swords, needed for the performance, were provided by the local *kaymakam*, who assisted in the show, seated with his entourage in the front rows of the improvised theatre hall in one of the local schools. The swords were real ones, and the amateur actors, unfamiliar with the use of weapons, managed to get so excited by the plot as to get involved in a real fight. The all too realistic fight even resulted in injuries, including of the main character, the princess Raina (played by a man) who got a cut close to the eye. The incident provoked some confusion and concern among the Ottoman officials who stood up and were about to leave the show. Nevertheless, the performance was very much enjoyed by the numerous and enthusiastic local public,²⁵ whose entertainment, as in most of the cases of theatre shows examined, tended to become highly participatory with the audience being caught up in the plot, people commenting, exclaiming, crying and giving their advice to the main characters.

There are no indications in the sources examined of either *Orta Oyunu* performances in Rusçuk during the period under study, or of puppet shows. But the latter could well have been part of the public entertainment in this city since Felix Kanitz described and provided a visual testimony in his travelogue from the early 1870s of such a show, performed by itinerant gypsies in the village of Mahala (modern Pelovo) located about 80 miles from Rusçuk.

... I heard loud noise and fits of laughter coming from the neighbouring courtyards. I got curious about the reason for it and saw quite an amusing scene across the fence. Two Muslim gypsies dressed in colourful clothes were presenting a show of puppets which were dressed ‘*alafiranga*’ and were going round to the sound of a fiddle and a tambourine. Meanwhile,

25 Urumov, Ivan, “Първото театрално представление в град Ловеч” [The first theatre show in Lovetch], in *Ловеч и Ловчанско. Географско, историческо и културно описание. Книга IV* [Lovech and its Surroundings. Geographical, Historical and Cultural Accounts. Vol. IV.], ed. Atanas Ishirkov (Sofia: P. Glushkov Printing House, 1932), pp. 39-40.



FIGURE 6.5 Gypsy puppet players near Mahala, “Joueurs de marionnettes Tsiganes à Mahala”, engraving in Kanitz, Felix, *La Bulgarie danubienne et le Balkan: Etudes de voyage (1860-1880)*, 1882), p. 227, reproduced by permission of the History Library at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

the gypsy was constantly reproving or praising his puppets: “Hey, not so fast Kara Bula, you will tear your nice trousers!”, “Mehmed, don’t look at Fatme with such eyes of love! And you, Fatme, don’t lift your dress so high; otherwise...”, here he pronounced some obscene phrases. All this, together with the mannered movements of a monkey, squatting on the shoulder of the fiddle player, was provoking great joy among the simple peasants.²⁶

Kanitz also mentions *Karagöz* performances as a typical form of traditional mass public entertainment in Vidin and in other cities of the *vilayet* in the 1860s, especially during festivities for *bayram* and at fairs, together with the performances of itinerant jugglers, usually, according to Kanitz, Indians or Persians, gypsy bands and dancers, acrobats, horse races and shooting competitions.²⁷ A more select public presumably assisted in the performance of the

26 Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът. Т. 2* [Danube, Bulgaria and the Balkans. vol. 2] (Sofia: Vorina, 1996), pp. 86-7.

27 Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът. Т. 1* [Danube Bulgaria and the Balkans. vol.

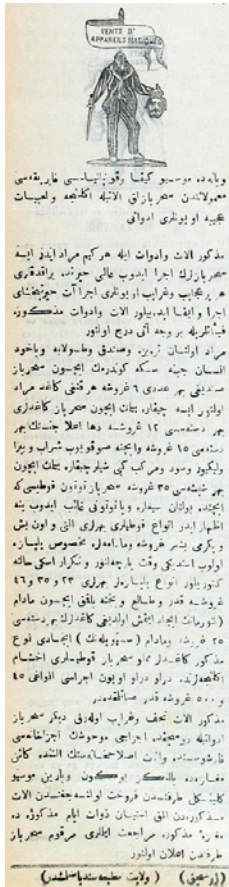


FIGURE 6.6
 “Magic tools and toys on sale”, *Tuna*, VIII, issue 669, 23 April 1872, reproduced by permission of the National Library “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, Bulgarian Historical Archives.

Persian illusionist Mehmed İsmail Efendi in the hall of the Islahhane Hotel in Rusçuk, announced in *Tuna* on 21 September 1866.²⁸ In the same newspaper “Magic tools and toys for family entertainment, particularly suitable for gifts to children” were also advertised for sale in the provincial capital from April 1872.²⁹

1] (Sofia: Borina, 1995), p. 52; Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът. Т. 3* [Danube Bulgaria and the Balkans. vol. 3] (Sofia: Borina, 1996), p. 341; Egreshi, Gabor, “Дневник от Турция” [Diary from Turkey], in *От Карпатите до Балкана. Дневници и мемоари за България от унгарски емигранти 1849-1850* [From the Carpathians to the Balkan. Diaries and Memoirs of Hungarian Emigrants 1849-1850], ed. Dord Arato (Sofia: Ogleдалo, Ungarski kulturen institut, 1999), pp. 425-6; Hilberg, Arnold, “Nach Eski-Djumaja. Reiseskizzen aus Bulgarien von Arnold Hilberg. Im Anhang: Bericht über die Messe von Eski-Djumaja im Mai 1876 von Sr. Excellenz Graf Edmund Zichy”, in *Маджарски пътеписи за Балканите 15-19 в.* [Hungarian Travellers' Accounts on the Balkans, Fifteenth-Nineteenth Century], ed. Petar Miatev (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1976), p. 133.

28 *Tuna (Dunav)*, II, issue 110, 21 September 1866.

29 *Tuna (Dunav)*, VIII, issue 669, 23 April 1872.

In the Open Air and in Urban Establishments

According to Kanitz and to the Austrian diplomat Benjamin Kalay, hunting was a “high class” form of entertainment, reserved for the foreign consuls and for the high Ottoman officials, while bathing (in the sea or in mineral water baths) was a mass form of leisure pastime.³⁰ *Teferrüç*, pleasure trips and picnics in beautiful places in the city surroundings, a traditional form of leisure pastime especially beloved by the Muslims all over the empire in all periods, was still very popular among the inhabitants of Rusçuk in the 1860s and 1870s, independently of their social status and ethno-religious belonging. Promenading along the Danube River, on the newly designed riverside alley and in the five city public gardens, was, on the other hand, something new and considered quite fashionable and was practiced mostly by the *alafanga* population of the provincial capital.³¹ The inhabitants of Rusçuk were apparently also fond of river pleasure trips along the Danube, since on the occasion of the celebration of Hıdırellez (and St. George’s Day) in April 1876, for example, the management of the *vilayet’s* ship company *İdare-i Nehriye*, offered to the local population a pleasure trip in the city surroundings (at quite moderate prices – the return ticket was three *kuruş* for adults and 60 *para* for children under ten). Two steamships, one designated for men and the other one for women, were to carry out three trips, scheduled in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening.³²

30 Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 3, pp. 212-13, 339; Kalay, Benjamin, “История на сръбското въстание 1807-1810. Т. 2” [History of the Serbian Uprising 1807-1810. vol. 2.], in *Маджарски пътеписи за Балканите 15-19 в.*, p. 89.

31 *Macedonia*, v, issue 8, 23 February 1871; Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 1, pp. 170-1; Bakardjieva, Teodora and Stoyan Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история (края на XIV в. – 70-те г. на XIX в.)* [Ruse. Space and History (From the End of the Fourteenth Century to the 1870s)] (Ruse: Avangard print, 2001), pp. 55-6. Kanitz observed similar mass taste for and practice of *teferrüç* among the population of other cities of the *vilayet*, such as Şumnu and Varna. See Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 3., pp. 76, 214-15. According to Teodora Bakardjieva, the municipal authorities in Şumnu and Varna initiated the construction of modern public gardens, as places “where all the clerks and citizens could promenade”. See Bakardjieva, Teodora, *На крачка пред времето. Държавникът реформатор Мидхат паша (1822-1884)* [A Step Ahead in Time. The Statesman Reformer Midhat Pasha (1822-1884)] (Ruse: Avangard print, 2009), p. 82.

32 *Tuna (Danav)*, XI, issue 1062, 18 April 1876.



FIGURE 6.7 "Roustchouk", engraving in Kanitz, Felix, *La Bulgarie danubienne et le Balkan: Etudes de voyage (1860-1880)*, 1882, p. 123. We can observe, on the left side of this engraving, such people promenading in *alafiranga* costumes. Reproduced by permission of the History Library at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

We can observe a similar differentiation in the attendance at the coffee houses, taverns, restaurants and casinos. Most of the coffee houses³³ offered the male population traditional forms of entertainment such as the consumption of coffee and sweets, *nargile*, traditional music and singing, storytelling, conversation (*sohbet*), backgammon as well as simply *dolce far niente*, and attracted a mass public. The members of the local *alafiranga* elites, on the other hand, preferred to visit, sometimes *en famille*, the new restaurants and the four casinos and to enjoy the consumption of beer (mostly imported from Vienna or Bucharest) and of "European" dishes (some of the owners and of the cooks

33 According to the *Salname-i Tuna* from 1291 (1874), there were 86 coffee houses in the provincial capital at that time, located in the city centre as well as in all the *mahalles*. The different ethno-religious and social groups seem to have had their preferences for particular coffee houses, according to Ivan Krilov (see Krilov, "Русчук и неговото значение за международната търговия", p. 212) and T. Bakardjjeva and St. Yordanov (see Bakardjjeva and Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история*, pp. 189-91).

were Europeans, mostly Austrians) and light string music as well as playing billiards.³⁴

Some of the hotels, coffee houses, taverns and restaurants in Rusçuk offered the company of female prostitutes, locals as well as women coming mainly from Austro-Hungary; brothels existed too, located on the road to the train station and near the cavalry barracks.³⁵ Several of the foreigners who visited the *vilayet* of Tuna in the nineteenth century mention that in some of the coffee houses and inns as well as at private parties the obscene dances of *çengi*, young boys sometimes dressed as girls and serving also as prostitutes, were part of the entertainment.³⁶ Without questioning the existence of the phenomenon itself, we should, however, note that these foreign testimonies show too many common tropes and, from their content and attitude, could also be interpreted as Orientalist reflections of life in the Ottoman empire.

The educated citizens of Rusçuk, especially among the young generations, became accustomed to spending part of their spare time (a modern notion in itself) in the local *kiraathanes*. There, together with drinking coffee and tea and relaxing, they could also read the press, borrow books, discuss current social, political and cultural issues of interest and take part in public lectures,

34 Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 1., pp. 165, 170, 217; Bakardjieva and Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история*, pp. 189-91; *Pravo*, v, issue 40, 30 November 1870.

35 Krilov, "Рушчук и неговото значение", p. 212; Kalay, "История на сръбското въстание", p. 83; Bakardjieva, *Русе. Градът и хората*, p. 247. In April 1875 the newspaper *Tuna* published the decision of the *vilayet* administrative council to implement measures aiming at better control of public order and prostitution in the city. They consisted of fixing closing hours for the hotels, restaurants, taverns and coffee houses, of expelling loose women from there and of regular medical checks for the prostitutes in the brothels. They also included official information of the consuls in Rusçuk on the matter, since, according to this publication, most of the irregular prostitutes were actually foreign citizens. See *Tuna (Dunav)*, XI, issue 963, 9 April 1875.

36 de Messence, Auguste, comte de Lagarde, "Voyage de Moscou à Vienne, par Kiow, Odessa, Constantinople, Bucharest et Hermanstadt; ou lettres adressées à Jules Driffith", in *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XIX в.* [French Travellers' Accounts on the Balkans, Nineteenth Century], ed. Bistra Tzvetkova (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1981), p. 102; Pertz, Miklosh, "Емигрантски дневник" [Diary of the emigrant], in *От Карпатите до Балкана. Дневници и мемоари за България от унгарски емигранти 1849-1850* [From the Carpathians to the Balkan. Diaries and Memoirs of Hungarian Emigrants 1849-1850], ed. Dord Arato (Sofia: Ogleдалo, Ungarski kulturen institut, 1999), pp. 336, 347; Egreshi, "Дневник от Турция", pp. 425-6; Vahot, Imre, "Унгарските бежанци в Турция" [The Hungarian refugees in Turkey], in *От Карпатите до Балкана. Дневници и мемоари за България от унгарски емигранти 1849-1850*, ed. Dord Arato, p. 583; Boué, Ami, "Recueil d'itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe. Détails géographiques, topographiques et statistiques sur cet empire", in *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XIX в.*, ed. Bistra Tzvetkova, p. 298.

either as audience or as lecturers. There were three such social and cultural clubs, places of intellectual entertainment, of the three main local *millet*s, in the provincial capital. One of them, advertised in *Tuna* at its inauguration in 1873, as a “common *kiraathane*, where the readers will have the opportunity to read several newspapers and journals”, was organized upon the initiative of the inspector of the *islahhanes* Mahmud Efendi. It was located near the *vilayet*'s central administration building, was composed of a coffee house, in the basement, and a hall and two reading rooms on the first floor, was equipped with furniture from Vienna and was in fact visited mostly by the local clerks and members of the administration, predominantly Turks. The entrance fee was 20 *para* and its income was destined to the orphans of both the *islahhane* for boys and that for girls in the city.³⁷ According to some critical articles in *Tuna* from the 1870s, however, although this *kiraathane* acquired an impressive library, comparable to the ones in the Ottoman capital, its reading rooms often remained empty, since the visitors preferred to gather in the coffee place or to look for entertainment in other coffee houses and taverns in the city.³⁸ The *kiraathane* of the Bulgarian community, called *Chitalishte “Zora”* (Public reading room “Dawn”) opened in 1866, moved its location three times and collected, on holidays or on week days after work, quite a diverse public, mainly the local teachers, clerks and students from the senior classes, but also merchants, some craftsmen and several of the local community dignitaries (*çorbacs*). It was involved in the organization of public lectures, of balls and theatre shows with charitable purposes; several of its young members were also engaged in political, often clandestine, activities aimed at national emancipation. It had a statute, official registration and membership fees and also collected donations. It is interesting to note that the list of the donors from 1869 includes Ernest Efendi, one of the local censors, Mahmud Efendi, the inspector of the *islahhanes*, and other important Ottoman officials.³⁹ The Jewish youth club, called *Midrash Arahot Haim*, which was running a reading room, was probably the first to be founded, already in 1842, but unfortunately we do not have any further information on its activities.⁴⁰ Thus, it seems important to stress here,

37 Bakardjieva and Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история*, p. 175; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VII, issue 753, 25 February 1873; *Tuna (Dunav)*, IX, issue 826, 11 November 1873; Krilov, “Рушчук и неговото значение”, p. 211.

38 See for example *Tuna (Dunav)*, X, issue 933, 18 December 1874.

39 Stoyanov, Zahari, *Записки по българските въстания* [Memoirs on the Bulgarian Uprisings] (Sofia: Balgarski Pisatel, 1962), pp. 114-16; Antonova, *Възрожденското читалище “Зора”*, pp. 22-169; Bakardjieva and Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история*, pp. 174-5; Krilov, “Рушчук и неговото значение”, p. 211.

40 Bakardjieva and Yordanov, *Русе. Пространство и история*, p. 176.

against the discourse prevailing in Bulgarian historiography,⁴¹ that these spaces of public intellectual entertainment, these social institutions, which followed a European model, showing at the same time several local specificities, were not unique to any of the local ethno-religious or national communities.

Celebrations and Festivities

The traditional circumcision celebrations (*sünnet düğünü*) were still an important form of and occasion for mass public entertainment in Rusçuk, as is shown, for example, by a correspondence to the newspaper *Svoboda* from 1870. For the circumcision feast of the two sons of the governor, Akif Paşa, joined by the sons of several dignitaries of the *vilayet*, dozens of gypsy male and female dancers and musicians from the city as well as from the villages of Kalkan and Çenger were engaged, together with *pehlivans* (wrestlers) and a reputed Bulgarian violin player from the city of Zıştovi (Svishtov) with his band. Their spectacular arrival in the city by land and by boats along the river performing their music and dances, appears to have been in itself quite an entertainment for the locals in the days preceding the ceremony.⁴² In 1871 the Austrian traveller Felix Kanitz observed a *sünnet düğünü* procession in another city of the Tuna *vilayet*, Lovça, which attracted a large concourse and, according to him, was very much enjoyed, “as a colourful theatre”, by the mass public.⁴³

The annual public celebrations of the birthdays and of anniversaries from the accession to the throne of the Ottoman sultans as well as the welcoming ceremonies for the newly appointed provincial governors and for Sultan Abdülaziz, who visited Rusçuk in August 1867 on his way back from a tour in Europe, on the other hand, were a new kind of festivities and occasions for mass public entertainment. These celebrations, which, as the sources show, took place regularly in all the large cities of the *vilayet* (Lom, Gabrovo, Tulca, Razgrad, Rusçuk, Provadia, Tarnovo, Varna, Zıştovi, Şumnu, Sofia, Nish, Silistre),⁴⁴ as well as all across the empire, manifested the new attitudes of the

41 See, for example, *История на България. Т. VI* [History of Bulgaria, vol. 6] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Balgarskata Akademia na Naukite, 1987), pp. 116-19.

42 *Svoboda*, I, issue 43, 26 September 1870, p. 341.

43 Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът. Т. 2*, pp. 27-8.

44 *Savetnik*, I, issue 16, 8 July 1863; *Turcia*, I, issue 33, 6 March 1865; *Gaida*, II, issue 20, 27 March 1865; *Istochno vreme*, issue 11, 28 June 1875; *Dunavski lebed*, I, issue 43, 25 July 1861, p. 178; *Pravo*, V, issue 38, 16 November 1870; *Turcia*, IV, issue 3, 5 August 1867; *Savetnik*, I, issue 16, 8 July 1863, p. 4; *Savetnik*, II, issue 24, 12 September 1864, p. 3; *Tuna (Dunav)*, III,

Ottoman authorities to the *millet*s, and vice versa, during the Tanzimat reforms and aimed at popularizing and advertising the modern image of the rulers among the subjects. They followed a rather standard scenario which included collective prayers, songs and hymns of praise, performed by representatives of the different *millet*s, receptions, firing of canon, fireworks, acrobatic displays, festive decoration, illumination and atmosphere in the cities.⁴⁵ Although not meant to be solely entertainment and having rather a political objective, for the citizens of Rusçuk these festivities became apparently another form of public entertainment, which was also highly participatory.⁴⁶

The religious and professional festivities in Rusçuk, as in most other large cities of the *vilayet*, involved mainly traditional forms of entertainment, such as the performance of folk music, singing and dancing in public as well as in private locations, processions which attracted as spectators most of the local population, and feasts in the city surroundings.⁴⁷ The public school examinations and celebrations for the end of the scholastic year, on the other hand, were a novelty. Practiced mostly by the Bulgarian schools, they followed a

issue 195, 26 July 1867; *Turcia*, IV, issue 3, 31 August 1867, p. 5; *Macedonia*, I, issue 37, 12 August 1867, p. 3; *Turcia*, IV, issue 4, 31 August 1867, pp. 5, 12; *Napredak*, IX, issue 47, 21 June 1875; *Savetnik*, I, issue 16, 8 July 1863; *Balgarska pchela*, I, issue 6, 5 July 1863; *Istochno vreme*, II, issue 20, 28 June 1875; *Savetnik*, I, issue 15, 1 July 1863, p. 3; *Tzarigradski vestnik*, XII, issue 26, 23 June 1862; *Gaida*, I, issue 4, 27 July 1864; *Tuna (Dunav)*, I, issue 16, 16 June 1865; *Tuna (Dunav)*, I, issue 17, 23 June 1865; *Tuna (Dunav)*, II, issue 82, 15 June 1866; *Tuna (Dunav)*, II, issue 87, 3 July 1866; *Tuna (Dunav)*, IV, issue 285, 16 June 1868; *Tuna (Dunav)*, VII, issue 585, 20 June 1871; *Tuna (Dunav)*, XI, issue 980, 15 June 1875.

45 Kanitz, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 3, p. 289; Bakardjieva, На крачка пред времето, p. 149; Keren, Zvi, *Еврейската общност в Русчук. От периферията на Османската империя до столицата на Дунавския вилает 1788-1878* [The Jewish Community of Rusçuk. From the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire to the Capital of the Vilayet of Tuna 1788-1878] (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 2009), pp. 113-15, 158, 212.

46 Similar entertainment provided also the festivities on occasion of the visits to Rusçuk of the grand *vezir* Kibrıslı Mehmed Paşa in 1860, of the minister of education Edhem Paşa in 1864 and of other high Ottoman officials, as well as those organized to greet the arrival in the city of the Rumanian king Karl Hohenzolern, in 1866, and of the Austrian emperor Frantz Joseph, in 1869, on their way to the Ottoman capital. See Bakardjieva, *Русе. Градът и хората*, pp. 237-40.

47 Национална библиотека „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий“ – БИА [National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Bulgarian Historical Archives (НБКМ – БИА)], ф. 4, а. е. (archival unit) 2, pp. 1-129 (Memoirs of Kiro Hadjipenvok Tuleshkov); Gavrilova, Raina, *Колелото на живота. Всекидневието на българския възрожденски град* [The Wheel of Life. Everyday Life in the Bulgarian City from the Revival Period] (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 1999), pp. 280-90.

European (French) model and were 'borrowed' from the modern Greek educational experience. Though not meant to be an entertainment *per se*, they gathered a large public which enjoyed the festive decoration of the schools, the speeches on the benefits of education, the songs and the recitations (usually praising education, the current sultan and the school) and the public interrogations of the pupils, as well as, sometimes, public processions through the cities.⁴⁸ These public events, which need to be further studied, were also included in the local 'calendar of festivities'.

In conclusion, we can argue that the case study of entertainment in late Ottoman Rusçuk shows, first, a growing diversification of entertainment in the city during the 1860s and 1870s. This phenomenon could be related to the rapid growth and to the increasingly complex social structure of the population in the provincial capital of the Tuna *vilayet*, to the intensification of the contacts with Europe, as well as to the modernizing tendencies in the empire during the period of reforms. Parallel to the multiplication of the types of entertainment, to the appearance of new protagonists and publics (which sometimes merged together), a new divide in this social activity, between traditional and modern, was apparently gaining importance. The 'classical' divides such as that between mass/popular and elite, private and public entertainment, entertainment related to religious festivities and to family celebrations, certainly continued to exist and to be of relevance. But the new fashions in entertainment seem to have been very much in the focus of the public interest; they were regularly reported and discussed in the press, provoked different reactions and were also often recalled in memoirs. It is important to note furthermore that female roles and participation in entertainment were also undergoing transformations during the period under study; they found expression in a growing involvement and public presence of women in several of the forms of entertainment examined. Some of the new occasions for entertainment, such as the welcoming ceremonies and celebrations for the Ottoman sultans and governors, initiated 'from above', were intentionally inclusive concerning the participation and involvement of the different *millets* and social groups in the city. But several other types of entertainment in late Ottoman Rusçuk, especially among the 'modern' ones, brought together too, as we have been able to observe, people from different ethno-religious and national allegiance, locals and foreigners, Ottoman officials and subjects with different political orientation, sharing similar tastes in entertainment. Thus, while several studies touching upon entertainment in the late Ottoman period emphasize the role of various forms of entertainment for promoting and confirming

48 Gavrilova, *Колелото на живота*, pp. 292-3.

national aspirations and identities in the empire, the available data on Rusçuk reveal a more complex picture (which does not exclude similar trends) and allow more nuanced interpretations about the social and political impact of entertainment. The vast array of options for and of types of entertainment observed, testify on the whole to both continuity and change in this sphere of social activity in the provincial capital.

Public Celebrations and Ceremonies in the Late Ottoman Cretan Press: Building a Collective Identity among the Christian Population

Antonis Anastasopoulos

Public ceremonies are rituals whose goal is to convey a message, often political in nature, in the narrower or wider sense of the word,¹ and to inculcate a feeling of belonging to a community in the hearts and minds of those who participate in them. Public ceremonies may or may not be entertaining, but they are generally associated with leisure and not rarely with public holidays, and include events that are expected to appeal to the senses and especially the emotions of those present at them. In the Ottoman case, the various ceremonies that the state organised in Istanbul and elsewhere, in order to celebrate the births, circumcisions and weddings of members of the ruling dynasty, military victories, the anniversary of the sultan's accession to the throne and so on, are typical instances of public festivities with a political goal. As Suraiya Faroqhi has pointed out, "Ottoman festivities provided an opportunity to establish and renew the bonds between the sultan and the population of the capital. Since important festivities were replicated in Aleppo or Cairo, ties with the inhabitants of the more important provincial cities were cemented as well".²

In this chapter, the centre of focus is public ceremonies with a political message which were organised not by the state but by social elements in defiance of the state. More specifically, this chapter deals with the public festivities which were organised in 1884 in the Cretan town of Rethymno (Ottoman Resmo) and the nearby Arkadi Monastery in order to commemorate the battle which took place in the latter in 1866. The ceremonies had a strong partisan flavour, as the battle had been between Ottoman troops and Christian insurgents, whose goal was the secession of Crete from the Ottoman empire and its annexation to the Kingdom of Greece. The intention of the organisers of the

1 For the political connotations of rituals, see Mitchell, Jon P., "Ritual", in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 490-3.

2 Faroqhi, Suraiya, "Crisis and change, 1590-1699", in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 615.

festivities was to strengthen Greek national identity among those who participated in them, to the exclusion of the Muslims of Crete, who were seen as the unwanted 'others'. The festivities took place at a time when their organisers had at their disposal a complementary propaganda weapon, a product of modernity, namely the press, a novelty which had appeared in Crete only a few years earlier. The press functioned as a sort of political 'amplifier' which enhanced the effect of festivities and disseminated their message to a wider public than the one that had participated in the festivities themselves. In other words, this chapter treats the Arkadi festivities of 1884 as instances of public celebration in the context of modernity, as expressed in both their nationalist agenda and the use of the new medium of mass communication that the press constituted.

The entertaining potential of public ceremonies is clearer when they concern festive occasions, such as the birthdays or name days of monarchs, and such instances are reported by the press of Rethymno. The purpose of the festivities on which we focus in this chapter was not entertaining, since they commemorated a dramatic military event with many casualties, which furthermore failed to achieve its political goal. However, even these festivities engendered a fulfilling sense of belonging and provided an opportunity for socialisation as a pleasurable activity that marked a break from the daily routine, while the speeches made, as well as the general mood, exuded optimism and determination for the eventual fulfilment of the goal of the martyrs for freedom. Besides, ceremonies constitute rituals, as noted above, and, as such, performances. As social anthropologists have pointed out, "no performance is pure efficacy [i.e., the principal characteristic of rituals] or pure entertainment [i.e., the principal characteristic of theatre]".³

Crete in the Nineteenth Century

From a political point of view, the nineteenth century was a troubled time for Crete, which had been an Ottoman province for 200 years, since the mid-seventeenth century. Not unlike what happened in other Ottoman provinces,⁴ the combination of sectarian and ethnic violence with Greek irredentism, the

3 Schechner, Richard, "Ritual and performance", in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 622.

4 See, for instance, Makdisi, Ussama, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Grandits, Hannes, Nathalie Clayer and Robert Pichler (eds.), *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans: The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

circumstances of the Eastern Question and reaction against a modernising state which wished to reinforce its hold over society, produced a situation of great, and almost constant, tension.⁵

Starting with the Greek War of Independence (1821-30), the Christians of the island revolted on several occasions with the aim of seceding from the Ottoman empire. Especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was practically one major mass protest or revolt every few years, as the Cretan Christians redefined themselves as Greeks who wanted to join the Kingdom of Greece. The revolt of 1866-69, which became known as the “Great Cretan Revolt” (*Μεγάλη Κρητική Επανάσταση*), was marked by the siege of the walled Arkadi Monastery by the Ottoman army. The Monastery – in the rural countryside of the district of Rethymno – was the local headquarters of the Christian rebels, where also many women and children had found shelter. On 9 November 1866⁶ the Ottoman troops stormed the monastery and the besieged Christians blew up its magazine, killing not only many among them but also a large number of the besiegers. Thus, they set an example of heroism and sacrifice for freedom for the Christians of the island and the Greek nation at large, and evoked international sympathy for their cause. Eventually the rebels failed to obtain their main goal, namely, union with Greece, but the Ottoman government was forced to accord the Christians of Crete stronger participation in local institutions of governance and to recognise Greek, alongside Ottoman Turkish, as the official language of the administration, in order to appease international pressure and put an end to the insurrection. These measures were included in a *ferman* of January 1868 which came to be known as the Organic Law (or Statute) of Crete.⁷

5 On the strained relations between Muslims and Christians in nineteenth-century Crete, see Andriotis, Nikos, “Χριστιανοί και μουσουλμάνοι στην Κρήτη, 1821-1924: ένας αιώνας συνεχούς αναμέτρησης εντός και εκτός του πεδίου της μάχης” [Christians and Muslims in Crete, 1821-1924: a century of continuous confrontation in and out of the battlefield], *Μνήμων*, 26 (2004), 63-94; Poullos, Stefanos, “The Muslim exodus from Crete: property destruction, urbanisation and counterviolence”, in *Social Transformation and Mass Mobilisation in the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean Cities, 1900-1923*, ed. Andreas Lyberatos (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2013), pp. 245-65.

6 All dates are given in the Julian calendar.

7 The classic account of the siege of the Arkadi Monastery was written by the Metropolitan of Crete, Veneris, Timotheos M., *Το Αρχάδι διά των αιώνων* [Arkadi over the Centuries] (Athens: Printed by Pysros, 1938), pp. 133-454. See also the special issue No. 944 (1 November 1966) of the journal *Νέα Εστία*. For the wider context, see Bourne, Kenneth, “Great Britain and the Cretan Revolt, 1866-1869”, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 35/84 (1956), 74-94; Prevelakis, Eleftherios, “Η μεγάλη κρητική επανάσταση 1866-1869” [The Great Cretan Revolt, 1866-1869], in *Πεπραγμένα του Β΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου. Τόμος Δ΄* [Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Cretan Studies. Volume IV] (Athens: Philological Society

In their quest for secession from the Ottoman empire, the Cretan Christians were generally backed by the Greek state and citizens' associations in Athens, the island of Syros and elsewhere, that supported their demand for union with Greece, while volunteers from that country arrived in the island and fought with the rebels at times of insurgency. For their part, the European Great Powers intervened more than once either to prevent war between the Ottoman empire and Greece over Crete or, as in other similar situations across the Ottoman empire, to put pressure on the Ottoman government to grant more political rights and a greater role in administration to the Christian community of the island. In a process which had started in the early 1830s, when Crete was governed by Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt, local Christians and Muslims were given the right to participate in representative administrative councils. As time went by, political rights were expanded in favour of the Christians – at least on paper – under pressure from the Great Powers: eventually, Christians came to be appointed governors of the island, the representatives of the Christian population held a clear majority in the General Assembly (*Meclis-i Umumi*, i.e. the Cretan parliament), and Greek was recognised in 1878 as the official language in which the sessions of the courts of law and the General Assembly would be held.⁸

In 1896 the European Great Powers effectively placed Crete under their supervision and protection. After a Muslim mob killed hundreds of Christians, among whom were 17 British soldiers and the Consul of Great Britain in Heraklion (Ottoman Kandiye) on 25 August 1898, the Great Powers obliged the Ottoman government to withdraw its troops from the island, which became an autonomous province under nominal Ottoman suzerainty. This proved to be

“The Chrysostom”, 1969), pp. 401-20; Kunalalp, Sinan (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “the Eastern Question”: The Cretan Uprising, 1866-1869*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010).

- 8 There is abundant scholarly literature about the political, economic and social history of Crete in the nineteenth century. See, for instance, Kalliataki-Mertikopoulou, Kallia, *Ελληνικός αλτρωτισμός και οθωμανικές μεταρρυθμίσεις: η περίπτωση της Κρήτης, 1868-1877* [Greek Irredentism and Ottoman Reforms: the Case of Crete, 1868-1877] (Athens: Estia, 1988); Kallivretakis, Leonidas, “A century of revolutions: the Cretan Question between European and Near Eastern politics”, in *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 11-35; Adıyeke, A. Nükhet and Nuri Adıyeke, *Fethinden Kaybına Girit* (Istanbul: Babiali Kültür Yayıncılığı, 2006), pp. 123 ff.; Perakis, Manos, *Το τέλος της οθωμανικής Κρήτης. Οι όροι κατάρρευσης του καθεστώτος της Χαλέπας (1878-89)* [The End of Ottoman Crete: the Terms of Collapse of the Chalepa Regime (1878-89)] (Athens: Vivliorama – National Research Foundation “Eleftherios K. Venizelos”, 2008); Perakis, Manos, *Κρήτη. Το νησί των προσαρμογών. Οικονομία και κοινωνία τον 19^ο αι. (1830-1913)* [Crete: the Island of Adjustments. Economy and Society in the Nineteenth Century (1830-1913)] (Athens: Asini, 2017).

an intermediate stage towards the incorporation of Crete into the Kingdom of Greece, which was made official in December 1913.⁹

Modernisation and the Press in Nineteenth-Century Crete

The nineteenth century was not only a period of sectarian violence and political turmoil, but also a time of modernisation for Crete, as for the rest of the Ottoman empire, with regard to both state administration and society.¹⁰ It is generally accepted that, in the Cretan case, the first set of modernising policies was introduced by Mehmed Ali Paşa who was granted control of the island between 1830 and 1840. One among them was the publication, in late 1830, of an official gazette, *Vekayi-i Giridiye*, which is thought to be the first newspaper that was ever published in Crete. *Vekayi-i Giridiye* was bilingual, with the Ottoman Turkish and Greek texts appearing side by side.¹¹ However, no privately owned newspapers were published in Crete until quite late in the nineteenth century, with the exception of a few clandestine ones printed by Christian rebels during revolts by means of portable printing presses.¹² The Porte agreed to

9 On this period, see Adıyeke, Ayşe Nükhet, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı (1896-1908)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000); Şenışık, Pınar, *The Transformation of Ottoman Crete: Revolts, Politics and Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Andriotis, Nikos, “Η διεθνής επέμβαση στην Κρήτη 1896-1909” [International intervention in Crete, 1896-1909], in *Κυριαρχίες και συνειδήσεις στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο (1880-1920)* [Sovereignties and Consciousnesses in the Eastern Mediterranean (1880-1920)], ed. Socrates Petmezas and Lena Tzedaki-Apostolaki (Heraklion: Society of Cretan Historical Studies, 2014), pp. 285-309.

10 For an examination of political developments in Crete in the context of the centralising policies of the Tanzimat and reaction to increased taxation, see Kostopoulou, Elektra, “Τα πολλά πρόσωπα της Αυτονομίας: Οθωμανική Μεταρρύθμιση και η Κρήτη του 19^{ου} αιώνα” [The many faces of autonomy: Ottoman reform and Crete in the nineteenth century], in *Κυριαρχίες και συνειδήσεις*, ed. Petmezas and Tzedaki-Apostolaki, pp. 35-51.

11 Tsoutsos, Giorgos Ath. and Christos N. Teazis (eds.), *Τα Κρητικά Γεγονότα (Vaka-i Giritiye): μία ελληνοοθωμανική εφημερίδα του 19ου αιώνα. Το διασωθέν ιστορικό αρχείο* [Cretan Events (Vaka-i Giritiye): a Greek-Ottoman Newspaper of the Nineteenth Century. The Surviving Historical Archive] (Athens: 3E – Elikranon, 2010); Yılmaz, Seçil and Panagiotis Krokidas, “Living in a modernizing misery: discipline and state beneficence in Crete under the rule of Mehmet Ali, 1831-1834”, in *Πεπραγμένα Ι΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου (Χανιά, 1-8 Οκτωβρίου 2006). Τόμος Γ1. Νεοελληνική περίοδος (Κρητική ιστορία 1821-1913)* [Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference of Cretan Studies (Chania, 1-8 October 2006). Volume C1: Modern Greek Period (Cretan History 1821-1913)], ed. Eratosthenis G. Kapsomenos (Chania: Philological Society “The Chrysostom”, 2011), pp. 71-89, esp. pp. 71-2.

12 There is scanty information about the first printing presses which were established in Crete during the nineteenth century, Skiadas, Nikos E., *Χρονικό της ελληνικής τυπογραφίας*.

permit the establishment of private printing presses and the publication of newspapers in July 1876, in reply to demands submitted by the Christian members of the General Assembly, but the right to publish newspapers, which are going to be the focus of this chapter, was formally granted in October 1878, with the so-called Pact of Halepa, which was ratified by a *ferman*.¹³ The publication of newspapers in Crete gathered momentum from that time onwards.¹⁴ If we compare this with Greek-language press elsewhere, this was quite late in time: the earliest newspaper in Greek is thought to have been published about a hundred years earlier, in Vienna in the 1780s, and by the late 1870s there was a tradition of several decades of Greek press both in the Ottoman empire and in the Greek state.¹⁵ If we compare it, on the other hand, with Turkish-language press in the Ottoman empire, again we observe a delay, but not as pronounced,

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- Μαχόμενη τυπογραφία. Σύμμικτα. Τόμος δεύτερος 1829-1862* [A Chronicle of Greek Printing. Militant Typography. Miscellanea. Volume II 1829-1862] (Athens: Gutenberg, 1981), pp. 326-7; Ekkekakis, G. P., *Τα κρητικά βιβλία: σχέδιασμα κρητικής βιβλιογραφίας. Α' 1499-1863* [The Cretan Books: a Sketch of Cretan Bibliography. I. 1499-1863] (Rethymno: Grafotechniki Kritis, 1991), pp. 7-8; Adıyeke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı*, p. 96.
- 13 Kalliataki-Mertikopoulou, *Ελληνικός αλυτρωτισμός*, pp. 274, 287-8; Perakis, *Το τέλος της οθωμανικής Κρήτης*, pp. 47, 426.
- 14 For the Greek and Turkish-language Cretan press, see Strauss, Johann, "The Cretan Muslims and their struggle for Ottomanism: some evidence from the periodical press (Sada-yı Girid, İstikbal)", in *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi: Tebliğler. Marmara Üniversitesi, Türkiyat Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, İstanbul 21-25 Ağustos 1989* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1990), pp. 55-66; Koloğlu, Orhan, "La presse turque en Crète", in *Presse turque et presse de Turquie. Actes des colloques d'Istanbul*, ed. Nathalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic and Thierry Zarcone (Istanbul and Paris: Editions Isis, 1992), pp. 259-67; Strauss, Johann, "Unutulmuş bir Cemaat: Girit Müslümanlarının Abdülhamid Devrindeki, İkinci Meşrutiyet Devrindeki ve İlhaktan Sonraki Faaliyetleri", in *XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi. Ankara, 5-9 Eylül 1990. Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1994), vol. 5, pp. 2105-14; Strauss, Johann, "Probleme der Öffentlichkeitswirkung der muslimischen Presse Kretas", in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog, Raoul Motika and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1995), pp. 155-74; Adıyeke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı*, pp. 94-100, 276-9; Papiomytologu, Giannis Z., "Ο τύπος στην Κρήτη" [The press in Crete], in *Ο ελληνικός τύπος 1784 ως σήμερα: ιστορικές και θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις. Πρακτικά διεθνούς συνεδρίου. Αθήνα, 23-25 Μαΐου 2002* [The Greek Press, 1784 to Today: Historical and Theoretical Approaches. Proceedings of an International Conference. Athens, 23-25 May 2002], ed. Loukia Droulia (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research/NHRF, 2005), pp. 330-6.
- 15 On the history of the Greek press, see Arslan, Ali, *Ο ελληνικός τύπος στο οθωμανικό κράτος, όπως καταγράφεται από τα έγγραφα της εποχής* [Greek Press in the Ottoman State, as Recorded in Documents of that Era], trans. Christos L. Pampalos (Athens: Eptalofos, 2004); Droulia, *Ο ελληνικός τύπος*; Mystakidou, Katerina, *Η Μεγάλη Ιδέα στον τύπο του Γένους: ο τύπος στην Ελλάδα και στην Οθωμανική Αυτοκρατορία (1800-1923)* [The Megali Idea in the Press of the Nation: Press in Greece and the Ottoman Empire (1800-1923)], 2nd edition (Athens: Patakis, 2005).

given that the earliest privately owned newspaper, which was not an official or semi-official gazette, appeared in 1860.¹⁶

From a political point of view, modernisation was a means for the central government to tighten its control over society and the provinces. But it really worked in the opposite direction as well, as technical advances, among which was the press, facilitated the dissemination of ideas among the population and the organisation of movements that contested the legitimacy of the Ottoman empire, putting forward new concepts such as that of the nation-state. One might consider, in this context, the newspapers which were published in Crete during revolts with a view to publicising the demands and goals of the rebels, such as, for instance, the newspaper *Kriti*, which was published by the insurgents in 1866-67, at the time of the Great Cretan Revolt, and which had as its subtitle “Freedom or Death” and below it, in brackets, the slogans: “Long live union [with Greece]; long live King George I [of Greece]”, making absolutely clear in a succinct way what the rebels sought to achieve;¹⁷ or, Greek newspapers in Greece and elsewhere which were used to foster sympathy for the revolt and to help raise money for the Christian refugees who had left Crete as a result of the violence that prevailed on the island.¹⁸

Obviously the Ottoman authorities were aware of this, as is attested to by the rigorous imposition of censorship, which functioned as “a mechanism of political control”, in the words of İpek Yosmaoğlu.¹⁹ Indeed, one reason why

16 Yosmaoğlu, İpek K., “Chasing the printed word: press censorship in the Ottoman empire, 1876-1913”, *The Turkish Studies Association Journal*, 27/1-2 (2003), p. 17. On the history of the press in the Ottoman empire, see also Clayer, Popovic and Zarcone, *Presse turque et presse de Turquie*; Koloğlu, Orhan, “The printing press and journalism in the Ottoman state”, *Boğaziçi Journal*, 18/1-2 (2004), 27-33.

17 “Κρήτη. Ελευθερία ή θάνατος. (Ζήτω η ένωση, ζήτω ο βασιλεύς Γεώργιος ο Α΄)”; Sgouraki, Iro, “Κρήτη” [Kriti], in *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του ελληνικού τύπου, 1784-1974: εφημερίδες, περιοδικά, δημοσιογράφοι, εκδότες* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Press, 1784-1974: Newspapers, Periodicals, Publishers], ed. Loukia Droulia and Gioula Koutsopanagou (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research/NHRF, 2008), vol. II, p. 632.

18 Karathanasi, Aggeliki, “Περιπτώσεις προσωπικών συνεισφορών στους πρόσφυγες της Κρήτης. Η συμβολή των εφημερίδων” [Cases of personal contributions to the refugees from Crete: the role of the newspapers], in *Το Ηράκλειο και η Κρήτη από την τελευταία περίοδο της οθωμανικής κυριαρχίας ως την Ένωση με την Ελλάδα (1866-1913). Πρακτικά επιστημονικού συνεδρίου. Ηράκλειο, 23-26 Οκτωβρίου 2013* [Heraklion and Crete from the Last Period of Ottoman Rule to Union with Greece (1866-1913): Proceedings of a Scholarly Conference. Heraklion, 23-26 October 2013], ed. Manolis G. Androulidakis (Heraklion: Vikelaia Municipal Library, 2017), pp. 91-102.

19 Yosmaoğlu, “Chasing the printed word”, esp. pp. 16-30. The quotation is from p. 16. Cf. İnuğur, M. Nuri, “Naissance et développement de la presse dans l’empire ottoman”, in Clayer, Popovic and Zarcone, *Presse turque et presse de Turquie*, pp. 88-9, on the decree that the Ottoman government issued in 1867 in order to restrict the freedom of the press

many of the Greek-language Cretan newspapers of the late nineteenth century were short-lived or temporarily discontinued their publication was because they were ordered by the state authorities to close down. Under such difficult conditions for the press, not only in Crete, but across the Ottoman empire, obviously caution, self-censorship and collaboration with the authorities were means through which newspaper owners sought to prolong the lives of their publications, which were sources of income and socio-political clout for them.²⁰ On the front page of the first issue of the newspaper *Mesogeios* of Chania (Ottoman Hania), published on 1 December 1891, its owner, director and editor, Ioannis G. Papadakis, announced that he was granted by the imperial government the right to publish the paper as a “semi-official” newspaper of the Ottoman administration, and reminded the readers of their obligation to be obedient subjects of the sultan, “who is imbued with pure principles, beneficial for the people, applied equally towards all his subjects”. Obedience to the sultan is a prerequisite for progress and prosperity, according to Papadakis.²¹

The press, in the form of newspapers and magazines, really became a mass phenomenon in the nineteenth century, not only in the Eastern Mediterranean but also in Western Europe, and grew together with the idea of public opinion as an important social and political agent. The press proved an effective way to promote political agendas and create an impact on the ideas and mentality of the population, which was seen as a political actor that could influence formal political procedures.²² Benedict Anderson has stressed the role

in reaction to criticism of its handling of the Great Cretan Revolt. See also Arslan, *O ελληνικός τύπος*, pp. 20-3, 35-8, 53-4; Karathanasi, “Περιπτώσεις”, p. 102.

20 Ebru Boyar problematises the relationship between Abdülhamid II and newspaper owners and editors in her “The press and the palace: the two-way relationship between Abdülhamid II and the press, 1876-1908”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 69/3 (2006), 417-32.

21 The newspaper is accessible online via the portal of the Greek General State Archives: <<http://arxiomnimon.gak.gr/browse/index.html?cid=144139>>; accessed: 18 March 2018. Cf. Guillon, H el ene, *Le Journal de Salonique. Un p eriodique juif dans l'empire ottoman (1895-1911)* (Paris: PUPS, 2013), pp. 305-6. The semi-official status must have meant that the newspaper was subsidised by the state. Cf. Pagkalias, Xenophon, “Οι κρητικ ες εφημερίδες του περασμ ενου αιώνα” [The Cretan newspapers of the previous century], *Κρητική Εστία*, 260/1 (1980), p. 409, and Boyar, “The press and the palace”, p. 428.

22 On the press and its political uses, see Charle, Christophe, *Le si cle de la presse (1830-1939)* (Paris:  ditions du Seuil, 2004), pp. 20-1 and *passim*; Brummett, Palmira, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Guillon, *Le Journal de Salonique*, pp. 261-354. Cf. Papataxiarchis, Evthymios, “Reconfiguring the Ottoman political imagination: petitioning and print culture in the early Tanzimat”, in *Political Initiatives ‘From the Bottom Up’ in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete VII. A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2009*, ed. Antonis Anastopoulos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2012), pp. 191-230.

of newspapers in cultivating national consciousness in particular.²³ In the turbulent political climate of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Crete, the question of the political status of the island between the Ottoman empire and Greece, and promotion and/or defence of the interests of either the Orthodox Christian (Greek) or the Muslim (Ottoman/Turkish) (“imagined”, in Anderson’s terms) community were high on the agendas of many newspapers.²⁴

When thinking of the impact of the press on society, one has of course also to take into consideration the (il)literacy factor, since few among the Cretan population would have been able to read newspapers even in the late nineteenth century. The overall illiteracy rate in Crete exceeded 85 per cent of the population, according to the official census of 1881, and the situation was only slightly better in the towns: in Rethymno, for instance, the illiteracy rate was 74 per cent. However, things were much better among the Christian urban male population with the illiteracy rate dropping to 54.5 per cent in Rethymno (still, 72.5 per cent among the largely Greek-speaking Muslims of the town were illiterate).²⁵ Besides, practically nothing is known about the distribution networks of the newspapers or about their circulation. But we may assume that their readers were predominantly upper and middle-class urbanites, i.e. the group of people who were nearer to the centres of political decision-making, and included those who wished to exert political and social influence. In any case, a point to be made here is that, as one should not overestimate the impact of the press on society, one should not think that this impact is limited only to those who buy the newspapers or the literate section of the population, as newspapers can be passed around among family members, friends, and neighbours, or be read aloud; or their contents can be narrated or discussed orally.²⁶

23 Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 30, 37-40, 61-5.

24 See, for instance, Strauss, “The Cretan Muslims” and “Probleme der Öffentlichkeitswirkung”.

25 The illiteracy rate was significantly higher among women than men, especially among Christians; Stavrakis, Nikolaos, *Στατιστική του πληθυσμού της Κρήτης μετά διαφόρων γεωγραφικών, ιστορικών, αρχαιολογικών, εκκλησιαστικών κτλ. ειδήσεων περί της νήσου* [Statistics about the Population of Crete with Various Geographical, Historical, Archaeological, Ecclesiastical, etc., News about the Island] (Athens: Printing Press “Paliggenesia” Io. Aggelopoulou, 1890), Part I, pp. 199-201; Part III, pp. 152-3. See also Strauss, “The Cretan Muslims”, pp. 60-1. On illiteracy as a factor which limited the social impact of the press, cf. Yosmaoğlu, “Chasing the printed word”, pp. 48-9.

26 Stein, Sarah Abrevaya, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian*

Public Festivities and the Press: the 1884 Memorial Ceremonies for the Battle of Arkadi

Something one may find information about in the late-nineteenth-century Greek-language Cretan press is public ceremonies and celebrations. Such events serve multiple purposes, and may hold high symbolic value. On the political level, they may be used to legitimise or delegitimise authority, and, on a wider socio-political plane, they may constitute statements of empowerment and defiance, or constitute occasions during which tensions and passions run high. For instance, it is reported by a contemporaneous source that the guild of wine sellers of Heraklion organised a public procession on 21 November 1879, having at its head their flag that depicted the Presentation of the Virgin Mary which is celebrated on that day. This was unprecedented and, thus, quite shocking for the local Muslims. A few days later, on 6 December, Saint Nicholas's Day, a Muslim mob, armed with knives and clubs, attacked the Christians during mass, and tore apart the flag of the guilds of the shoemakers that bore the image of the saint, so as to avert another public procession by the Christians.²⁷

Furthermore, public ceremonies and celebrations may serve to familiarise people with ideas and ideologies or commemorate historical events that are considered to be politically important. Overall, they are one of the building blocks in the construction of collective identities.²⁸

The press is useful in this context as a medium through which ceremonies and celebrations are announced and advertised, but also narrated.²⁹ In this

and Ottoman Empires (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 64-6.

27 Parlamas, Menelaos G., "Ιστορικά και βιογραφικά σημειώματα του Στεφάνου Νικολαΐδου" [Historical and biographical notes by Stefanos Nikolaidis], *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 3 (1949), p. 331.

28 On public festivities and ceremonies see Zandi-Sayek, Sibel, "Fêtes et processions: rituel et politique dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle", in *Smyrne, la ville oubliée? 1830-1930. Mémoires d'un grand port ottoman*, ed. Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2006), pp. 157-68; Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 28-36, 47-71; Faroqhi, Suraiya and Arzu Öztürkmen (eds.), *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World* (London and New York: Seagull Books, 2014). There is also extensive relevant literature with reference to early modern and modern Europe. See, for instance, Corbin, Alain, Noëlle Gérôme and Danielle Tartakowsky (eds.), *Les usages politiques des fêtes aux XIX^e-XX^e siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994); Friedrich, Karin (ed.), *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000). Interestingly, Anderson describes the daily reading of newspapers as a mass ceremony in itself, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 39.

29 Cf. Boyar, "The press and the palace", p. 424; Guillon, *Le Journal de Salonique*, pp. 167-203.

way, the press enhances the social appeal and impact of such events and contributes to their goal of constructing and consolidating group identities. As an example of this function of the press, I will focus, in the remainder of this chapter, on how the eighteenth anniversary of the Battle of the Arkadi Monastery was reported by the newspaper *Arkadion*, which was published in Rethymno, the third biggest town of Crete in terms of population, and the one that is closest to the Monastery. This was in fact the first time that the Siege of Arkadi was celebrated either in Rethymno or elsewhere in Crete,³⁰ and it should be seen as a strong political statement on the part of the Christians of Rethymno primarily but also of the rest of the island. Christian associations from other Cretan districts were officially represented in the festivities.

As is explicitly stated in its first issue, the name of the weekly Greek-language newspaper *Arkadion* was a direct reference and tribute to the battle of 1866 that had come to symbolise the self-sacrifice of the Christian Cretans for the sake of freedom. The first issue of this newspaper appeared on 29 September 1884 as a continuation of the newspaper *Neos Radamanthys*,³¹ and it continued its publication until 27 September 1888, with certain intervals, as the authorities closed the newspaper down on several occasions because of articles that it had published.³² *Arkadion* was a patriotic newspaper, which espoused the ideals and goals of Greek nationalism in Crete. On the first page, under its title, the newspaper featured a telling quotation from Plato's *Crito*: "Your country is worthier, more to be revered, more sacred, ..., than your father and mother and all your other ancestors".³³ The newspaper's owner and editor,

30 Maragoudakis, Dionysios, *Το ιερόν και ηρωικόν της Κρήτης Αρκάδι* [The Holy and Heroic Arkadi of Crete] (Athens: n.p., 1996), p. 221.

31 The reasons for the change of name are not explained either in the last issue of *Neos Radamanthys* or in the first issue of *Arkadion*. Unless it is related to problems with the authorities, it is possible that the change of name was connected to the forthcoming festivities in commemoration of the siege of 1866.

32 Papiomytoglou, Giannis Z., "Αρκάδιον" [Arkadion], in *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του ελληνικού τύπου*, vol. 1, pp. 283-4; Pagkalias, "Οι κρητικές εφημερίδες", p. 410. The newspaper is available online via the portal of the Greek National Documentation Centre: <http://reader.ekt.gr/bookReader/show/index.php?lib=GRRET&path=GRRET_0000000000010009#page/1/mode/1up>; accessed: 23 March 2018. I would like to thank Georgios Ioannis Antonopoulos, Apostolos Dimitriadis, Maria Kalamata, Melina Manoura and Artemis Vrontzaki, students of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Crete, who have indexed nineteenth-century Rethymniot newspapers – in the context of the Internship Programme of the Department – for the needs of research projects of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FO.R.T.H.

33 "Πατρός τε και Μητρός και των άλλων προγόνων απάντων τιμιωτερόν [sic.] εστιν η Πατρίς, και σεμνότερον και αγιώτερον. (Πλάτων)". The English translation is from *The Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), pp. 40-1.

Stylios Emm. Kalaitzakis, had participated in the Great Cretan Revolt of 1866-69, and was arrested for the articles that he printed in *Arkadion*.³⁴

In its issues of 27 October and 3 November 1884 *Arkadion* announced the festivities that were to take place on the anniversary of the storming of the Monastery by the Ottoman troops, and, in its issue of 10 November, it reported extensively on the ceremonies that had taken place two days earlier.³⁵ In his exaggerated rhetorical style, the Bishop Dionysios Maragoudakis (1872-1953), author of a book about the Arkadi Monastery, acknowledged the role of *Arkadion* in stimulating enthusiasm and patriotic emotion among the Christians of Rethymno ahead of the festivities of 1884:

the Rethymno newspaper 'Arkadion' induces great courage by inspired and fiery articles, like a holy trumpet calling the believers and patriots to participate in the great festivities. In these, most convincing exhortations are put forward, indicative of the patriotic fire and genuine enthusiasm nestling in the hearts of the Cretans, together with the sweet hope of national restoration ... One thinks that one listens to an invitation to divine service, pronounced by the holy mystagogue. The most vivid emotion occupies the reader and a sacred shiver runs through his body. He gives in unwittingly and performs what is recommended, as the spark grows into a galloping flame by means of a tiny fuse.³⁶

On the front page of the issue of 27 October, the newspaper announced that, apart from the regular annual religious memorial service that took place in the Arkadi Monastery,³⁷ a local cultural society (*Αἱ Μούσαι*, The Muses) would organise a second memorial service and a civil memorial ceremony, in the town of Rethymno, for the victims of Arkadi and all those who died anywhere in Crete "for our faith and the motherland". The newspaper praised this initiative and urged all its readers to participate in the festivities, specifying that participation is a "token of eternal gratitude that is due to those giants, who ... glorified the name of the Cretans through their most heroic actions, actions that

34 Papiomytoglou, Giannis Z., "Καλαϊτζάκης, Στυλιανός Εμμ." [Kalaitzakis, Stylios Emm.], in *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του ελληνικού τύπου*, vol. 11, pp. 490-1; Pagkalias, "Οι κρητικές εφημερίδες", p. 410.

35 For the annual public ceremonies in commemoration of the Battle of Arkadi, see Deredakis, Nikolaos I., *Αρκάδι: 150 χρόνια εορτασμών* [Arkadi: 150 Years of Celebrations] (Rethymno: n.p., 2016); Maragoudakis, *Αρκάδι*, pp. 221-36.

36 Maragoudakis, *Αρκάδι*, pp. 221-2.

37 A short item on page 3 informed readers that the regular memorial service at the Monastery would be more magnificent than those of the previous years.

only Greek hearts are capable of daring to undertake". The programme of the festivities was printed immediately below the announcement and praise of the newspaper. The Bishop of Rethymno was to officiate in the religious service, which would take place in the morning, while in the evening of the same day speeches would be given at the boys' school and songs would be sung by the pupils. The organisers extended their invitation to religious dignitaries, the members of the administrative and municipal councils and local associations, as well as to the consuls of foreign states, and "any other Cretan or foreign national who wishes to pay the slightest tribute of gratitude to those who died for faith and the motherland in Arkadi and elsewhere in Crete". The religious dignitaries invited were only the Christian ones, and the same applied to the members of councils. No mention was made of inviting governors or other representatives of the central government, and apparently Muslims were not expected to attend the ceremonies, which were conceived as what Danielle Tartakowsky has called "les fêtes partisanses", expressions of opposition to the Ottoman regime.³⁸

The right hand column of the front page of the newspaper was occupied by an emotional account of the siege of the Arkadi Monastery and the sacrifice of its Christian defenders, which continued on page 2. The title was "Days of glory" and the text was signed by someone who used the pen name "Phoenix" (Φοίνιξ), in direct reference to his remark that the Monastery had not perished in 1866, but had been reborn stronger from its ashes; possibly also a reference to the idea of the resurrection of Crete through liberation from the Ottoman yoke. This text ended with exhortations to readers to attend the forthcoming religious festival at the Monastery. Thus, the newspaper aimed at persuading the Rethymniot Christians to attend both events, in the town and in Arkadi, in large numbers.

Indeed, the official announcement, issued by the Abbot, of the memorial service that was to be held at the Monastery, was given front-page coverage in the next issue of the newspaper, on 3 November. It was followed by another text, signed again by "Phoenix" – much shorter than that of the previous issue – that urged the Christians to attend the service. The readers were addressed as "brethren", and the victims were praised for "eagerly spilling their blood in order to resurrect the motherland", meaning a Greek Crete. Phoenix concluded his text by stating: "The invisible sacred shade of the martyrs that will be present above us will pray with us for the sake of the motherland. Let's [all] go [to the service]! Let's go!"³⁹

38 Tartakowsky, Danielle, "Les fêtes partisanses", in Corbin, G r me and Tartakowsky, *Les usages politiques des f tes*, p. 39.

39 *Arkadion*, 3 November 1884, front page.

Public events such as these religious services, patriotic speeches and songs reinforced the feeling of difference between the Christians and the Muslims of Crete, and contributed to the shaping of a Greek national identity and the cultivation of patriotic fervour among the former. In this context, the press served as the medium that disseminated knowledge about the events, but also itself contributed to raising national awareness. At the same time, it delegitimised the Ottoman state, which was the unnamed enemy, the perpetrator of crimes against Christians.

The accounts of the festivities that took place both in the town and the Monastery, as well as the text of the speech that the lawyer Evangelhos G. Stavroulakis made during the evening ceremony, occupied three and a half out of the four pages of the issue of 10 November. The description of the celebrations was preceded by an unsigned editorial, apparently by the owner and editor of the newspaper, in which the tone was again patriotic with strong sectarian overtones: Arkadi was described as “a select place where Christianity inflicted a terrible blow on barbarism”,⁴⁰ while, once again, the sacrifice was described as one made for the sake of religious faith and the motherland, the two pillars of Greek national ideology. The piece about the ceremonies in the town put emphasis on how the spaces where the morning and evening festivities took place had been arranged in conformity with the national character and message of the occasion. Suffice it to say that the centrepiece in the cathedral, where the memorial service was held in the morning, was a cenotaph with an obelisk on top; the cenotaph and the obelisk were decorated with inscriptions citing the years of Christian revolts in Crete, the date of the fall of Arkadi and phrases commemorating the martyrs of the siege. More importantly though, to the right and left of the obelisk there were two flags, which were decorated with ancient Greek sayings: a black one with the phrase “The day [of liberation] will come” on it, and a blue and white one (the colours of the Greek flag) with the phrase “Fight for your country”. At the boys’ school in the evening, three portraits were hung on the wall behind the speakers: in the middle the portrait of Gabriel, the martyred Abbot of the Arkadi Monastery in 1866, and on either side of it the portraits of the king and queen of the Kingdom to which the organisers of the event felt that Crete should belong: King George I of Greece and his queen, Olga. The rest of the decoration was as patriotic: a portrait of another martyr of the Greek nation in Ottoman hands, Patriarch Gregory V, praying; a picture of him being led to the gallows to be hanged; pictures depicting the “Arkadi drama and other scenes of the holy struggle”; laurel branches as symbols of honour; and the flags of the cenotaph in the cathedral

40 *Arkadion*, 10 November 1884, front page.

and the wreaths that had been laid on it.⁴¹ On the other hand, the newspaper dedicated very few lines to the evening festivities as such, with the exception of the solemn speech by Stavroulakis, which was reproduced as a separate item. The newspaper laconically noted that they consisted of two songs sung by schoolchildren, speeches, and the reading of a poem entitled “Arkadi” (*Αρχάδιον*).

Furthermore, the newspaper remarked that the morning crowd was divided between the two places where the memorial services took place, i.e., the cathedral and the Monastery, but in the evening the hall of the school was packed with many people standing, while many others had to wait in the schoolyard. The newspaper stressed the deep emotion and tears of those who attended both the morning and evening ceremonies.

The description of how the anniversary was celebrated at the Monastery was much longer and detailed and even more emotional than the account of the festivities in the town. Predictably, Phoenix was the author of this piece in the newspaper. He, too, put emphasis on how emotional and painful it was for all to gather in Arkadi, pray for the martyred heroes, listen to the accounts of the survivors, and attend vespers in the evening before and liturgy followed by two memorial services, one in the Monastery’s church and another at the grave of those who died defending it, on the morning of the anniversary. Apparently, the readers, too, were expected to be moved by what they read, including a passionate description of the flag of the rebels of 1866, full of holes from enemy bullets. The flag took centre stage in the ceremonies, both in the church and at the grave of the martyrs, where it was carried by one of the survivors of 1866, at the head of a solemn procession. As was remarked by Phoenix, the flag “was a rag, but a rag more precious than royal purple clothes”.⁴² Phoenix also quoted the speech that had been sent by the “Cretans in Athens” (described in it as “the capital of the free motherland”), and was read over the grave. In it, those who died fighting were addressed as the “holy martyrs” who “fell heroically for Greek greatness and the freedom of Crete, having stayed faithful to the ancient oath of our forefathers”. The living reassured them that “we, the younger generations of Cretans, swear on your holy bones that we will keep faithfully and unswervingly alive the flame of your sacred oath [for freedom]”. After the completion of the religious services, those present feasted together, raising toasts “to the motherland” and singing heroic songs which praised the qualities of their ancestors. Besides, as Phoenix noted in his description of the deep emotional state of the crowd, their bountiful tears were “not tears of sorrow for

⁴¹ *Arkadion*, 10 November 1884, front page.

⁴² *Arkadion*, 10 November 1884, p. 2.

their [i.e., the martyrs'] death, but tears of joy for the glory with which the motherland had crowned them".⁴³

In this issue, which appeared only two days after the celebrations, we observe the newspaper recording and disseminating information about ceremonies which were meant to inculcate the ideas of Greek national pride and union with Greece into the minds of the people: this had an impact on those who were absent from the ceremonies and were now being informed about them and their political meaning, but also on those present whose memory of the day must have been filtered through the emotional reporting of the newspaper. On page 4, the editor praised once again the five members of the organising committee of the Rethymno ceremonies for the hard work that they had put into them, thus singling them out as role models for the Christian community.

The partisan announcement and reporting by *Arkadion* of the 1884 Arkadi festivities is a characteristic example of how ceremonies and the press can combine to shape mentalities and identities; in this particular case, in the service of the Greek national idea, the formation and consolidation of the Greek national identity, and the delegitimisation of the Ottoman empire, towards achieving the goal of political union with the Kingdom of Greece.

If one browses through the pages of the newspapers of Rethymno, one may find more evidence of this function of the press through the reporting of ceremonies and celebrations. For instance, one may consider the reporting of ceremonies that were held in Athens, which was perceived as the national centre. On 12 November 1883, the predecessor of *Arkadion*, the newspaper *Neos Radamanthys*, reproduced the programme of the celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Arkadi in Athens, expressing the wish that similar ceremonies should be organised in Crete, too, as indeed happened one year later.⁴⁴ What is interesting in this case is that the newspaper reports on the Athens festivities in very enthusiastic terms, but exclusively on the basis of the programme announced, without having access to information about what really took place; this uncertainty is reflected in the somewhat awkward formulation of the text: "A most formal feast and celebration, to be attended by many people, was expected to take place in Athens last Tuesday, 8 November ... the Most Reverend Metropolitan [of Athens] was to officiate ... the Reverend Archimandrite Vlachakis was willing to give a speech, [that would be] appropriate to the circumstance, in the church ...".⁴⁵ On 14 October 1884, *Arkadion* reported the il-

43 *Arkadion*, 10 November 1884, p. 2.

44 *Neos Radamanthys*, 12 November 1883, front page.

45 *Neos Radamanthys*, 12 November 1883, front page.

lustrious celebration in Athens of the day dedicated to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, the patron saint of the city,⁴⁶ and on 22 December of the same year the celebration of the birthday of the king of Greece; this piece of information was given first-page space.⁴⁷ In an interesting contrast, on 16 April 1888, the same newspaper dedicated only four lines on page 3, in the section “Miscellanea”, to the information that Rethymno had been illuminated the previous evening for the birthday of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Furthermore, it specified that the illumination applied especially to the “Ottoman” (meaning Muslim) section of the town, apparently a fact, but possibly also a hint at the differing political allegiances of the Muslim and the Christian segments of the population.⁴⁸

Finally, it is interesting to note – with regard to sovereigns, and as a reflection of changing political circumstances in the context of Greek nationalism and irredentism – that on 12 January 1885, *Arkadion* published a poem that was critical of the announced engagement of the Greek princess Alexandra to the Russian Grand Duke Paul, because “Russia wishes to grab Constantinople from us”.⁴⁹ It recommended instead that Alexandra should declare that she would marry the one who would liberate Crete, Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace from the Ottomans. Fifteen years later though, on 4 December 1898, when Russian troops were stationed in Rethymno after the departure of the Ottoman army, another local newspaper, *Rethymnon*, reported that the whole region would celebrate with enthusiasm the name day of the great benefactor of Crete, “our motherland”, the Russian Czar Nicholas II!⁵⁰

Conclusion

To conclude, the festivities which are described above, took place within a modern framework of national aspirations, with the press constituting a complementary element of modernity. Such festivities were meant to cultivate a sense of common belonging among the members of the group who organised and attended them,⁵¹ and newspapers served as propagators of this message. Eventually, these and other similar cases of press reporting⁵² show the capacity

46 *Arkadion*, 14 October 1884, p. 3.

47 *Arkadion*, 22 December 1884, front page.

48 Juxtapose with Zandi-Sayek, “Fêtes et processions”, pp. 165-8.

49 *Arkadion*, 12 January 1885, pp. 3-4.

50 *Rethymnon*, 4 December 1898, p. 4.

51 Cf. Zandi-Sayek, “Fêtes et processions”, p. 163.

52 See, for instance, the front page of *Arkadion* of 22 June 1885 for the description of another patriotic memorial service, held in the village of Vamos.

of the press to amplify (or minimise) the significance and impact of festivals and public ceremonies as political events in the service of nationalism or other ideals. Put differently, press reports may be said to constitute the prelife and afterlife of festivals and public ceremonies, with an effect that may be as, or even more, potent as that of the events themselves.

The Late Ottoman Brothel in Istanbul: a Heterosexual Social Space for Homosocial Entertainment?

Ebru Boyar

What difference is there for me in this world between praise and scorn?
Blessed be the beloved friends but who cares what they say!

LEYLA (SAZ) HANIM (1850-1936)

•••

Do not listen in this world to the rejoicing of your enemies [over your
misfortunes].

Enjoy and have a good time, who cares what they say.

ŞEREF HANIM (1809-61)¹

••
•

Despite such brave calls by the nineteenth-century poetesses Leyla Hanım and Şeref Hanım to enjoy one's life without caring what others say, Ottoman society did not allow such merry-making outside social boundaries. One of the strictest boundaries was that between unrelated men and women and this resulted in the lack of a formal heterosexual environment for socialization between the sexes. It is for this reason that Ottoman entertainment culture was dominated by activities in same-sex spaces or in spaces, such as pleasure grounds, where both sexes were to be found but where gender segregation was strictly observed.

In the late Ottoman period, although there were non-Muslim female performers working in theatres and *café chansons* or gypsy women who danced

¹ Quoted in original Turkish in Alkan İspirli, Sehan, "Osmanlı Kadınının Şiiri", *Turkish Studies. International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 2/4 (2007), p. 446.

and sang in public spaces, these performers were to be watched but not to be socialized with. The only exception to this gender segregation in a social space where men and women could socialize in Istanbul seems to have been the ever-present brothels of the capital. However, although such establishments were heterosexual spaces, they did not challenge the traditional structure of Ottoman society. The reason for this was that these establishments in essence catered for homosocial² entertainment.

Limits of Heterosexual Sociability

In the late nineteenth century, the public visibility in Istanbul of women of different social standing and from different classes had increased due to the changing political, economic and social circumstances which, to a certain extent, allowed women to have more mobility than before. Their numbers did not simply increase in usually female frequented locations, such as pleasure gardens, markets or religious spaces, for now some women were educated in newly-established modern schools and hence became part of a student body strolling along the streets of the city. They took part in political meetings, especially after the 1908 Revolution; they were involved in charity work, not by simply donating funds but being a part of such organizations. The new ways of moving around the city also resulted in higher female visibility, on trams and on the steam boats sailing between different shores of the city, which catered for women in special areas allocated to them, both on the boats and in separate waiting areas on the jetties.³

All these changes, however, did not fundamentally alter the nature of heterosexual socialization. Unrelated men and women still were not allowed to talk to each other, let alone fraternize, as neither the society nor the state was ready to tolerate any open socialization. Any opportunity that could create such a possibility was to be prevented. As it was not possible to prevent

2 According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the term homosocial is used in general to denote "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve, *Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 1). Jean Lipman-Blumen defines the term as "the seeking, enjoyment and/or preference for the company of the same sex" (Lipman-Blumen, Jean, "Toward a homosocial theory of sex roles: an explanation of sex segregation of social institutions", *Signs*, 1/3 (1976), p. 16). It should be noted that in this chapter the term is used in relation to Ottoman male socialisation where single-sex socialisation was not so much a preference as a reflection of the gender segregated society of the empire.

3 Es, Hikmet Feridun, "Eski Vapurular, Eski Tramvaylar", *Hayat Dergisi*, 21 October 1965, republished in *Kaybolan İstanbul'dan Hâtıralar*, ed. Selçuk Karakılıç (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2010), p. 47.

females appearing in public, the state continuously tried to regulate female presence in public space.⁴ In 1873, for example, a police announcement appeared in newspapers warning women that they were forbidden to sit in front of and inside shops when they went shopping, and further warned them not to “wander around immodestly dressed” in excursion areas and markets and other shopping places. Those who did not obey this order would be punished.⁵ Earlier, in 1861, strict rules were introduced to regulate the public conduct of both men and women in excursion areas, and thus, of course, to prevent any possibility of social intermingling between women and men.⁶ How women should dress, how they should behave and where they should go continued to be one of the preoccupations of the sultans and their governments.⁷ Even the dire economic conditions of the late nineteenth century were in part linked to too much female visibility, at least that of the palace women, for they were accused of overspending, and going out in expensive carriages dressed in fancy clothes. To remedy this, ministers required that “as before, women should not go out of the palace, and the expenses of the palace should be reduced to their former state”.⁸

Regardless of any state pressure, Ottoman society itself was set to curb any possibility of social mingling, although the changing world by the beginning of the twentieth century was making this increasingly more difficult to do, as Leon Sciaky’s description of his youth in Thessaloniki makes clear:

In the past few years the rigid mores of the Orient which, even among non-Muslims, made social contact between young people of opposite sex well-nigh impossible, had somewhat relaxed. The ‘irresponsibility’ of a younger generation educated in Western schools, absorbing with eagerness the new-fangled ideas and the ‘loose’ ways of the Occident, was slowly breaking down the age-old barrier, in spite of the viewing with alarm and the ruffled sensibilities of elders often shocked by the ‘shameless’ intermingling.⁹

4 For a detailed discussion of Ottoman women’s presence in public space, see Ambros, Edith Gülçin, Ebru Boyar, Palmira Brummett, Kate Fleet and Svetla Ianeva, “Ottoman women in public space: an introduction”, in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 1-17.

5 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, ed. Nuri Sağlam (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), p. 173.

6 Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 240.

7 For examples, see Engin, Vahdettin (ed.), *Sultan Abdülhamid ve İstanbul’u* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2001), pp. 53-7; Topuzlu, Cemil (Paşa), *İstibdat-Meşrutiyet-Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım*, ed. Cemalettin Topuzlu (Istanbul: Topuzlu Yayınları, 2002), pp. 136-7.

8 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma’rûzât*, ed. Yusuf Halaçoğlu (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980), p. 11.

9 Sciaky, Leon, *Farewell to Salonica: City at the Crossroads* (London: Haus Books, 2007), p. 210.

Such ‘relaxation’, however, did not allow a young man to “call on a girl” or “to be seen walking on the street with someone else’s sister”, as “that indeed would be constituted behaviour most ‘compromising’ for the young lady’s good name”.¹⁰ The mere fear of gossip and censure was sufficient to prevent women from being seen with unrelated men. A good reputation could easily be tarnished by common gossip and social pressure weighed more heavily than religious conviction, at least on some segments of Ottoman society. Lady Layard, the wife of the British ambassador, Sir Henry Layard, in Istanbul between 1877 and 1880, related how Princess Nazlı, the granddaughter of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt and the wife of Halil Şerif Paşa, the Ottoman ambassador to Paris, and Princess Vicdan Halim, the daughter-in-law of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt, on board the British ship the *Devastation* with Lady Layard, objected to an Ottoman gentleman joining their party, declaring that “they did not mind talking to European gentlemen but could not speak to Turks”.¹¹ Even Hilmi Paşa’s wife did not have any religious scruples about sitting without her veil in the presence of the British ambassador and male embassy secretaries,¹² something she would presumably not have done with unrelated male Ottomans.

Talking, let alone courting, therefore, was not possible for the majority of Ottomans within the acceptable formal boundaries. Simply seeing a Muslim woman’s face without the obstruction of a veil, however thin, was near impossible unless a woman wanted to show her face deliberately and of course secretly, or, as the above example indicates, in a ‘foreign’ environment. Those who wished to see women without veils in late Ottoman Istanbul, had to go to the places which non-Muslim Ottoman and European women visited. As Refik Halid Karay (1888-1965) confessed, “libido” (*libido*) was the primary reason for him and his friends frequenting Tepebaşı Garden in Beyoğlu:

That was a place where men and women sat side by side, where they were in the same space and wandered around; it was full of women. Women, different types of women, without veils, without *çarşafs*, in suits or dresses, wearing flowered and ribboned straw hats attached to their heads with long pins, reminding us of those women whom we stared at with adoration in the pictures of the French novels we read.

As if it was a corner of Europe!

10 Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica*, p. 210.

11 Kuneralp, Sinan (ed.), *Twixt Pera and Therapia. The Constantinople of Lady Layard* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), p. 126.

12 Kuneralp, *Twixt Pera and Therapia. The Constantinople of Lady Layard*, p. 151.

It was such a change of environment for those who came from Istanbul [i.e. the old city] that it was, at the very least, like going to Bucharest or Athens, it was like making a journey.¹³

Young Karay's desire to see uncovered women can be explained by sexual curiosity. However, writing in the early twentieth century, Salahaddin Asım's explanation for his wish to see all Ottoman women without veils was that veils made all women look similar and hence the difference between "a woman of pleasure" and "a family woman" was blurred. This permitted men to treat all women as sexual objects, leaving them exposed to sexual harassment in public spaces,¹⁴ something which women did indeed experience.¹⁵ Hikmet Feridun Es (1909-92) described men whom he referred to as "tram womanisers" (*tramvay çapkınları*). A man of this type was "a well-dressed, decent, serious man, perhaps a director in a state office! A shy gentleman.... But when the fellow got on a crowded tram, he suddenly became like a lion! Wherever he saw a young woman among the crowd, he hotfooted it in her direction...". This was such a phenomenon that the famous psychiatrist of the period Dr. Mazhar Osman described "the debauchery of the tram" (*tramvay çapkınlığı*) as a clinical mental disease.¹⁶

The sixteenth-century poet Maşızade Fikri Çelebi, although his sexual proclivities lay elsewhere, was equally irritated by the concealment of the veil, for "how can you know whether behind every chuddar/ is the face of your mother or sister?".¹⁷ For others, however, veils and *çarşafs* had the effect of making women more alluring by hiding their imperfections, as the old poet in Mehmed Rauf's (1875-1931) 1927 story "Eski Aşk Geceleri" (The Past Nights of Love), explained: "Faces were concealed behind the black veils which embellished the truth 1000 times, figures were lost among the folds of wide and loose-fitting *çarşafs*, their faults transformed into the exquisiteness of a masterpiece".¹⁸

13 Karay, Refik Halid, "Hafta Konuşması: (Tepebaşı)ndan Hâtıralar", 6 July 1947, a newspaper cutting from Taha Toros Arşivi, Dosya No: 37-Tarlabaşı-Tepebaşı-Taksim, İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi e-arşiv Sistemi.

14 Salahaddin Asım, *Türk Kadınlığının Tereddidi Yahut Karşılaşma* (Istanbul: Türk Yurdu Kitabhanesi, n.d.), p. 40.

15 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 302, 307.

16 Es, "Eski Vapurlar, Eski Tramvaylar", in *Kaybolan İstanbul'dan Hâtıralar*, p. 46.

17 Özyıldırım, Ali Emre (ed.), *Mâşî-zâde Fikri Çelebi ve Ebkâr-ı Efkâr'ı. On Altıncı Yüzyıldan Sıradışı Bir Aşk Hikâyesi* (Istanbul: Dergâh, 2017), p. 221 and for the couplet, p. 319. See also Ambros, Edith Gülçin, "Frivolity and flirtation", in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 169.

18 Mehmed Rauf, *Eski Aşk Geceleri* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kitabhanesi, 1927), p. 4.

For others, such garments invited more lewdness. According to Ercümen Ekrem Talu (1888-1956), who was the son of the famous poet and writer of the late Ottoman period Rezaizade Mahmud Ekrem, covering encouraged clandestine but more intense interaction between the sexes: “veils, *feraces*, *çarşafs*, headcoverings, *yeldirmes* [light cloaks], cage-like coverings were sometimes very far from protecting modesty, manners, uprightness and honour. On the contrary, the ugliness and badness hidden under or behind these, because they did not strike the eye, because they were far from the control of a foreign gaze, took a more impudent, a more excessive and insolent form”.¹⁹

While veiling could thus be said to have created a kind of dis-identification by anonymising individual female physical and social identity, it could also intensify allure. Although women were still very much covered, the increasing presence and mobility of women in excursion areas, according to Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza Bey (1842-1928), intensified the desire of women and men to see each other.²⁰ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822-95) even claimed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, that homosexual love had been mostly replaced by heterosexual love.²¹

Regardless of any such desire, however, those women and men who wished to communicate did not have much chance to indulge in sophisticated conversations. Eyes, hands, umbrellas and handkerchiefs were used to communicate in public places,²² such sign language becoming very widespread, in Kağıthane as well as in Beyazıt square “the style of flirtation by signalling to [passing] carriages were highly advanced”, according to Ahmed Cevdet Paşa.²³ But such communication did not have a wide array of vocabulary, allowing only the passing of basic messages such as declarations of attraction, love and adoration or the communication of secret assignments.

Such a restrictive environment explains the popularity of a song by the well-known composer of the nineteenth century, Hacı Arif Bey (1831-85). The lyrics of this song belonged to the famous eighteenth-century poet Nedim, whose name was associated with the *Lale Devri*. In this song, which very much

19 Talu, Ercümen Ekrem, “Küçüküsu’da Bir İskandal”, *Son Posta*, 24 June 1936, republished in *Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki. Anılar*, ed. Alaattin Karaca (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2005), pp. 214-5.

20 Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza Bey, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), pp. 131-2.

21 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma’rûzât*, p. 9. For a further discussion about this shift, see Kuru, Selim, “Yaşanan, Söylenen ve Yazılan: Erkekler Arasında Tutkusal İlişkiler”, *Cogito*, 65-66 (2011), 263-77.

22 Ambros, “Frivolity and flirtation”, pp. 150-86; Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 239 and p. 307.

23 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma’rûzât*, p. 9.

resonated with the late Ottoman social environment, the lover asked the female beloved to come to Kağıthane, but this invitation was not to meet but to see each other from a distance, and perhaps, if lucky, to exchange some simple messages:

Awaiting your arrival, the boat is ready
 This Friday, make an excursion with a thin veil
 Your *ferace* of pink silk is very chic
 This Friday, make an excursion with a thin veil

Please do not disappoint the intoxicated
 Adorning yourself, wear a comb in your lovelock
 Enliven the quarter of Kağıthane
 This Friday, make an excursion with a thin veil

The famous journalist and author of the period, Ahmed Rasim (1864-1932), who himself was also a lyricist and composer, remembered this popular song with excitement when his friends invited him on an excursion to Kağıthane.²⁴ For him, this excursion was not simply about enjoying leisure time in open spaces, but an opportunity to watch the opposite sex as they sauntered by, hips swaying, dressed in colourful *feraces*.

There were, thus, venues for flirtation between the sexes in the late Ottoman urban setting, but male-female contact within acceptable boundaries were still very limited. It is for this reason that Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar (1887-1963) in his semi-autobiographical work, *Boğaziçi Mehtapları* (Fullmoons of the Bosphorus) describes this period as “a period of platonic loves” and claims that “it was such a romantic period that a lover could receive sufficient happiness merely by meeting the eyes of the beloved at a distance and be content with that alone. Is it not enough, our poets said, to see the face [of the beloved]?”²⁵

Perhaps not all lovers were as easily pleased as the poets of the period, but in the end, they did not have much choice. Physical proximity to ‘the beloved’ was not easy under the close watch of Istanbul society, more specifically the population of a *mahalle*, the neighbourhood, as traditionally Ottoman *mahalles* were given the collective responsibility of policing and providing social order, thus forestalling any need for direct state intervention. This system still applied in the late Ottoman period. The *mahalle* not only watched and

24 Ahmet Rasim, *Fuḫṣ-i Atik*, ed. Ali Hayalioğlu (Istanbul: Üç Harf Yayıncılık, 2005), pp. 69-77.

25 Hisar, Abdülhak Şinasi, *Boğaziçi Mehtapları* (Istanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1967), p. 198.

reported but interfered through the mechanism of the raid (*baskın*) on houses in the *mahalle* which were deemed dens of impropriety, from venues of adulterous relations to settings for all-male consumption of alcohol.²⁶ In his long story, *Ali Nizami Beyin Alafrangalıđı ve Şeyhliđi* (The 'Europeanness' and Sheikness of Ali Nizami Bey), referring to the era of Abdülhamid II, Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar draws a picture of how difficult it was to move around in Ottoman neighbourhoods undetected:

Wherever an unexpected noise appears, the police intervene. In the *mahalles* there is such bigotry that it is even possible to stage a raid merely because a stranger enters a house at night. There is always the possibility of a man being caught in a raid, of being publicly shamed, of the reputation of the woman he loves being besmirched. If the husband of the woman involved hears about this, then all hell can break loose. The scandal can even reach the ears of Sultan Abdülhamid. In that case only God knows what will happen.²⁷

The Entertainment World of the Brothel in Late Ottoman Istanbul

Inspired by the anonymous *Karagöz* play, *Kanlı Nigar*,²⁸ Sadık Şendil wrote a play with the same name in the mid-1960s. This play, whose author was born in 1913 and thus, even if only as a small boy, did witness the dying days of the Ottoman empire, provides a very clear insight into late Ottoman society with its many references to *mahalle* life and the moral insincerity of *mahalle* inhabitants. In the 1968 film version of this play, Abdi, a worker in the local coffee house (played by Münir Özkul), convinced the landlord to let his house to Kanlı Nigar (played by Belgin Doruk), who had told Abdi that she had abandoned her old ways and was no longer running a brothel. One day, on hearing music emanating from Nigar's house, Abdi, much concerned and feeling very responsible towards his *mahalle*, rushed to find out what was going on. Abdi asked Nigar about the source of this noise. Nigar, who was in fact running a small brothel with two girls, cheerfully replied through the window: "well, we

26 Boyar, Ebru, "An imagined moral community: Ottoman female public presence, honour and marginality", in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 202-6; Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 121-2.

27 Hisar, Abdülhak Şinasi, *Ali Nizamî Beyin Alafrangalıđı ve Şeyhliđi – Hikâye* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1952), p. 48.

28 Anonim, *Kanlı Nigâr*, ed. Mustafa Nihat Özön (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1971).

are singing and dancing” (“Çalıp oynuyoruz ayol”). Abdi, much put out by the response, threatened Nigar: “This is an upright *mahalle*. Do not make my blood boil, otherwise I will tear your house down and that will be that”.²⁹

These and similar threats did not, however, prevent Kanlı Nigar from continuing her old ways, as was the case with many brothel owners of the period. In fact, such establishments were a central part of late Ottoman Istanbul’s male entertainment culture and night life. Such brothels easily seeped into every part of the city as brothels generally did not require large spaces and so could easily blend in with the humble abodes of the neighbourhoods. Contrary to Reşat Ekrem Koçu’s more recent narrow description of a brothel (*umumhane/genelev*) as a location where prostitution took place “under police surveillance”,³⁰ and separating brothels from the secret rendezvous places, *koltuks*,³¹ Mustafa Galib, who was the director of the Istanbul Police School and taught a course on “Active Service and Professional Behaviour”, described a brothel (*umumhane*) in 1921 in more general terms. Defining a prostitute as a woman who “adopts the craft of devoting herself to the pleasures of others in exchange for profit or in a habitual manner, and in this way has relations with numerous men”, Mustafa Galib defined a brothel as a location where two or more women of this sort resided or where they assembled for the purpose of prostitution. Even those places called “pansiyon”, whose rooms were rented by the tenants as a unit or room by room to many prostitutes for profit and use, were considered as brothels. Those places which were let by their owners or tenants to many people many times for prostitution were called “a place of meeting” (*mahal-i mülakat*).³²

Based on his personal experiences, Ahmed Rasim vividly describes the prostitution and debauchery of late Ottoman Istanbul in *Fuhş-i Atik* (Prostitution of the Past), first published in 1922. There he relates a conversation between his barber and himself, when he was just a new graduate from the high school Darüşşafaka and very curious about Istanbul night life. After asking the well-informed barber about the addresses of famous brothels of the city, the barber asked him in turn whether he had been to any such places. When Ahmed Rasim assured him that he had not, the barber was pleased: “Let there be a young man in Istanbul who does not fall into such places. [But] this is not possible. If not today, then it will happen tomorrow, if not tomorrow then the following

29 Kanlı Nigar (1968, Director: Ülkü Erakalın).

30 Koçu, Reşad Ekrem, “Genelev”, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, XI (Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), p. 7003.

31 Koçu, “Genelev”, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, XI, pp. 7003-4.

32 Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redaet-i Ahlakiye* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1338/1922), p. 12.

day”.³³ The barber’s response clearly indicates both surprise at finding such a young man and how normal the existence of these houses and the making use of their services was. In fact, being familiar with such establishments and knowing women working there was so normal that the journalist Şevket Nezihî wanted to start his series of interviews about the famous women of the period with Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım, who was a famous prostitute of the Abdülhamidian era and brothel owner in later years. “Starting first with Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım” he explained “was very natural, because well before I was born, Lütfiye Hanım was involved in the lives of those who were the same age as our fathers”.³⁴

Going to brothels for men whose lives were ‘touched’ by Lütfiye Hanım and other prostitutes was not simply about satisfying their sexual desires but for socialization and entertainment. Men usually visited such establishments in groups to drink alcohol, listen to music and dance, accompanied by females. These women working in brothels were not “family women” but “women of pleasure”, to borrow Salahaddin Asım’s terms. While keeping their ‘sexual femininity’, these women lost their ‘social femininity’ as they were not considered ‘proper’ women, such as the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of the men going to the brothels, and were thus marginalized.³⁵ In the story, “Bağırsak” (Intestine) written by Salahaddin Enis (1892-1942) in 1918, the author gives an extremely degrading picture of such women working in brothels: “Their hearts feel nothing; they are like real pavement stones. They do not know how to love, they do not understand about being loved, they only worship money like an animal, they only talk about money”.³⁶ Such a woman did not have “a body of a woman” but instead, resembling “a phlegm pot into which everybody spits, filthy tripe”, she was “a heedless heap of meat which ingests the coagulated effects and immoral secretions of hundreds of men, afflicted with various diseases and illnesses, which it does not digest”.³⁷ Men visiting these houses, hence, did not need to adjust their manners and socialize according to a heterosexual setting. Indeed, Salahaddin Enis wrote bitterly, men arriving at such

33 Ahmet Rasim, *Eski Fuhuş Hayatı. Fuhuş-i Atik* (Istanbul: Avrupa Yakası Yayınları, 2007), p. 51.

34 Şevket Nezihî, *Meşhureler. 1. Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım* (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1342/1924), p. 6.

35 For a detailed discussion about marginal women in the Ottoman empire, see Boyar, “An imagined moral community”, pp. 187-229.

36 Salahaddin Enis, “Bağırsak”, in *Bataklık Çiçeği*, ed. M. Kayahan Özgül (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 2000), p. 67.

37 Salahaddin Enis, “Bağırsak”, p. 68.

houses did not have any “shame, restraint or modesty”, as such qualities “remained in the pockets of social garments which were simply left behind”.³⁸

Men, indeed, did not need such qualities in such establishments. Boosting men’s confidence and not challenging them either socially or sexually, as long, of course, as men could pay, these brothels catered for the tastes of their clients. According to Abdülaziz Bey (1850-1918), the houses had a system of hosting their guests in which drinking had a very central part. Alcohol was served with *mezes*, accompanied by songs and music while females with their flirtatious laughter and sweet words made their customers feel special with the use of phrases such as “[he is] my life and my existence; let me be your slave; oh how beautifully God has created you; you are so bewitching; oh my handsome young master; oh my master, what kind of cruel woes did you throw me into”.³⁹ Creating a fake intimate atmosphere even to the extent of mimicking a spousal relationship, the prostitute calling her customer “my husband”, these environments were designed purely for male demands and females in this environment were thus allowed to behave in a manner that would not have been permissible for any other Ottoman woman in private let alone in public space.⁴⁰ So, rather than challenging the homosocial entertainment culture, in fact, brothels reinforced it.

Brothels varied according to the quality and variety of services offered. Brothels in Beyoğlu and Galata generally had a more ‘European’ atmosphere, related in part to the fact that mostly non-Muslim and non-Ottoman women worked in the brothels there. *Beyoğlu Alemleri* (The World of Beyoğlu), the story of a fictional Beyoğlu brothel, run by an Armenian woman called Haykanuş and written by an author whose name appeared only as G. R., reveals the hypocrisy of men in their attitudes to female honour in general and prostitutes in particular in its intimate description of the inner world of this slightly upper class Beyoğlu brothel.⁴¹ Here four Muslim men were entertained by various non-Muslim women in a room furnished in European style. After consuming a great deal of beer, a European beverage unlike local *rakı* or wine, men and women got drunk and had long making out sessions on the armchairs and

38 Salahaddin Enis, “Bağırsak”, p. 64.

39 Abdülaziz Efendi, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri. İnsanlar, İnanışlar, Eğlence ve Dil*, ed. Kazım Arısan and Duygu Arısan Günay (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), pp. 331-9, quotation on p. 332. See also pp. 344-5.

40 For a discussion of the spousal relationship in late Ottoman Istanbul households see Duben, Alan and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households. Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 214-26.

41 G. R., *Beyoğlu Alemleri. Beyoğlu Sefahat Aleminin Bütün Safhatını Musavver* (Istanbul: Şark Kütüphanesi, n.d.), pp. 3-7.

sofas in the room.⁴² But here this imitation European 'life-style', created in the brothel, extended onto the street as men and prostitutes went out to a dance as couples in one of the clubs of Beyoğlu.⁴³

Other brothels mimicked a pseudo-traditional 'home' life. One of the well-known brothels of the period, Acem's brothel, was run by Kamile Hanım whose husband was a "Persian" (*Acem*), which was how the brothel got its name. In this place, traditional entertainment was laid on for customers, to the extent that they were even provided with *entaris*, loose robes, quintessential traditional symbols of comfort and cosiness.⁴⁴

It was a big house. The street door gave onto a wide ground floor. There were always two carriages for transporting customers at night. The second floor of the house consisted only of one big hall and a room. This room was called the "*meclis* room" [i.e. the main communal room]. There were six bedrooms on the third floor. The customers were dressed in *entaris*. And in the *meclis* room instruments played, *rakı* and wine were drunk. The regulars of this house were the well-known figures of the period. There was also a fourth floor, called "the pavilion", which was made up of two rooms.⁴⁵

Istanbul's Brothel Topography

The famous establishment of Acem was in Çapa, near Lofçalı Derviş İbrahim Paşa's mansion at the very heart of old Istanbul within the city walls (Suriçi), that part of Istanbul which was considered, according to the famous journalist Burhan Felek (1889-1982), "Istanbul's inner sanctum and the centre of the caliphate".⁴⁶ The decadence of Istanbul was, however, traditionally regarded as a phenomenon of Galata and Beyoğlu.⁴⁷ Refik Ahmed (Sevengil)'s (1903-70) description of sixteenth-century Eyüp as being "with very small differences,

42 G. R., *Beyoğlu Alemleri*, pp. 8-15. For a detailed description of such a brothel in Beyoğlu, see also Abdülaziz Efendi, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri*, pp. 341-5.

43 G. R., *Beyoğlu Alemleri*, pp. 16-17.

44 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 281.

45 Şevket Nezihî, *Meşhureler. I. Cihan Yandı Lütüfye Hanım*, p. 31.

46 Felek, Burhan, "Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki: Eski Beyoğlu Tünel – Galatasaray", 5 June 1977, a newspaper cutting from Taha Toros Arşivi, Dosya No: 38-Beyoğlu-İstiklal Caddesi, İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi e-arşiv Sistemi.

47 Ayverdi, Samiha, "Beyoğlu", in *İstanbul Geceleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1971), pp. 123-8; Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza Bey, *Bir Zamanlar İstanbul*, ed. Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu (Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser) (İstanbul: Kervan Kitapçılık, n.d.), pp. 308-9.

very much like the streets of today's Galata", and of having become a place where "an honourable man could not live", gives a clear idea of the reputation of Galata in 1927.⁴⁸ Labelled "Frank", "European", "Infidel", Galata and Beyoğlu were alienated from the rest of the city and hence allowed to be a 'freer' space for entertainment than the rest of the capital. As noted by Felek, "Beyoğlu, for us, was a place of entertainment and one with a different atmosphere".⁴⁹ Music halls, cafes with female singers and waitresses, and theatres with female actresses were associated with Beyoğlu in late Ottoman night life. On occasions the women working in such establishments indulged in prostitution.⁵⁰ Prostitutes and pimps preying on customers were visible on the streets and brothels did not need to hide their existence behind the walls of family house facades. Prostitution was first legalized here through registering and charging fees for brothels and requiring prostitutes to undergo health checks, although non-Ottoman subjects generally escaped from such controls due to the extra-territorial rights granted to foreign subjects in Ottoman territory.⁵¹ According to Samiha Ayverdi (1905-93), Beyoğlu was "like women of pleasure whom no one would think of marrying, a whore who does not know about comradeship, a caring friendship, fidelity, and friendship".⁵² For Salahaddin Enis, "If Beyoğlu was the spoiled stomach of Istanbul" then its side streets where brothels were present "were, without any doubt, its sick and rotten intestines which cause your nose to smart from its foul odour".⁵³

Women working in brothels there were able to go out and be seen with customers in this part of the city. Suphi, the male protagonist of Refik Halid Karay's short story "Kuvvete Karşı" (Against the force), written in 1909, was even able to go with İzmaro, who worked in a brothel in Hamalbaşı Street, to a theatre and to Tokatlıyan, the famous upper class night club, restaurant and hotel of the period. The madam of the brothel allowed İzmaro to go out with Suphi, who was one of the most regular and refined clients of her establishment, as if

48 Refik Ahmed, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu? Fetihden Zamanımıza Kadar* (Istanbul: Suhulet Kitabhanesi, 1927), pp. 16-17.

49 Felek, "Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki: Eski Beyoğlu Tünel – Galatasaray".

50 Cohen, S., "Report of an enquiry made in Constantinople on behalf of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women", in *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922*, ed. Rifat N. Bali (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), p. 77; Birsal, Salah, *Ah Beyoğlu Vah Beyoğlu* (Istanbul: Sander Yayınları, 1976), p. 19.

51 Alus, Sermet Muhtar, "Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki: Eski İstanbulda: Tünelden Galatasaray", a newspaper cutting from Taha Toros Arşivi, Dosya No: 38 Beyoğlu-İstiklal Caddesi, İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi e-arşiv Sistemi; Crawford, F. Marion, *Constantinople*, illustrated by Edwin L. Weeks (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 71.

52 Ayverdi, "Beyoğlu", p. 123.

53 Salahaddin Enis, "Bağsarak", p. 64.

İzmaro was his mistress.⁵⁴ Just as in the theatres, described by Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil (1866-1945), prostitutes were present in the parks, too, such as Tepebaşı Garden where “some loose women, after entering and wandering around, after displaying themselves and after strolling about, would vanish”.⁵⁵ Sometimes such appearances were more concealed for, as Karay explained, “because it did not fit with the etiquette of the time for such things to be too public, customers would leave after them and they would meet and see each other in the side streets”.⁵⁶ Sermet Muhtar Alus (1887-1952) described “Tepe”, in today’s Şişli, which non-Muslim prostitutes and their pimps of the period frequented on Fridays and Sundays in search of customers, the women, decked out in their finery, exchanging signs to arrange rendezvous.⁵⁷ Although prostitutes could appear in public in Direklerarası and in the pleasure gardens surrounding the capital, such as Kağıthane, they had a higher public visibility in Beyoğlu and Galata, where even un-registered brothels had a freer existence.

It should be noted that women working in the brothels of these areas were usually non-Muslim Ottomans or foreign subjects. This gave rise to an incorrect assumption among westerners about the nature of prostitution in Istanbul. In a small item, entitled “Morality of Turkish women”, published in 1886 in the American journal, *The Medical Advocate*, it was claimed that “the Turkish women are, as a rule, true to the Turk. There is not a house of prostitution conducted by Mahometans in Constantinople. The English and other European representatives supply these immoral accommodations”.⁵⁸ Almost 30 years later, in 1914, a British Jew, S. Cohen, repeated the same claims but without an emphasis on Turkish female virtue:

... the Turks do not shrink from making use of the public brothels, although they are very strict about their own women folk not leading immoral lives. The answer generally given by them when asked why the present state of affairs is permitted, is that the matter does not concern

54 Karay, Refik Halid, “Kuvvete Karşı”, in *Memleket Hikayeleri* (Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1964), p. 118.

55 Uşaklıgil, Halit Ziya, *Kırk Yıl*, ed. Nur Özmel Akın (Istanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2008), p. 772.

56 Karay, “Hafta Konuşması: (Tepebaşı)ndan Hâtralar”.

57 Ergin, Osman Nuri, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Beledîyye*, 9 vols. (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995), vol. VI, p. 3302; Alus, Sermet Muhtar, “Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki: Eski İstanbulda Baharın Son Günleri”, a newspaper cutting from Taha Toros Arşivi, Dosya No: 312- Sermet Muhtar Alus, İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi e-arşiv Sistemi.

58 Constantinople Cor. Iowa Medical Reporter, “Morality of Turkish women”, *The Medical Advocate*, 3/11 (1886), p. 435.

them so long as the inmates of the brothels do not belong to the Mohammedan faith.⁵⁹

The existence of Muslim prostitutes and their Muslim pimps, however, challenged these long-held views among western observers and in fact, brothels were not contained in certain areas but spread all over the city.

"Thousands of Istanbulites" did not in fact cross to Galata.⁶⁰ Entertainment in Beyoğlu and Galata was an expensive venture. Ahmed Rasim, commenting on the sobering effect of the high prices in Café Courenne, noted dryly that "paying half an English pound for two bottles of standard *raki*, three plates of *mezes* sobers a man up".⁶¹ The overpriced nature of these districts was even the subject of a popular song of the period sung by Peroz Hanım, in which the victim complained that "I was stripped like an onion/ Here see my emptied pockets".⁶² In fact, even crossing the Galata Bridge required money. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the fee for crossing was, according to Felek, ten *paras*, later increased to 20 and then to 40 *paras* (1 *kuruş*).⁶³ This practice of charging for crossing the bridge continued well into the Republic.⁶⁴ It was almost impossible to cross without payment, according to Refik Halid Karay, as "they would not permit anyone, including foreigners, to cross without paying up [literarily giving a ten]" and "the bridge toll collectors were very shrewd men who did not miss a penny, and were at the same time rude, or even insolent". The only exception to this were mansion carriages and members of the palace.⁶⁵ However, according to the account of an Istanbul Greek resident, Haris Spataris, some women did manage to avoid payment by simply walking straight over without stopping, the helpless male fee collectors unable to prevent them as they could not physically touch them. But this problem was solved when the men stood together as a phalanx on the pavement, not allowing any women to pass between them without paying.⁶⁶ The barrier of the bridge was not just a financial one, for closing times presented another

59 Cohen, "Report of an enquiry made in Constantinople on behalf of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women", p. 78.

60 Felek, Burhan, *Yaşadığımız Günler* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1974), p. 10.

61 Quoted in Birsell, *Ah Beyoğlu Vah Beyoğlu*, p. 19.

62 Quoted in Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 326.

63 Felek, *Yaşadığımız Günler*, pp. 12-13. A similar price was also given in Spataris, Haris, *Biz İstanbullular Böyleyiz! Fener'den Anılar 1906-1922*, trans. İro Kaplangı (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), p. 45.

64 Felek, *Yaşadığımız Günler*, pp. 12-13.

65 Karay, Refik Halid, "Köprüden Hâaturalar", first published on 9 August 1952, reproduced in *Memleket Yazıları- 15- Elli Yıl Önceki*, ed. Tuncay Birkan (Istanbul: İnkılâp, 2017), pp. 24-5.

66 Spataris, *Biz İstanbullular Böyleyiz!*, p. 45.

problem. It was necessary to keep a close eye on closing times as they were not always reliable and even in the still respectable hours of the night, men could be easily stranded in Galata.⁶⁷ Once over the bridge, going from Karaköy to Beyoğlu, unless one did so on foot, was not cheap: according to figures from the late 1890s, taking the tube from Karaköy to Beyoğlu (Tünel) cost 20 *paras*, taking the tram was 60 *paras* and hiring a carriage cost at least 7.5 *kuruş*.⁶⁸

Not crossing the bridge, at least in the Abdülhamidian era, was not simply about money, it was also, according to Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil, about fear: “To cross the bridge to the other side required great courage, and to be seen frequently at the Taksim or the Tepebaşı gardens, at the theatre, in short in the entertainment places of the other side [i.e. Beyoğlu and Galata], even in the streets was an act which would absolutely attract attention”.⁶⁹ Galata and Beyoğlu were always under close surveillance by the state authorities, Abdülhamid’s spy system being very active there. Quite apart from fear of the sultan’s wrath, family pressure or social unacceptability could be a significant deterrent. The famous publisher Ahmed İhsan (Tokgöz)’s (1867-1942) grandmother, who, like “the women of her time”, did not consider Beyoğlu and Galata as a part of the country, lamented when she heard that her grandson had gone to Galata with his cousin: “They took the boy to *Frenğistan!* Alas!”.⁷⁰ Ahmed Rasim, too, when he was a student in high school, was warned, along with the other pupils, not to go to Galata and Beyoğlu by the school master, to the extent that students who were from that part of the city was banned from “wander[ing] around the back streets”.⁷¹

While many were thus deterred from crossing to the entertainment world of Beyoğlu, some prostitutes headed across the bridge in the opposite direction, for, as Osman Nuri Ergin explained, Beyoğlu and Galata were not attractive locations for prostitutes, at least in the late nineteenth century, due to imposition of health checks by the local municipal authority (Altıncı Daire). Women, especially those afflicted by syphilis, thus, escaped to other parts of the city.⁷² This influx and the difficulties of reaching Beyoğlu, together with the existence of brothels which catered for the more traditional tastes of the Muslim population of Istanbul, boosted demand for brothels in other parts of the city, including the more traditional quarters. This demand was particularly exacerbated

67 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 316.

68 Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları*, ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul: Oğlak Klasikleri, 2005), p. 184.

69 Uşaklıgil, *Kırk Yıl*, p. 737.

70 Tokgöz, Ahmet İhsan, *Matbuat Hatıralarım (1888-1914)*, ed. Alpay Kabacalı (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), p. 27.

71 Quoted in Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 323.

72 Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, VI, p. 3302.

due to the lack of night life in those parts of Istanbul as the night for the majority of Istanbulites was not the time to go out but to stay in. Ahmed Haşım (1884-1933), writing nostalgically in 1921 in his article “Müslüman Saati” (Muslim time), described how “the rays of dawn determined the beginning of the Muslim day and the shades of evening its end”.⁷³ Once the day ended, life outside the home faded away. Night in the traditional streets of the city was dark and silent. The journalist Sadri Sema (Aydoğmuş) (1880-1964), who was a young boy at the end of the nineteenth century, summarized the perception of the night by the people around him: “At night, streets are dangerous. At night, devils wander around the streets. Nights are mysterious”.⁷⁴ Another eyewitness of the period, whose childhood was in the last years of the reign of Abdülhamid II, was the minister of education in the early Turkish Republic, Hasan Ali Yücel (1897-1961). Yücel described the night in Istanbul: “with the exception of Ramadan and night time illuminations [*donanma*], like many families, no one from ours was on the street [at night] and if they were out at sunset, they would return home, come what may. There was no security outside at night. The danger for women was especially great”.⁷⁵ This great danger was not due simply to the physical challenges of the night, there being very little if any street lighting for example, but was also due to the fact that “Even middle-aged women who were seen on the street in the evening after sunset were thought of as “bad””.⁷⁶ While women did not dare to go out at night, men, too, tended to stay at home. Many men avoided going out at night with the exception of going to the nearest *mescits* or mosques or the neighbourhood coffee houses.

Those who needed to go out at night to places where there were no street lights were obliged to carry lanterns. Failure to do so could lead to a night in jail and a fine, except for someone “already well-known and not under suspicion”, who, after the registration of his name, address and occupation, would be allowed to go home accompanied by a policeman.⁷⁷ According to Burhan Felek, however, carrying lanterns at night was not “a question of security, but a question of needing to see where you were stepping”.⁷⁸ Street lighting was very poor especially in residential areas. Lights oozed from shops onto the main

73 Ahmed Haşım, “Müslüman Saati”, *Dergah*, 1/3 (16 Mayıs 1337/1921), p. 35.

74 Sadri Sema, *Eski İstanbul Hatıraları*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2002), p. 141.

75 Yücel, Hasan Ali, “Çocukluğumun Geceleri”, in *Geçtiğim Günlerden* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), p. 155.

76 Yücel, “Eski Mesireler”, in *Geçtiğim Günlerden*, p. 139.

77 Karakışla, Yavuz Selim (ed.), “İstanbul’da Geceleri Fenersiz Gezme Yasağı (1859)”, in *Eski Hayatlar. Eski Hatıralar. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Gündelik Hayat (1760-1923)* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015), p. 29.

78 Felek, Burhan, “30 Yıl Önce. Geceleri İstanbul Sokakları”, in *Eski İstanbul Hikâyeleri* (Istanbul: Ak Yayınları, 1971), p. 49.

shopping streets such as Divanyolu, Şehzadebaşı, Beyazıt or Beyoğlu⁷⁹ and street lamps were installed on the main streets, initially in places in Beyoğlu and Galata,⁸⁰ but “the other parts of the city were in darkness”.⁸¹ While deterring most nocturnal traffic, this darkness provided the necessary anonymity for those who wished to visit brothels. At the same time, it drove the demand for local establishments which men could sneak into and out of easily. Such locations also helped prostitutes and brothel owners to escape from the clutches of the state.

Brothels were thus not restricted to Galata and Beyoğlu but were to be found throughout the city. Indeed, according to Abdülaziz Bey in his detailed account of late Ottoman social life in Istanbul, brothels were everywhere, in “Çivizade, Sena Yokuşu, Yüksek Kaldırım, Haseki, Eğrikapı, Salkımsöğüt, Samatya, Karagümrük, Mollaaşkı, Zindanarkası, Çukurbostan, Acıçeşme, Kocamustafapaşa, Odabaşı” and many other places known only to their customers.⁸² The famous houses were in particular located in Aksaray and its environs. When Ahmed Rasim, while having his hair cut, asked his barber for the addresses of these houses, the barber, in a flash, provided a list: Sena Yokuşu, the well-known location for brothels, was in Fener; Acem’s house was in Çapa Çeşmesi on the other side of Aksaray; Bahri’s house was near Acem’s; Kaymak’s house was on Şekerci Street in Aksaray and Hürmüz’s house was on the same street as Kaymak’s.⁸³

Aksaray, according to Ayverdi, was Janus-faced: on the one hand it was “unpretentious, inoffensive and sedate” but on the other it was famous for its brothels.⁸⁴ In *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu* (How Istanbul Entertained Itself), first published in 1927, Refik Ahmed (Sevengil) underlines a contradiction in the life of Istanbul by using Aksaray as his example:

Officially it was forbidden for Muslim women to be prostitutes. But, contrary to this, for example, in the middle of Muslim *mahalles*, such as Aksaray, there were houses run by Muslim women who, openly and before

79 Felek, “30 Yıl Önce. Geceleri İstanbul Sokakları”, p. 49.

80 Alus, “Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki: Eski İstanbulda: Tünelden Galatasaray”.

81 Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyeye*, II, p. 924.

82 Abdülaziz Efendi, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri*, p. 332.

83 Ahmet Rasim, *Fuḫş-i Atik*, pp. 50-1; Şevket Nezihi, *Meşhureler. 1. Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım*, p. 32. For a longer list, see also Abdülaziz Efendi, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri*, pp. 332-3 and 337.

84 Ayverdi, “Aksaray”, in *İstanbul Geceleri*, p. 71.

the eyes of all, worked Muslim girls and accepted clients from among the elite of the period.⁸⁵

The Clientele of Istanbul's Brothels

What allowed such houses to be set up in such *mahalles* was in essence the demand, and the brothel clientele were many and varied. The registered brothels in Beyoğlu and Galata, according to the 1884 regulation (*talimatname*), were divided into four groups according to the size of the brothel, location and number of girls working there.⁸⁶ This categorization was a natural result of the existing circumstances as there were many brothels, employing women, of various ages, from all over the empire as well as from Europe and elsewhere, serving all kinds of men, coming from different classes and nationalities. This naturally led to a categorization according to which there were houses frequented by upper class or lower class men, by European customers or local, and their fees naturally varied accordingly.

Some brothels prided themselves on serving the *crème de la crème* of the capital's society. Perceiving herself as a part of the prostitution 'nobility', Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım commented on Bahri Hanım's house, where she worked as a prostitute in the late nineteenth century: "the most important men of the period, the people of the palace, used to come to Bahri Hanım's house, they would hold salons [*meclisler*] in its ground floor reception room, there was jollity and drinking".⁸⁷ In 1924, after a murder in one of the brothels on Pars Street, in Kadıköy, Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım, who had an establishment there, gave an interview to newspapers and accused the owner of the brothel where this murder happened, of accepting ruffians in her establishment. As a response to this, the accused brothel owner defended herself: "We do this job to earn money. For us, a gentleman and a dustman are the same. We care [only] about the money they pay".⁸⁸

A dustman's money and the money of a gentleman, however, were not the same, at least in late Ottoman Istanbul. The profile of the clientele of the brothels, the 'protectors' (*kabadays*) they paid and served, as well as the relations both brothel owners and their employees established with the authori-

85 Sevengil, Refik Ahmet, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu*, ed. Sami Önal (Istanbul: İletişim, 1985), p. 172.

86 Boyar, Ebru, "Profitable prostitution: state use of immoral earnings for social benefit in the late Ottoman empire", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1-2 (2009), p. 144.

87 Şevket Nezihi, *Meşhureler. 1. Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım*, pp. 27-8.

88 Şevket Nezihi, *Meşhureler. 1. Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım*, p. 15.

ties allowed such establishments not only to survive but to flourish. At the beginning of the 1890s, Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi reported to Abdülhamid II about a house, number 38, near Sultan Selim Mosque opposite Çukurbostan in Fatih, run as a brothel by a woman from Bursa. Men from the palace frequented this house where they drank and disported themselves with the women there, men such as Nuri Paşa, the Divisional General Master of the Horse; Hasan Paşa, the head official supervising Abdülhamid II's ablutions; Damad Ahmed Zülküf Paşa,⁸⁹ who was the husband of Sultan Abdülaziz's daughter Saliha Sultan and son of Field Marshall Kurt İsmail Paşa; and Kadri Bey, who was described as "one of those who are in the service of the Caliph". In order to prevent a scandal, a raid planned by the inhabitants living around the house, disparagingly described by Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi as "rabble", was prevented during the visit of one of these grandees.⁹⁰

Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (1864-1944) in his 1923 novel, *Tebessüm-i Elem* (The Smile of Sorrow), vividly narrates a raid on a house run as a brothel on a street in Çiçekbostanı by the "famous" Uncu Ahmed, who pretended to be a devout Muslim, carrying his prayer beads with him and always murmuring prayers.⁹¹ Gürpınar clearly based this character on a real person, not even bothering to make much alteration in his name, for this man was one of the famous brothel owners of the period, Mumcu Ahmed who had a brothel in Salma Tomruk in Karagümruk, which his wife Zehra ran.⁹² Among the men who were caught in this raid while trying to sneak out dressed in *çarsafs*, was Mehmed Kenan,⁹³ who was described in the novel as a "European character, very chic and dandy".⁹⁴

One group of regular brothel visitors in Istanbul was police officers. The bad reputation of the Abdülhamidian police force was widespread among the population⁹⁵ and among foreigners,⁹⁶ due to their immoral and abusive conduct.

89 Örik, Nahid Sırrı, *Bilinmeyen Yaşamlarıyla Saraylılar*, ed. Alpay Kabacalı (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2002), pp. 19 and 89.

90 Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi, *Sultan İkinci Abdülhamid'e Takdim Edilen Jurnallerin Tahkik Raporları (1891-1893)*, ed. Raşit Gündoğdu, Kemal Erkan and Ahmet Temiz (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), pp. 97-8. The names listed with their honorifics in Turkish are "Feri-kandan Mirahur Nuri Paşa Hazretleri; Ser-İbrikdari Şehriyari Hasan Paşa Hazretleri; Damad-ı Şehriyari Müşir İsmail Paşazade Beyefendi Hazretleri; Bendegan-ı Hilafet Penahiden Kadri Bey Efendi".

91 Gürpınar, Hüseyin Rahmi, *Tebessüm-i Elem* (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2012), p. 6.

92 Şevket Nezih, *Meşhureler. 1. Cihan Yandı Lütfiye Hanım*, p. 32.

93 Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, pp. 87-8.

94 Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, p. 6.

95 İleri, Nurçin, "Rule, misconduct, and dysfunction: the police forces in theory and practice in fin-de-siècle Istanbul", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34/1 (2014), p. 153.

96 Fiaux, Louis, *La prostitution réglementée et les pouvoirs publics dans les principaux états des deux mondes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, Editeur, 1909), p. 198.

The unruly behaviour of the police force was one of the major problems which the authorities tried to tackle, especially after the 1908 Revolution.⁹⁷ In 1910, the head of the police department in Istanbul asked for the names of police officers with syphilis who were treated in the Haydarpaşa and Bahriye hospitals.⁹⁸ Although the intention behind this request was not revealed, it is possible that such syphilitic policemen would have been considered as state employees of low morals who had contracted this disease from prostitutes. Indeed, policemen working in particular in areas abounding with brothels used their power in exchange for money and sex, creating special relationships with brothel owners.⁹⁹ Such a relationship is evident from a letter written by the *mutasarrıf* (governor) of Beyoğlu to the Ministry of Public Security (Zabita Nezareti) in December 1894, which also gives a further idea about the customers of such establishments. According to this letter, the Police Superintendent of central Taksim, Hacı Cemal, the Police Superintendent of Tarlabası, Ahmed, the Second Superintendent from the Police Commission, Şemsi, a policeman Mehmed Efendi and another Mehmed Efendi who was from the Tophane Accounting Office were reported to be in the brothel of Katarina of Beşiktaş in Bülbülderesi in Tarlabası. There, these men indulged in drinking accompanied by eight women, of whom one was Armenian and three were Greek. Interestingly, the nationalities of the other four women were not revealed, so there is no information as to whether these women were Muslims, Jews or non-Ottomans.¹⁰⁰ Another document within the same folder from the same date, refers to the existence of a musician among this group and reveals the reason for such a merry gathering: it was to celebrate the name day of the brothel owner, Katarina.¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that these allegations were denied by Hacı Cemal and Şemsi, the *mutasarrıf* did not give credit to their attempts to prove their innocence, and instead asked the ministry to punish these officials, emphasizing in particular that the police chiefs had abandoned their duties and gone to “a whorehouse” (*kerhane*) with their inferiors.¹⁰²

97 In the post-1908 period, the desire of the different political factions to control the police force for their own political aspirations was a main impediment to reforming the police. See, for example, Rey, Ahmet Reşit, *İmparatorluğun Son Döneminde Gördüklerim Yaptıklarım (1890-1922)*, ed. Nur Özmel Akın (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), pp. 244-7.

98 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul (hereafter BOA), DH. EUM. THR. 34-46, 11 Mayıs 1326 (1910).

99 For example, see İrtem, Süleyman Kani, *Abdülhamid Devrinde Hafiyelik ve Sansür. Abdülhamid'e Verilen Jurnaller*, ed. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1999), pp. 32-6.

100 BOA, ZB. 70/18, 28 Teşrin-i sani 1310 and 12 Cemaziülahir 1312 (1894), p. 11.

101 BOA, ZB. 70/18, p. 3.

102 BOA, ZB. 70/18.

Regardless of class and wealth, Ottoman male subjects did not have a problem about frequenting such establishments. In this period, “what was regarded as shameful was not the frequenting of a brothel but being caught doing so”.¹⁰³ In September 1908, in the month of Ramazan, during his visit to a brothel in Bülbülderesi, Celil Efendi of İzmir, who was a civilian investigation official from the first imperial army division, popped out to buy tobacco. When he was on the street, he was accosted by a musician, whose name was Karpi(?) and was an inhabitant of the neighbourhood. Karpi then followed Celil Efendi back to the brothel and threatened him. Karpi was then arrested. Although Celil Efendi was not charged with anything, the police authorities still reported this incident to the Ministry of War where Celil Efendi worked and requested that the ministry punish Celil Efendi not on any legal grounds but on moral ones. It was stressed that Celil Efendi had acted against “the Islamic rules” in the holy month of Ramazan and it was not proper (*caiz*) for him to be in a place where such an incident could arise.¹⁰⁴

Although attitudes to the practice of prostitution were shifting in the late Ottoman period, and state control was beginning to be asserted more systematically in this area, at the same time the more fluid, traditional approach continued and brothels maintained their centrality in the entertainment scene, as perhaps the only genuinely heterosexual social space in the gender-segregated Ottoman world. Brothels, however, catered for homosocial entertainment similar to other all-male entertainments, such as drinking in *meyhanes*, spending time in coffee houses or hunting. The character of the brothels did not threaten the existing order of female-male relations in late Ottoman society and paved the way for the acceptable moral hypocrisy, which allowed the brothel to survive even in very conservative areas of Istanbul. This acceptability of such a moral hypocrisy was put forward succinctly in *Beyoğlu Alemi*. The author, addressing his male readers, wrote: “You want to be seen to be honest although you are a liar, to be upright although you are dishonest, to be honourable although you are a scoundrel, to be decent, although you are indecent, to be innocent although you are a criminal. You are right. Because you are a man”.¹⁰⁵

The English philosopher Bertrand Russell once perceptively observed that “we have, in fact, two kinds of morality side by side: one which we preach but do not practice, and another which we practice but seldom preach”.¹⁰⁶ This

103 Boyar, “An imagined moral community”, p. 220.

104 BOA, ZB. 357/115, 10 Teşrin-i evvel 1324 (1908).

105 G. R., *Beyoğlu Alemi*, p. 5.

106 Russell, Bertrand, “Eastern and western ideals of happiness”, in *Sceptical Essays*, with a new preface by John Gray (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 84.

double-sided moral understanding is summed up nicely by a prostitute caught in the raid on Uncu Ahmed's brothel described in *Tebessüm-i Elem*:

The prostitute, who had been caught in the raid, after twice inhaling from her cigarette, let out a loud laugh and told her friend standing beside her, "Don't worry sister.... Tonight's raiders are our customers who will go to bed with us tomorrow night. They censure the thing they long for. I am amazed by the way people's minds work".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, p. 94.

Bicycling into Modernity in the Late Ottoman Empire: Ahmed Tevfik and his Bicycle Travelogue

Yavuz Köse

travelling for pure pleasure.¹

REDHOUSE



This chapter seeks to present a Muslim Ottoman's journey to Bursa at the end of the nineteenth century.* It is based on the published travelogue of the main figure of this study, İbnü'l-Cemal Ahmed Tevfik, the first (and only) Muslim Ottoman to have written a book about a bicycle tour made solely for touristic and entertaining purposes. Entitled *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan. Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Dahilinde* (A Bicycle Tour. In the Province of Bursa), it was first published in February 1900. Ahmed Tevfik's small book presents us not only with the opportunity of sharing the experiences he had during his journey but also of observing how he adopted "western-style (technological) modernity".² We also get an idea of how using a bicycle as a means of transport and mobility influenced his way of being a tourist.

Undoubtedly, the Ottomans' engagement with "technological modernity", beginning at the latest with the Tanzimat (1839-76), had an impact on the way local tourists travelled and organized their recreational activity. New forms of transportation such as railways and steamships were used, as were the ever-increasing number of hotels that became more and more attractive for

* The author would like to thank Astrid Menz and Winfried Riesterer for helping him to find a copy of the first edition of Ahmed Tevfik's travelogue. Many thanks should also go to Klaus Kreiser, who drew his attention to this intriguing work. Further, he is very obliged to Wiebke Hohberger and Matthew Powell for their careful reading and corrections.

1 "zevk için giden seyyah", in Redhouse, J. W., *Redhouse's Turkish Dictionary* (London: Redhouse, 1882), p. 340.

2 Smethurst, Paul, *The Bicycle – Towards a Global History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Ottomans. The transformations that occurred not only created new places of consumption and leisure as well as entertainment, but they also altered the social organization of time as well as its perception and use, as Avner Wishnitzer demonstrated impressively in his *Reading Clocks Alla Turca*.³ Along with such developments, other new items of modernity found their way into the Ottoman realm, such as the bicycle.

According to Glen Norcliffe, bicycles contributed to social and economic change in several significant ways, as he has shown in his seminal book on the history of bicycles in Canada.⁴ For Paul Smethurst bicycle mobility was “part of the intrusion of modernisation” and itself a “harbinger of modernity”.⁵ And, Eugen Weber goes so far as to describe the bicycle as “that incomparable harbinger of progress and emancipation”.⁶ In his study *Ride to Modernity*, Glen Norcliffe adopts Peter Hall and Pascal Preston’s “carrier wave” concept, which is used to describe ground-breaking inventions triggering a series of related innovations that “have ultimately had a much larger social and economic impact”.⁷ To name just a few examples: the steam engine with its huge impact on industry and transport, the sewing machine which changed the way the garment industry operated or the telephone that altered social and business relations.⁸ Similarly, the bicycle “advanced technological modernity through a stream of innovations that subsequently proved crucial to the evolution of the car, the motorcycle, agriculture machinery, aviation, and many other forms of mechanical production, bringing in its train a host of related innovations”.⁹

The methods used to make bicycles from the second half of the nineteenth century underwent dramatic changes as artisanal production was progressively replaced by mass production in vertically integrated factories. Consequently, the bicycle became one of the industrialized world’s first ‘mass-produced, con-

3 Wishnitzer, Avner, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). For a general survey on time and its perception in the Ottoman empire see Georgeon, François and Frédéric Hitzel (eds.), *Les Ottomans et le temps* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Hitzel, Frédéric, “De la clepsydre à l’horloge. L’art de mesurer le temps dans l’empire ottoman”, in Georgeon and Hitzel, *Les Ottomans et le temps*, pp. 13-15. The volume does not refer to the influence of tourism on the organization of time.

4 Norcliffe, Glen, *The Ride to Modernity. The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

5 Smethurst, Paul, “A flâneur on wheels? Bicycle mobility and the sociological gaze in Edward Thomas’s *In Pursuit of Spring*”, *Studies in Travel Writing*, 18/3 (2014), p. 261.

6 Weber, Eugen, *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1991), p. 11.

7 Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, p. 21.

8 Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, p. 21.

9 Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, p. 22.

sumer luxuries'. We may thus conclude with Glen Norcliffe that like modern technology in general "the bicycle had a significant impact on modernizing western society".¹⁰

In his global history of the bicycle Paul Smethurst states that "the bicycle's rate of acculturation in non-Western societies could be measured against their capacity to adopt western-style (technological) modernity" and that their appearance in "non-Western societies between 1890 and 1940 could therefore be read as a talisman for modernity".¹¹ Smethurst only covers Asia and Africa without mentioning the Ottoman empire at all. Although the bicycle appeared in the Ottoman realm at almost the same time as it did in China, Japan or India, it was never appropriated and integrated into daily life as it was in those countries. Nevertheless, the bicycle, like the camera, belonged to the set of western technologies that gained momentum in the late Ottoman period.

The Bicycle in the Ottoman Empire

The first report about travellers with bicycles in the Ottoman empire dates from 1885. In an article from 31 August in the daily *Tarık*, the itinerary of a certain T(h)omans Stefans from Istanbul through İzmit to Ankara is described.¹² This was none other than Thomas Stevens, who was the first person to cycle around the world by bicycle (a large-wheeled Ordinary), starting in 1885.¹³ His entry into Ankara was quite a spectacle: the *vali* (governor), several officials and more than a thousand inhabitants lined the street in order to take a look at the bicycle. Stevens was asked to present his vehicle and demonstrate some

¹⁰ Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, p. 23.

¹¹ Smethurst, *The Bicycle – Towards a Global History*, p. 106. For India see Arnold, David, *Everyday Technology. Machines and the Making of India's Modernity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹² Akçura, Gökhan, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet* (Istanbul: Om Yayınevi, 2003), p. 13; Süme, Mehmet and Selami Önsoy, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye'de Bisiklet Sporu", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 24 (2010), p. 360. See also Stevens, Thomas, *Around the World on a Bicycle. Volume 1: From San Francisco to Teheran* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1887), p. 249.

¹³ Thomas Stevens (1854-1935) was a British author and adventurer who lived in the United States before he returned to England in 1895. For his tour through Anatolia see Stevens, Thomas, *Around the World on a Bicycle. Volume 1: From San Francisco to Teheran*, and *Around the World on a Bicycle. Volume 2: Teheran to Yokohama* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1888). On world tours with bicycles see Amenda, Lars, "Mit dem Fahrrad um die Welt – Radfernenreisen vor hundert Jahren", in *Das Fahrrad. Kultur, Technik, Mobilität*, ed. Mario Bäumer/Museum der Arbeit (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2014), pp. 113-14.

tricks.¹⁴ During the 1880s and 1890s the appearance of cyclists always attracted great attention, as exemplified by the pictures found in the report “Across Asia on a bicycle” by two American students who started their bicycle tour from Istanbul to Peking in 1891.¹⁵

Almost at the same time as the first foreign cyclists appeared, the first bicycles were imported from Paris and advertised in 1889/1890 in the almanac *Annuaire Oriental*.¹⁶ Around 1894, the first advertisement for bicycles in the Ottoman press appeared and the *Annuaire Oriental* from 1896 lists a number of local stores (mostly department stores like Orosdi Back, Bon Marché [Bortoli Frères] and the English department store) offering a variety of western brands.¹⁷ Interestingly, the stores used in their advertisements the term “vélosipèd” (high wheel), meaning bicycles known as safety bicycles (diamond frame), which were produced from 1885 onwards.¹⁸ In Ottoman, bicycles were designated “velospid”, a corruption of the word “vélosipèd”.¹⁹ This word was used in almost all reports about cyclists and bicycles in the Ottoman press.²⁰ The Ottoman terms “derrace” (bicycle) and “derrace süvar” (cyclist) can also be found in publications, but seem not to have been widely used.²¹ *Derrace* was normally

14 Stevens, *Around the World*, 1, Chapter 13, “Bey Bazaar, Angora, and Eastward”. See <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5136/pg5136.html>> (accessed 17 September 2017).

15 Allen, Thomas Gaskell Jr. and William Lewis Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle. The Journey of Two American Students from Constantinople to Peking* (Seattle: Inkling Books, 2003 [1894]). Shortly after Gaskell and Sachtleben had undertaken their journey in 1892, Frank Lenz started his world tour on a bicycle. In early May 1894 he left Tabriz for Istanbul, the last time he was seen alive. A few days later he was probably murdered near Erzurum by Kurdish bandits. See Herlihy, David V., *The Lost Cyclist. The Untold Story of Frank Lenz's Ill-Fated Around-The-World-Journey* (Edinburgh, London: Mainstream Publishing, 2010). In 1895 Sachtleben undertook a journey to Erzurum in order to investigate the disappearance of Frank Lenz. He is also known for his commitment to the Armenians, who during 1894 and 1895 suffered severe massacres in the region where Lenz was killed. For illustrations see Gaskell and Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle*, p. 87.

16 Akçura, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet*, p. 13; Koçu, Reşat Ekrem, “Bisiklet”, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. V (Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1961), pp. 2818-22.

17 Akçura, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet*, pp. 119, 123.

18 Bijker, Wiebe E., *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs. Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 88-97.

19 See also Ch. Samy-Bey Frachery, *Dictionnaire Français-Turc. Illustré*, 3rd. ed. (Constantinople: Mihran, 1901), p. 2201.

20 The term and diverse variations (velespit, vulispit, vilispit) were in use until the 1950s. Suman, Kemal, “Bisikletin Türkiye Serüveni”, *Tombak*, 23 (1998), p. 25.

21 See for instance *Hüdavendigar Salnamesi* 34 (1325/1909), pp. 209 and 232. Ahmed Tevfik also uses the term “derrace süvar”, though the term *velosiped* is the most common in his text. İbnü'l-Cemal Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Dahilinde* (Dersaadet: Yovanaki Panayoditis Matbaası, 1317/1900), p. 4.

used in military contexts, in the sense of a battering ram on wheels. The most common name today, “bisiklet”, was also used in Ottoman texts in the late nineteenth century and found its way into the French-Ottoman dictionary of Şemseddin Sami Bey Frashëri published in 1901.²²

Among the Ottoman rural population, another name for bicycles was very prominent: “şeytan arabası”, meaning the “devil’s cart” or “devil’s carriage”. The term was similarly used in Iran and Central Asia, as the travelogue *Across Asia on a Bicycle* confirms.²³ Even Ahmed Tevfik uses this name, but only in order to mock the children who don’t believe him and ask to learn the real name of the apparently unknown vehicle.²⁴

It is not surprising that such innovations were regarded as the “devil’s work”, for the rural population barely had contact with the technological transformation that urban Ottoman society was experiencing.²⁵ In comparison, in China, where the bicycle also appeared in the late nineteenth century and was disseminated in significant numbers in the 1920s, the bicycle was often compared to horses or donkeys (“as fast as a horse”, “iron donkeys”, or “foreign horse”) in rural areas.²⁶ Similarly, another descriptive term for bicycles that was common in Anatolia referred to horses, but still associated them with the devil, “şeytan atı” – the “devil’s horse”.²⁷

Between 1890 and 1895 the bicycle aroused much curiosity among Ottoman urban citizens – and even more among people in rural areas.²⁸ The press

22 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 6. See also the title of the manual *Bisiklet Merakularına Yadigar* (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i Islam ve Askeri, 1320/1904), and Frachery, *Dictionnaire Français-Turc*, p. 274. Some authors also use the term (*yarışma*) *makine* meaning (racing) machine. See Kadri, “Bisiklet. Terakkiyat ve Teceddüdatı”, *Servet-i Fünun*, 200 (29 Kanun-u evvel 1310/1896), pp. 276- 8.

23 Gaskell and Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle*, p. 14.

24 But Ahmed Tevfik uses also “araba” as a synonym (p. 79). Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 98.

25 In the Ottoman dictionary *Kamus-i Türki* from 1900 “şeytan arabası” is used as a synonym for mine carts that were deployed in order to move materials on rails. Ş[emseddin] Sami, *Kamus-i Türki* (Dersaadet: İkdam Matbaası, 1317/1899), p. 794.

26 Dikötter, Frank, *Things Modern. Material Culture and Everyday Life in China* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), pp. 84, 88, 89.

27 Çağbayır, Yaşar, *Ötüken Türkçe Sözlük*, vol. iv (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2007), p. 4469. The speed of bicycles was often compared to that of horses.

28 Thomas Stevens gives vivid impressions of the reactions of the inhabitants of rural Anatolia that his appearance aroused. See Stevens, *Around the World*, 1, Chapter 13. Ahmed Tevfik’s travelogue confirms the amazement shown by inhabitants, especially children, of the villages they passed through. Apparently only in “Boşnak köyü”, where mostly Bosnians lived, did a few inhabitants seem to have seen a bicycle before, Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 118.

seems also to have been interested in this vehicle.²⁹ Ahmed İhsan (Tokgöz) (1868-1942), editor of the most prestigious and most important publication in this period, the *Servet-i Fünun*, dedicated several articles to this topic. He reported on the first races in Istanbul, which most probably started around 1895.³⁰

Already in the same year, the municipality of Pera (Beyoğlu), the centre for cyclists in Istanbul by then, set out to restrict the routes where cycling was allowed because of the risk of accidents. The grand vezirate, however, saw no reason to conform and advised the local police to instruct cyclists politely to drive carefully.³¹ In 1907 the same municipality tried to register all cyclists, assigning them numbers and demanding a type of tax.³²

Most cyclists were probably members of the middle or upper classes, which apparently necessitated more respectful behaviour on the part of the local police, and, given the fact that, unlike in Europe around 1900,³³ bicycles were still quite expensive, it is probable that only a relatively small number of citizens were able to buy (or even rent) them.³⁴ Such cyclists were sometimes the

29 On the often hostile reactions towards western cyclists in China who, due to the political circumstances, were perceived as “invaders” see Smethurst, *The Bicycle – Towards a Global History*, p. 109. For violence against cyclists see also Jamieson, Duncan R., “Bicycling and violence”, <<http://www.cafyd.com/HistDeporte/htm/pdf/4-9.pdf>> (accessed 17 September 2017).

30 Interest was not restricted to the capital; İzmir and Thessaloniki (Selanik) were also places where the bicycle was quickly adopted and cycle races were organized. Akçura, *Evvil Zaman Bisiklet*, pp. 32-4, and Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, pp. 348-50. For articles on bicycles see *Servet-i Fünun*, numbers 36, 135, 136, 153, 200, 230, 390, 416, 700, 756-7, and 796.

31 Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, p. 348.

32 Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, p. 348.

33 Smethurst, “A flâneur on wheels?”, p. 250. Yet, until the end of the nineteenth century bicycles were still “ein Produkt für Wohlhabende”. See Benad-Wagenhoff, Volker, “Fahrradbau 1817-1914 – Vom handwerklichen Einzelstück zum industriellen Massenprodukt”, in *2 Räder – 200 Jahre. Freiherr von Drais und die Geschichte des Fahrrades*, ed. Technomuseum (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2016), p. 96.

34 At the end of the nineteenth century, bicycles were sold for prices between 400 and 600 francs (25 francs = 1 lira), 16 and 24 lira respectively. Akçura, *Evvil Zaman Bisiklet*, pp. 13-14. In 1909 the price was around 13 lira. In the same year bicycles could be bought in China for \$150 (equivalent to 30 lira). See Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, p. 354, and Dikötter, *Things Modern*, p. 84. According to a salary table of officials (differentiating between “Traditionalist” and “Modernist” Muslims serving in the Foreign Ministry in Istanbul) the salary of Ahmed Tevfik around 1900 might have been between 1,000 and 1,300 *kuruş*, that is ten and 13 lira per month, Findley, Carter V., *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 312-15. In comparison, in 1900 unskilled workers would earn about 22 lira per annum; whereas employees of state companies had incomes varying between 55 and 72 lira. The salary of lower-level civil servants from 1900-1909 varied between 240 and

butt of criticism and it was perhaps Ottoman cyclists from Pera whom the journalist and author Ahmed Rasim (1865-1932) had in mind when he described such characters as ridiculous fops, a characterization that had been applied earlier to cyclists in London and Paris in a similar fashion, in his humorous column “Şehir Mektupları” (City letters) published in the daily *Malumat* around 1896.³⁵ Such criticism was often used against westernized, hedonistic young Muslim Ottomans who had lost their connection to local customs (tradition) and were mere imitators of the European lifestyle (*alafranga*),³⁶ but sympathetic descriptions of bicycles and riders are more frequently to be found in contemporary publications, which covered the whole gamut of bicycling and bicycle enthusiasts, than such caricatures, common as they were.³⁷ Indeed, the journalist Sermet Muhtar Alus recalled that around 1900 the excitement about bicycles had reached a pitch of enthusiasm almost akin to that for aviation in the 1930s.³⁸

The bicycle as a sports or cruising vehicle was not only adopted by Europeans and urban Ottomans. Already in the first decade of the 1900s, state employees working for the police or in postal offices used bicycles. Even the army discovered the bicycle as a means of transport.³⁹ But although it was “substan-

1,000 lira annually, according to their rank. In the middle and upper echelons of the civil service, annual incomes could rise from 2,400 up to 5,160 lira, Köse, Yavuz, “Vertical bazaars of modernity: Western department stores and their staff in Istanbul (1889-1921)”, *International Review of Social History*, 54 (2009), Supplement, p. 105.

- 35 Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları* (Istanbul: Üç Harf Yayınları, 2010), pp. 13, 121, 320-2; Akçura, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet*, pp. 22-8, and Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 288-90. Paul Smethurst describes the European pedant as a “much-ridiculed Dandy on wheels”, Smethurst, “A flâneur on wheels?”, p. 250.
- 36 Such one-dimensional characterizations of Ottomans can be found in many novels. See Mardin, Şerif, “Super-westernization in urban life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century”, in *Turkey: Geographical and Social Perspectives*, ed. Peter Benedict, Erol Tümertekin and Fatima Mansur (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 403-45.
- 37 See for instance *Malumat*, 292 (1312/1896) quoted in Akçura, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet*, p. 22, and Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, p. 348.
- 38 Alus remembers that in the early 1900s he knew many Ottomans, among them a few high-ranking officials, who were enthusiastic cyclists. See Alus, Sermet Muhtar, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul. 1900’lü Yılların Başlarında Şehir Hayatı*, ed. Faruk Ilıkan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), pp. 142-6, here p. 142. See also Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 288-90.
- 39 Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, pp. 353-4. For similar developments in China see Dikötter, *Things Modern*, p. 87, and Smethurst, *The Bicycle – Towards a Global History*, pp. 105-20; for India see Arnold, *Everyday Technology*, pp. 54, 82 and 155-7, and for Europe (especially Germany) see Essler, Henrik, “Das Fahrrad als Arbe-

tially cheaper to buy and maintain than a horse”;⁴⁰ the bicycle was apparently integrated only partly and in small numbers into the modernizing state in the early twentieth century, unlike other ‘small technologies’ such as the sewing machine and photographic camera⁴¹ or ‘big technologies’ such as the railroad and telegraphs.⁴² Clearly bicycles were an exclusively urban phenomenon, where they quickly became an established feature. According to Memduh Necdet, by 1906, bicycles belonged to the everyday street scenery of Istanbul and did not even attract curious looks anymore.⁴³ The bicycle, however, was not only a vehicle for cruising in the city; it was more often perceived as a sports vehicle. Very soon after its first appearance, local cycling clubs formed in several Ottoman towns.⁴⁴

For Ahmed Tevfik, although the bicycle, “this nice touring vehicle” (“bu latif vasita’seyir-ü seyahat”), well-known and esteemed for pleasure in the civilized world (*memalik-i mütemeddin*) and used as a means of transport and in the postal service, had been well received in his country, it was still “not adequately disseminated”.⁴⁵ His book aimed to change this situation.

itsgerät”, in *Das Fahrrad. Kultur, Technik, Mobilität*, ed. Mario Bäumer/Museum der Arbeit (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2014), pp. 65-75.

40 Arnold, *Everyday Technology*, p. 54.

41 Kupferschmidt, Uri, “The social history of the sewing machine in the Middle East”, *Die Welt des Islam*, 44/2 (2004), 195-213, and Kupferschmidt, Uri, “On the diffusion of ‘small’ western technologies and consumer goods in the Middle East during the era of the first modern globalization”, in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940*, ed. Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayech and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 229-62. Surprisingly, Kupferschmidt does not mention the bicycle in his article on the ‘small’ western technologies.

42 The given numbers of bicycles that were used by state employees between 1908 and 1917 are very low. See Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, pp. 353-4.

43 Memduh Necdet, “Bisiklete Dair”, *Servet-i Fünun*, 796 (13 Temmuz 1322/26 July 1906), p. 247.

44 Cycling races were even integrated into the programme of official fairs, as the aforementioned provincial almanac of Bursa from 1909 exemplifies. See Süme and Önsoy, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Bisiklet”, pp. 349-50; Hiçyılmaz, Ergun, *1912-2012. Türkiye’de Bisikletin 100 Yıllık Tarihi* (Istanbul: Bisiklet Federasyonu Yayınları, 2012), and *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi*, pp. 34, 209, 232. On the Bursa fair see Işıklı, Aytaç (ed.), *Türkiye Fuar Albümü. The Album of Turkish Fairs – Osmanlı Dönemi. Ottoman Era* (Istanbul: Istanbul Fuar Merkezi, 2012), pp. 218-25.

45 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 3.



FIGURE 9.1
Front cover of
Ahmed Tevfik's
*Velosiped ile Bir
Cevelan*.

Flâneur on Wheels – Ahmed Tevfik as Avant-Garde

Ahmed Tevfik had no ambitions to take part in a bicycle race. On the contrary, the definition of a tourist given in Ottoman dictionaries fits him very well, for he was clearly a man “travelling for pure pleasure” (“zevk için giden seyyah”),⁴⁶

46 Redhouse, *Redhouse's Turkish Dictionary*, p. 340.

a “man who travels from country to country for entertainment” (“eğlence için memleketden memlekete seyahat eden adam”).⁴⁷ Having decided to visit Bursa, Ahmed Tevfik gives the motivation for his trip: “Our aim was to see without getting tired – to have fun and travel effortlessly”. The bike not only helped him simplify the journey, but it seemingly served as a mode of recreation that enabled him to see more places in a convenient and independent manner.

On 22 July 1899, he started his one-week trip to Bursa with a friend on roads that according to him were best suited for a ride by bicycle. Before we go into the details of the tour, a little bit of information about Ahmed Tevfik is necessary.

İbnü'l-cemal Ahmed Tevfik: an Ottoman Bureaucrat and *homme des lettres*

Ahmed Tevfik and his small book of 126 pages, in which he gave no personal information (nor the identity of his companion), remained unknown until very recently. Although two translations of the book were published in modern Turkish for a wider audience in October 2006 and April 2007, they do not offer any reliable information about the author.⁴⁸ Nezaket Özdemir, who published a translation in 2007, states that Ahmed Tevfik was one of the cycle racers who are depicted in the almanac of the province of Bursa from 1909.⁴⁹ She also gives in her introduction to the travelogue a list of doctors and pharmacists (from 1933) active in Bursa, including the pharmacist Ahmed Tevfik.⁵⁰ However, although Ahmed Tevfik had travelled to Bursa several times, this does not necessarily mean that he had left Istanbul in order to settle there.⁵¹ As becomes clear from the travelogue, Istanbul occupied a prominent place in Ahmed Tevfik's life. During the sea voyage from Istanbul to Mudanya his friend tells him “You are still looking at Istanbul, while we have already passed the islands. Look at the shore of Anatolia, how beautiful”. Ahmed Tevfik replies “It seems I have never before seen Istanbul [that is the famous panorama of the city seen

47 Frachery, *Dictionnaire Français-Turc*, p. 2142.

48 İbnülcemal Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosipet ile Bir Cevelan. 1900'e Doğru İstanbul'dan Bursa'ya Bisikletle Bir Gezi*, trans. Cahit Kayra (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006); İbnülcemal Ahmed Tevfik, *100 Yıl Önce Bisikletle Bursa (Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Dahilinde Velosipetle Bir Cevelan)*, trans. Nezaket Özdemir (Bursa: Sentez Yayıncılık, 2007).

49 *Hüdavendigar Salnamesi*, pp. 209, 232. The copy of the almanac she used has on one of the pictures of the cyclists the name “Hafız Tevfik”.

50 Özdemir, *100 Yıl Önce Bisikletle Bursa*, p. 5.

51 He notes that he is travelling the route from Istanbul to Mudanya for the third time, Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 20.

from the sea], how can I quit looking at it and gaze elsewhere”.⁵² Furthermore, as will be shown, Istanbul was most probably his hometown, the place where he worked and published. Özdemir’s assumptions about the identity and profession of Ahmed Tevfik are therefore speculative and do not seem convincing. Cahit Kayra, the author of the 2006 translation, refrains from any speculation about the author’s identity, merely suggesting that Ahmed Tevfik was in harmony with himself and his bicycle (“kendisi ve bisikleti ile barışık”).⁵³ Based on a comparison with Şerafeddin Mağmumi’s description of the same region on a visit a few years earlier (1894), Kayra concludes that Ahmed Tevfik was a “conformist” who avoided any trouble by describing the area as good and beautiful.⁵⁴

Neither Özdemir nor Kayra, therefore, shed any light on Ahmed Tevfik’s identity. It is, however, possible, through research in the archives and various

52 “Hala İstanbul’a mı bakıyorsun? Adaları geçtik. Anadolu sahiline bak, ne kadar güzel” – Meğer ben daha İstanbul’u görmemişim, onu bırakıp da başka nereye bakılabilir”, Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 20. The “melancholic” description of the panorama of Istanbul seen from a departing boat (to Mudanya/Bursa) was popular. See for instance Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Seyahat Hatıraları, Aded 1: Anadolu ve Suriye’de* (Cairo: Bulak, 1909), pp. 810, quoted in Agai, Bekim, “Die Inszenierung der eigenen Reise als gute Geschichte im Anatolien- und Syrienreisebericht von Şerefeddin Mağmumi 1895/96 – oder – Wie viel Reise steckt im Reisebericht”, in *Wenn einer eine Reise tut, hat er was zu erzählen. Präfiguration – Konfiguration – Refiguration in muslimischen Reiseberichten*, ed. Bekim Agai and Stephan Conermann (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2013), pp. 63-4, or Süleyman Tevfik, *Tesalya’da Bir Cevelan ve Dört Aylık Seyahatım* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1315/1899), pp. 5-7, and 12.

53 Kayra, *Velosipet ile Bir Cevelan*, p. viii.

54 Kayra, *Velosipet ile Bir Cevelan*, p. viii. The doctor Şerafeddin Mağmumi was sent by the Ottoman state to Bursa in order to control a cholera outbreak in the region. Mağmumi’s travel memoirs were first published in 1909, one year after the revolution of 1908 that brought the Young Turks to power. The fact that Mağmumi was a member of the Young Turks and an admirer of their concept of top-down modernization certainly played a major role in his perception of the province of Bursa and its people, which could be described as ‘developmentalist’. Nevertheless, Mağmumi’s descriptions of Bursa (and other places) are valuable in the light of what they reveal about the ‘touristic’ infrastructure, including hotels and places worth visiting and seeing. A comparison with Ahmed Tevfik’s notes reveals some interesting insights into the partly varying perceptions and images of the same places. For a discussion and analysis of Mağmumi’s travelogue as well as its *mise-en-scène* character see Agai, “Die Inszenierung der eigenen Reise”. On Mağmumi’s other destinations see, for instance, Güçha, N. Şahin, “Tracing the memoir of Dr. Şerafeddin Mağmumi for the urban memory of Ayvalık”, *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 25/1 (2008), 53-80. For a similar ‘developmentalist’ approach to that of Mağmumi see the journalist’s report from the newspaper *Tanin*, associated with the Young Turks, Ahmet Şerif, *Anadolu’da Tanin: Birinci Gezi* (Istanbul: Kavram Yayınları, 1977). On the Young Turks see Hanioglu, M. Şükrü, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 144-9, 150-202.

databases,⁵⁵ to glean some information about his life. Ahmed Tefvik was born in 1865 in Istanbul and his father was the reserve Brigadier General Hacı Cemal Paşa.⁵⁶ Besides his travelogue, he published at least six other books. His writings were published between 1900 and 1910, and the topics included photography (two books, 1900 and 1909), religion (two books, both 1901), and politics (no date). In 1910, he also published a drama (in five acts) called *İstibdadın Son Günü Yahud Zavallı Valide* (The Last Day of Absolutism or the Poor Mother).⁵⁷ According to its front cover he worked in the Foreign Correspondence Office (*Tahrirat-ı Hariciye Kalemî*) in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, in a section that was responsible for French correspondence.⁵⁸

Ahmed Tefvik probably had a traditional Islamic-based education that enabled him to write about Islamic figures from the classical period (his father was a Hacı, i.e. he had visited the holy places of Islam). Certainly he was fluent in at least one foreign language, presumably French.⁵⁹ His body of work clearly shows that he had access to western publications. Furthermore, in the offices of the Foreign Ministry there were traditionally a large number of Armenian and Greek employees who had an international education and very good command of European languages. They must have exerted a good deal of influence on the Muslim employees.⁶⁰

To sum up, Ahmed Tefvik was an Ottoman bureaucrat working for the Foreign Ministry at the end of the nineteenth century until 1910 at the latest. He

55 See <<http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/>> (first accessed 1 December 2014).

56 "Ahmed Tefvik Bey; 1281 İstanbul doğumlu, Redif Kumandanı Mirliva Hacı Cemal Paşa'nın oğlu", see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter BOA), DH. SAİD (Dahiliye Nezareti Sicil-i Ahval Defterleri), Dosya No. 115, Gömlek No. 9, 29 Zilhicce 1281/25 May 1865. See also BOA, MF.MKT (Maarif Nezareti, Mektubi Kalemî), Dosya No. 548, Gömlek No. 35, 5 Zilhicce 1318/26 March 1901, and on the awarding of the Nişan-ı Osmani (second class) to Ahmed Tefvik's father see BOA, İ.TAL (İradeler Taltifat), Dosya No. 300, Gömlek No. 1321/M-034, 13 Muharrem 1321/11 April 1903.

57 Ahmed Tefvik's other publications are *Ameli ve Nazari Rehber-i Fotoğrafya* (Istanbul: Kasbar Matbaası 1317/1901); *Hazret-i Ebu Eyyub El-Ensari* (Istanbul: Kasbar Matbaası, 1318/1901); *Hazret-i Ebu Eyyub El-Ensari* (Istanbul: Şirket-i Mürettebiye Matbaası, 1318/1901); *Hürriyet-i Millet* (Istanbul: n.p., [probably 1909]); *Teshil-i Fotoğrafya* (Istanbul: Aristovolos ve Anastasyadis Matbaası, 1325/1907). The play *Aktris*, which is a translation from French, might also be by Ahmed Tefvik, although his name İbnü'l-Cemal is not mentioned in the front matter. Ahmed Tefvik, *Aktris* (Istanbul: Alem Matbaası, 1312/1895).

58 *İstibdadın Son Günü Yahud Zavallı Valide*, 5 acts (Istanbul: Artin Asaduryan Şirket-i Mürettebiye Matbaası, 1326/1910), front matter. See also Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, p. 187.

59 Findley differentiates among the officials working for the Foreign Ministry between "traditionalist" Muslims "knowing little or no French" and "modernist" Muslims "claiming proficiency in that language", see Findley, Carter V., *Ottoman Civil Officialdom. A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 257-8.

60 Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, pp. 257-8.

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وولوسیه دایله

اوغرائیلان محلولک ، کیلو مترو حسابیه ، یکدیگرینه اولان مسافه لرلی
وانای راهدهکی سرعتی مشعر جدولدر

ساعات	دقیقه	صباح	اقلام	ساعات	دقیقه	صباح	اقلام	ساعات	دقیقه	صباح	اقلام	ساعات	دقیقه	صباح	اقلام	ساعات	دقیقه	صباح	اقلام	
۳۰	۱۱	صباح		۲۷۲۸																مدانیه دن
۴۵	۱			۳۵۵۳		صباح		۸,۲۵۰												تهدودیندی
۵۵	۳			۴۲۰۵				۶,۵۲۰												بیوک بیکه مه
۴۸	۵			۴۹۵۳				۷,۴۸۰												کیوک بیکه مه
۳۳	۶			۶۱۵۰				۱۱,۹۷۰												چیکرکه
								۱۴,۱۴۰												پروسه
				۷۵۶۴																پروسه جوارنده قرج
۳۰	۹	اقلام		۸۳۲۵		اقلام		۷,۶۱۰												پروسه دن حرکت
۵۰	۱۰			۹۳۵۸				۱۰,۳۳۰												حاجی اوخس خان
۳۵	۱۱	اقلام		۱۰۰۱۱۴				۷,۵۶۰												قره بیگار
۳۰	۱۱	صباح		۱۰۷۶۶۱				۶,۴۷۰												ایچاقی دربندی
																				آقصور قریسی

۳۰	۱۲			۱۱۲۳۹		صباح		۴,۷۸۰												غازنجی دربندی
۱۵	۲			۱۲۶۹۷				۱۴,۵۸۰												غازخان ایینه کول جوارنده
۱۲		ایرتسی صباح		۱۲۸۰۶				۱,۱۲۰												ایته کول
۳۵	۳			۱۴۱۹۴				۱۳,۸۵۰												جینلی مدن سورنی منبسی
۴۵	۴			۱۴۸۱۲				۶,۱۸۰												حسن باشا کوی
				۱۵۶۰۴				۷,۹۲۰												تکرار ایته کول
								۲۰,۷۴۰												ایته کول جوارنده
۴۵	۱۲	ایکی کجه اقامت صباح		۱۷۶۷۸																ایته کولدن حرکت
																				دلکی قیا درمنی
۴۵	۳	صباحلین		۱۹۰۵۶		صباح		۱۳,۷۸۰												بوغاز کوی
۲۵	۸	اقلام		۲۰۰۶۱				۱۰,۰۵۰												بکجه کوی
				۲۰۵۸۱		اقلام		۵,۲۰۰												بکینهر
۲۵	۲	صباح		۲۳۲۲۵				۲۶,۴۴۰												قرنعلینی بوغاز
۵۰	۳			۲۳۴۲۴				۱,۹۹۰												دبیز
۳۵	۶			۲۳۵۵۶				۱,۳۳۰												پوشانی کوی
۲۵	۷	اقلام		۲۳۷۹۸				۲,۴۲۰												آق اینیش دربندی
۱۵	۱۰			۲۶۱۲۸		اقلام		۲۳,۳۰۰												پروسه به (عودت)
				۲۹۴۰۴		صباح		۳۲,۷۶۰												مدانیه
۲۶۶,۷۶۰										بکول										

* بورادن طوغری بکینهره شوسه وارسهده بز طوبراق یولی تعقیب اینش ایدک .

FIGURE 9.2 Detailed chart of the itinerary, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 124-5.

belonged to the group that Carter Findley terms “modernist Muslim officials”.⁶¹ Although he was very familiar with the traditional education, his interests went beyond the “old-fashioned types of versification”⁶² detected in the poems that he inserted into his travelogue. His education in French allowed him access to western literature and writings on topics like photography. As his

61 Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 202-10, 209. See also Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, pp. 254-67.
62 Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, p. 204.



FIGURE 9.3
Map of Istanbul and
the province of Bursa
– Ahmed Tevfik’s tour,
*Meyers Reisebücher,
Türkei, Rumänien,
Serbien, Bulgarien*, 1902,
p. 322.

second book published in 1907 implies, he was also a passionate photographer, for it includes several pictures taken by the author himself.⁶³ His great affinity with western ‘small technologies’, like bicycles or cameras, made him appear to be a conscious consumer of modernity in its true sense. He was 34 years old when he and his unnamed friend embarked on their bicycle tour.

Cruising on a Bicycle: Bursa and its Surroundings

Bursa (Prusa), the first capital of the Ottomans (1326), is situated about 90 km south of Istanbul at the foot of the mountain Uludağ (Olympus). It was famous for its hot springs and the heritage of the early Ottomans. There were two reasons for the decision to travel there: firstly, the roads in and around Bursa are described as convenient for bicycles and secondly, the author had been there twice before and was familiar with the city and its surroundings. The tour started with a five-hour journey by ship from Istanbul to Mudanya, where the friends decided to bicycle to Bursa (about 32 km). The major stops were at the villages of Aksu, İnegöl, and Yenişehir, with other stops at many small villages in between. They then returned from Yenişehir to Bursa and finally to Mudanya. The tour started on July 22 and lasted one week.

63 Ahmed Tevfik, *Teshil-i Fotoğrafya*, see illustrations between pp. 10 and 11, 16 and 17 or 35 and 36. This book was the first book of a (planned) series about photography entitled “Fotoğrafya Kitabhanesi” launched by the publishing house. Most probably due to the weight of their luggage and for practical reasons, Ahmed Tevfik did not take a camera with him on the bicycle tour.

The author provides the reader with a detailed chart containing information not only about the places visited, but the distances between them, the speed (deploying a cyclometer), the condition of the roads used, as well as the departure and arrival times (see Fig. 2).⁶⁴ The departure times clearly show that the travellers started out quite early in the morning (between 6:30 and 7:30).⁶⁵ Ahmed Tevfik, not without pride, also gives the total distance they covered during the week: 266 km and 760 m. The author even mentions that their route would form a triangle on a map (Bursa-İnegöl-Yenişehir-Bursa) (see Fig. 3).⁶⁶ As mentioned above, the ten chapters offer more information about the landscape, panoramas, and the best roads for bicycles than facts about the places – so common in other travelogues of that time. They provide many scenes of socializing with the locals with extensive dialogues. Factual information therefore represents only a small part of the bicycle travelogue.

Ahmed Tevfik gives the impression that he is more interested in the travel itself than repeating the well-known facts about places like Bursa. Nevertheless, he offers at least a few pages with the instruction: “All those who are interested in more detailed information about Bursa may read the following pages”.⁶⁷ The passages including general information about the cities and larger villages (Mudanya, Bursa, Aksu, İnegöl and Yenişehir) are short and follow the actual travel description.⁶⁸ This differs from other travelogues such as those of Şerafeddin Mağmumi or Ömer Subhi (a military captain): the former gives clearly structured information about the city, including its attractions such as mosques, theatres, bazaars, and hotels, as well as about the local factories, the press and of course the famous thermal spas and spring waters, whereas the latter offers information about the places he visited (mostly mosques and mausoleums), with a few excursions into pre-Ottoman history, and adds a detailed report about the drinking water and spring waters. Şerafeddin Mağmumi and Ömer Subhi even include tables of the ingredients and nutritional value of

64 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 124-5. Ahmed Tevfik differentiates between chausses (*şose*) and unpaved country roads (*adi yol*).

65 The time of day given is according to Ottoman time-keeping. The reckoning begins with sunset (12:00) and ends with sunrise (12:00). Correspondingly, the time would be adjusted to the length of day. See *Meyers Reisebücher. Türkei, Rumänien, Serbien, Bulgarien*, 6th ed. (Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1902), pp. 155-6.

66 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 96. Besides the illustration of a bicycle on the front cover, one other depiction of the same illustration on page 16, and an illustration of a bird flying above a wheel on the last page (126), the book contains no other illustrations. It also has no maps.

67 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 65.

68 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 40-4 (Mudanya), 65-71 (Bursa), 81-2 (Aksu), 96-6 (İnegöl), 106-8 (Yenişehir).

the water.⁶⁹ It seems that Ahmed Tevfik deliberately refrained from burdening the reader with this sort of information.

Ahmed Tevfik's account is vivid and entertaining. The reader also receives valuable information about the touristic infrastructure, including accommodation (hotels, *hans*, that is caravanserais, and simple guest rooms in villages), restaurants, and cafés. Such information is also provided by other authors such as Mağmumi.⁷⁰ Ahmed Tevfik and his friend quite often had to deal with problems such as finding a place to stay or to eat, especially in the later part of the day.⁷¹ Bursa and its environs had already been attuned to touristic needs – although, as the report indicates, only places like Bursa or Mudanya could offer some convenient infrastructure. Other more remote places often had only modest accommodation or food.⁷² What Ahmed Tevfik and his friend tried to get at least once every day was Turkish coffee. He seems to have been a coffee addict and very sensitive about drinking good (and cold) water, for their coffee breaks are documented on almost every page. Yet he and his companion were not keen to search for luxurious hotels or restaurants (even though they certainly had the means to do so). This becomes clear at the very beginning of their tour, when they decide to buy third class ship tickets in order to stay with their bicycles. When they arrived in the small village of Aksu, they had to stay in a *han* situated above a cowshed. It is the best place they could find. Ahmed Tevfik notes laconically “Anyway we are not very picky”.⁷³

Sporadically, the book resembles a *Lonely Planet* guide for bicycle tourists. Besides descriptions of the beauty of the nature and interesting (insider) places, the author tries to convey the pleasure bicycling has to offer. He does not conceal, however, the challenges of travelling with bicycles: flat tires, the danger and challenge of poor road conditions, oncoming animal-drawn vehicles, tiring ascents and downhill stretches.⁷⁴ Still, in describing all aspects of travel-

69 Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Anadolu ve Suriye’de Seyahat*, pp. 38-73, and Ömer Subhi, *Ömer Subhi Bey’in Bursa Seyahati (Hüdavendigar Vilayeti’nde Bir Hafta Seyahat)* (Bursa: Sentez Yayıncılık, 2007), pp. 13-39, and 66-87.

70 Güçha, “Tracing the memoir of Dr. Şerafeddin Mağmumi”, pp. 59 or 62-3 for instance. For an overview of the accommodation that travellers used in the region of Thrace between the fifteenth and the nineteenth century see Vingopoulou, Ioli, “Routes et logements des voyageurs dans la région de la Thrace”, *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 7 (2010), 299-322.

71 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 31-3.

72 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 79, 84 or 88.

73 “Bizde o kadar müşkelpesend değil idik”. Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 79.

74 The cyclists were, depending on the road, quite fast. Ahmed Tevfik notes that they would constantly check their speed. For their return to Bursa from Yenişehir, they required between 1.75 (105 sec.) and 2.20 (132 sec.) minutes per kilometre. He remarks: “Faster than

ling by bicycle, he follows his aim of guiding the interested reader and future cyclist. Ahmed Tevfik also uses poems to express his enthusiasm for nature and bicycles.⁷⁵

Ahmed Tevfik's profession and his publications distinguish him as someone educated in European history and culture. As much as he is enthusiastic about western 'small technologies', he seems to be bound to tradition and his religion. While he devotedly describes his enjoyment of cycling in nature, he also depicts in the same depth the pleasure he experiences when he encounters mosques or has an interesting conversation with a faithful Muslim.⁷⁶ When the many holy buildings of Bursa come into view, he writes that each minaret reflects the uniqueness of God and sends a feeling of freedom to one's heart.⁷⁷ The doctor Şerafeddin Mağmumi, when encountering the silhouette of Bursa from almost the same spot, writes in comparison: "Now we saw the domes and minarets of the venerable mosques, the great decoration and the only characteristic of an oriental city".⁷⁸ Ahmed Tevfik and his friend not only visited the mosques (and other places worth seeing),⁷⁹ but even attended the Friday prayer in İnegöl, where they remained for two nights.⁸⁰ His devotion to the

this would mean riding a horse". In another passage, he mentions that they needed 48 minutes to cover a distance of 25 km, which is about 2 minutes per km. These figures, impressive as they are, may be the result of inaccurate measurement. Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 83, 111.

- 75 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 3 (on bicycle riding), 44-5 (on the landscape and a night in Mudanya), 60 (on the valley in Bursa). The then famous poet Tevfik Fikret, one of the founders of modern Turkish poetry, published a "bicycle sonnet" in 1898/99 in the journal *Servet-i Fünun*. See Akçura, *Evvel Zaman Bisiklet*, p. 76, and Süme and Önsoy, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye'de Bisiklet Sporü", p. 352.
- 76 The travellers were impressed by the intelligence and knowledge of Islam displayed by a young man who worked as a coal carrier in the village of Aksu, Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 81-2.
- 77 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 55.
- 78 Translated from the German version in Agai, "Die Inszenierung der eigenen Reise", p. 66. For the Ottoman version see Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Anadolu ve Suriye'de Seyahat*, p. 34.
- 79 The places Ahmed Tevfik visited in Bursa and its surroundings resemble the established "must see" places other Ottoman travellers, as well as European tourists, would visit. The guides like Baedeker or *Meyers Reisebücher* give almost similar recommendations. See Baedeker, Karl, *Konstantinopel und Kleinasien. Archipel, Cypern. Handbuch für Reisende* (Leipzig: Verlag von Karl Baedeker, 1914), pp. 251-65, and *Meyers Reisebücher. Türkei. Rumänien, Serbien, Bulgarien* (Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1902), pp. 324-33.
- 80 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 85. For another example, see Halil Salim, *Anadolu ve Rumeliye Bir Küçük Seyahat Yahud Her Yerde Terakki* (Kostantiniyye: Istanbul Matbaası, 1308/1892), p. 36.

religion of Islam is also reflected in his publications about the religious figures of early Islam.

One essential part of the book is the numerous dialogues that Ahmed Tevfik recorded. Ahmed Tevfik and his friend were seemingly interested in the people they met on the road and in the places they chose to stay at. Apart from the fact that two Ottomans travelling by bicycle aroused some excitement, particularly in small villages where the inhabitants would ask for a demonstration of their riding skill and applaud when the travellers left the location,⁸¹ both appear communicative and open-minded. The book not only gives a report on very interesting (exclusively male) figures and their stories, but it does so through dialogues, which offer a quite vivid (and at times probably also fictional) picture of each personality.⁸²

From the outset, the author explains how he accumulated his material. As an experienced traveller, he had become accustomed to taking notes in a notepad, even before the trip.⁸³ So, in a hotel in Mudanya, when his friend and the owner are interested in where the name “Mudanya” (Montanya) comes from, Ahmed Tevfik pulls out his notepad and gives detailed information.⁸⁴ The author explains that he always amasses information about places he has visited or intends to visit. Because he also took notes during the trip,⁸⁵ it seems quite possible that he had noted down the dialogues soon after the various encounters that produced them. The fact that the report was published only seven months after the tour lends weight to the authenticity of the text. Most of the travelogues in the late nineteenth century were published years after the trip, as was the case, for example, with that of Şerafeddin Mağmumi, which implies that the information – even if the authors had taken notes – might have been substantially modified by the time of publication. Apart from personal circumstances, one important reason for such delays was the severe censorship during the Abdühamidian era that was responsible for the time lag between

81 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 57, 82, 83, 86, 88 or 97, 104, and 118.

82 See for instance his description of Greek passengers on the boat trip to Mudanya, the dialogue with the hotel operator in Mudanya, or the discussion with a former oil wrestler (*pehlivan*) who lost his fingers in an accident, Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 19-30, 31-40, 102-4.

83 Şerafeddin Mağmumi also mentions a note pad that he used for travel purposes. Agai, “Die Inszenierung der eigenen Reise”, pp. 50-1. For the Ottoman version see Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Anadolu ve Suriye’de Seyahat*, p. 11.

84 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 37, 40-2.

85 Above all he would take notes on the distances they travelled. Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 108.

finishing and publishing a work.⁸⁶ The very short time between when the tour took place (end of July 1899), the date of the foreword (end of September 1899) and the date of permission for publication (February 1900) implies that Ahmed Tevfik's travelogue passed through the censorship process smoothly.

Ahmed Tevfik's Travelogue: the Cyclist's Delight

The travelogue is not only a detailed report about the one-week journey; it starts with lengthy instructions concerning how beginners should start cycling and how they should practice. Ahmed Tevfik was certainly addicted to cycling and wanted to advertise this new means of mobility and share his enthusiasm with others. He apparently persuades and encourages his unnamed friend to learn how to ride a bicycle within two weeks and gives assistance in his cycling education.⁸⁷ The instructions about riding are didactic and are clearly addressed to the reader. Although he confesses that he had wonderful times travelling alone, he believes that bicycling with a companion makes a trip much more enjoyable – even more so if the friend shows apparent talent in learning to ride.⁸⁸ Since the unnamed friend is not only part of the manual section but also of the whole itinerary, we may assume that he wished to remain anonymous.⁸⁹ The reader, according to the author, should be informed about all important aspects of bicycles and travelling (alone and in company) by bicycle. This was the main impetus to publish the notes taken during the journey, as we learn from the introduction.⁹⁰ As has been noted, it would seem that around 1900 cycling had gained momentum in the Ottoman realm. The first bicycles appeared there around 15 years earlier, and as a new foreign object they at-

86 Publication could be postponed for up to several years. Demirel, Fatmagül, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansür* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007), pp. 89-104, and Georgeon, François, "Yasak Kelimeler. XX. Yüzyılın Başındaki Osmanlı Sansürüyle İlgili Bir Belge Üzerine", in *Mete Tunçay'a Armağan*, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan, Tanıl Bora and Murat Koraltürk (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), pp. 191-2. Among the travelogues consulted see Ömer Subhi, *Hüdavendigar Vilayetinde Bir Hafta Seyahat* (Istanbul: Alim Matbaası, 1308/1892) and İbnü'l-Celal Sezai, *Bursaya Seyahat* (Kostantiniyye: Alim Matbaası, 1308/1892). The latter work was written during the author's journey in 1889, the foreword is dated 1891.

87 For the instructions see Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 4-14.

88 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 8.

89 Travelling with a friend or in a group was quite common – not only among cyclists. See for instance Nafizade Ahmed Fuad, *Mecmua-i Hatratımdan İki Yaprak Yahud İlk Seyahatım* (Istanbul: Alim Matbaası, 1313/1897), Halil Salim, *Anadolu ve Rumeliye Bir Küçük Seyahat*; İbnü'l-Celal Sezai, *Bursaya Seyahat*.

90 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 2, see 3-19 for the "manual".

tracted a great deal of attention. But they were also regarded with scepticism and ridicule.⁹¹

Cycling to Modernity: Ahmed Tevfik's Travelogue from a Comparative Perspective

Ahmed Tevfik seems not to have been a member of a cycling club, nor was he very ambitious in terms of sporting activities.⁹² The central aim of the tour was “to see without exhaustion and have fun without effort”; the ideal was the travelling itself. This attitude was strange enough to arouse amazement among the inhabitants of a village when the travellers told them that they had come from Istanbul and just wanted to look around and travel back.⁹³

Ahmed Tevfik was a “touriste” in the sense of the Ottoman-French dictionary of 1905. Travelling in all its forms was a rarity, as we learn from diverse Ottoman writers from the 1870s.⁹⁴ Whereas Europeans would travel all over the world, Ottomans would not even travel within their own country, with the exception of officials, as Ahmed Midhat Efendi stated as late as 1878.⁹⁵ This assessment, however, was certainly overstated for the 1890s. By the last decade of the 1800s, the number of locals travelling within the Ottoman realm and writing about it had risen. Many of them travelled for business reasons or by order of the military or the state. Some of them left travelogues in which they inform the reader not only about business-based topics but also about local spots worth seeing and provide historical information – mostly about the Ottoman heritage – about the places visited.⁹⁶ We even find several Ottomans “travelling

91 Paul Smethurst describes similar developments during the diffusion of bicycles in Asia, see Smethurst, *The Bicycle – Towards a Global History*, pp. 105-40.

92 This is also confirmed by his refusal to don the fashionable sportswear contemporary cyclists wore. He and his friend travelled in what we would label “casual wear” today. See Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 16. On the history of cyclist fashion see Scherreihs, W., “Schick unterwegs – Eine kurze Geschichte der Fahrradmode”, in *Das Fahrrad. Kultur, Technik, Mobilität*, ed. Mario Bäumer/Museum der Arbeit (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2014), pp. 122-7.

93 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 80.

94 Mehmed Emin Efendi, *İstanbul'dan Orta Asya'ya Seyahat*, ed. Rıza Akdemir (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1986), p. 6.

95 “Bizde seyahat yalnız memuriyetle bir yerden diğer mahale gitmekten ibaret kalmış”, Mehmed Emin Efendi, *İstanbul'dan Orta Asya'ya Seyahat*, p. 2.

96 Ömer Subhi, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayetinde Bir Hafta Seyahat*; Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Anadolu ve Suriye'de Seyahat*.

just for fun” and publishing their travel sketches.⁹⁷ Ahmed Tevfik’s work belongs to this latter group of travelogues, yet it also stands out due to some key features.

If we compare travel reports of journeys within the Ottoman realm from the late nineteenth century, we get the impression that the Ottomans had discovered their *Reiselust*. The examples which I have consulted do imply that travelling and sightseeing became of value in themselves. Travel descriptions also often served other purposes, such as showing the reader the progress (that is, western-oriented modernization) the country was making under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909).⁹⁸ Such progress is demonstrated in the new means of transportation, like steamships and above all the railway, or the educational system.⁹⁹ One traveller even gave his book published in 1892 the title *Anadolu ve Rumeliye Bir Küçük Seyahat Yahud Her Yerde Terakki* (A Short Journey to Anatolia and Rumeli or Progress Everywhere).¹⁰⁰

Abdülhamid II, a sultan who “left behind a contradictory legacy”,¹⁰¹ assumes a prominent position in some of the introductions of travelogues in this period.¹⁰² Certainly not an enthusiastic traveller himself, rarely leaving his Yıldız Palace, he nevertheless promoted a modernization of the empire, paying special attention to the ‘large’ and ‘small’ technologies such as railways, ships,

97 See, for instance, the travelogues mentioned in footnote 87. Further Mehmed Hayreddin (Midillili), *Aydın Vilayeti Celilesi Dahilinde Bir Kaç Gün Seyahat* (Istanbul: Malumat Matbaası, 1314/1898); Ömer Subhi, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayetinde Bir Hafta Seyahat*; Birecikli Ayanzade Namık Ekrem, *Anadolu’da Bir Cevelan* (Istanbul: Necim İstanbul Matbaası, 1327/1909); Süleyman Tevfik, *Tesalya’da Bir Cevelan*. For a list of Ottoman travel accounts to Europe see Hillebrand, Casper, “Ottoman travel accounts to Europe. An overview of their historical development and a commented researchers’ list”, in *Venturing Beyond Borders – Reflections on Genre, Function and Boundaries in Middle Eastern Travel Writing*, ed. Bekim Agai, Olcay Akyıldız and Caspar Hillebrand (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2013), pp. 53-76.

98 Deringil, Selim, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

99 See for instance Nafizade Ahmed Fuad, *Mecmua-i Hatıratımdan İki Yaprak*; Ömer Subhi, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayetinde Bir Hafta Seyahat*; Birecikli Ayanzade Namık Ekrem, *Anadolu’da Bir Cevelan*, or Süleyman Tevfik, *Tesalya’da Bir Cevelan*.

100 Halil Salim, *Anadolu ve Rumeliye bir Küçük Seyahat*.

101 Findley, Carter V., *The Turks in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 164. To some he was an authoritarian, despotic leader, brutally suppressing the opposition, implementing a wide network of espionage and censorship; to others he is regarded as a reformer, as the leader of the Muslim world. See also Georgeon, François, *Abdülhamid II: le sultan calife (1876-1909)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), and Lewis, Bernard, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 178-9.

102 Halil Salim, *Anadolu ve Rumeliye Bir Küçük Seyahat* or Ömer Subhi, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayetinde Bir Hafta Seyahat* or Süleyman Tevfik, *Tesalya’da Bir Cevelan*.

tramways, photography and the telegraph.¹⁰³ This not only enabled him to control vast regions,¹⁰⁴ but resulted in ever-increasing opportunities for Ottomans to travel in a convenient, secure and fast manner. At the same time, he intensified the existing censorship of the press and books.¹⁰⁵ Despite his rigid censorship, especially of political topics, the number of books published within the first 15 years of his reign increased: more than 4,000 book titles are listed in a bibliography prepared in the 1890s. “Of these, the most important are the literary works, and works of popular science and scholarship”, as Bernard Lewis notes.¹⁰⁶ Like technology, part of the idea of modernization of the empire and which played a part in the project developed by the sultan written about by authors such as Ahmed Midhat Efendi, travel, too, was a subject that became very popular at the end of the century. It is within this context that the number of local travellers (tourists) increased. Since writing was under strict censorship, the publishing of seemingly “apolitical” works on travelling (itself part and parcel of the modernization project)¹⁰⁷ became more prominent.

Whereas many travellers appear as representatives of the sultan’s vision of modernity and praise him for his efforts, Ahmed Tevfik has a different approach altogether. His text neither refers to the sultan nor does he extensively discuss the merits of his modernization efforts in the country. With a few limited exceptions that point to the quality of roads and accommodation in the villages, as well as references to modern buildings, he rarely deals with topics related to the progress of the Abdülhamidian era. Given the play *İstibdadın Son Günü* (The Last Days of Despotism) that he published one year after the deposition of Abdülhamid II in 1910, a work that is very critical of the “despotism” this sultan stood for, we may even argue that Ahmed Tevfik was never a great (political) supporter of the sultan.¹⁰⁸

103 See also Kupferschmidt, “On the diffusion of ‘small’ western technologies”.

104 The modernization project pursued by Abdülhamid was not restricted to the ‘core’ regions of the still vast Ottoman empire, but also included the periphery, which was the focus of an Ottoman version of *mission civilatrice*. See Kuehn, Thomas, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference. Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Leiden: Brill 2011). For the Tanzimat period see Reinkowski, Markus, *Die Ordnung der Dinge: eine vergleichende Untersuchung über die osmanische Reformpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2005).

105 On censorship during his reign see Demirel, II. *Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansür*.

106 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, pp. 188-9. See also Berkes, Niyazi, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), pp. 276-81.

107 See Motika, Raoul and Christoph Herzog, “Orientalism “alla turca”: late 19th/early 20th century Ottoman voyages into the Muslim ‘outback’”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 40/2 (2000), Special Issue, *Ottoman Travels and Travel Accounts from an Earlier Age of Globalization*, pp. 139-40.

108 Ahmed Tevfik, *İstibdadın Son Günü Yahud Zavallı Valide*. The play is about a young man (Rifat Bey) who is innocently imprisoned (between 1906 and 1908) during the last days of

Ahmed Tevfik is certainly interested in issues surrounding ‘small technologies’. And by reporting about places like the agricultural school and the felt factory in Bursa with its production machines, he may have intended to show the intrusion of modernity into the provinces. The technical failure of one pedal of his companion’s bicycle on their way to Yenişehir, near a small village (“Boşnak köyü”) indicates that even in remote areas some help could be found. Though far away from any bicycle repair shop, they managed to find a blacksmith (“capable of his craft and intelligent” – “sanatında mahir, mamafih zeki”) who apparently had basic understanding of mechanics and finally was able to fix the pedal in an unexpectedly good manner.¹⁰⁹ Ahmed Tevfik seems to be critical of certain “modern” developments as well. He mentions the water mills that were used as driving components for machines for tobacco production in Bursa and which produced foul smelling wastewater that affected the surrounding villages.¹¹⁰

The village life described by Ahmed Tevfik appears partly idealistic,¹¹¹ as Cahit Kayra suggests.¹¹² Yet, some villagers seem to begrudge Ahmed Tevfik and his friend their life in comparison with their own existence full of privation: “You have (such) a good time in Istanbul, that big city” (“İstanbul’da o koca şehirde ne güzel vakt geçiriyorsunuz”).¹¹³ For Ahmed Tevfik the debauchery of the city (“sefahat-ı medeniye”) and the village life, both offer enjoyment. Envy of the lives of others Ahmed Tevfik considers as part of the human nature.¹¹⁴ Although Ahmed Tevfik may appear too idealistic about rural life, Kayra’s statement needs to be attenuated. Some passages also indicate the burdensome life of the people and the shady side of rural existence.¹¹⁵

Abdülhamid’s reign, depicted as an era of despotism (*istibdad*). The play is a confrontation with the Abdülhamidian despotism and a patriotic – if implicit – plea for the ideals of the Young Turk Revolution, advertising the idea of Ottomanism. Neither Abdülhamid II nor the Young Turks are mentioned explicitly in the text.

109 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 116-18.

110 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 53-4 (visit to the Bursa agricultural school), 60 (felt factory, and water mill). On the tension between tradition and modernity discussed in a British bicycle travelogue see Smethurst, “A flâneur on wheels?”.

111 See for instance Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 92-4.

112 Kayra, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. viii.

113 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 92.

114 Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, p. 92.

115 See his description of apparently malnourished children and of the inhabitants of a village whose clothing identify them as foreigners that is Muslim immigrants from the Balkans also known as *muhacir*. In the village of Aksu, Ahmed Tevfik is surprised by the apparently high prices they had to pay for eggs and the fact that they would demand ten per cent exchange rates for changing money (a quarter lira), Ahmed Tevfik, *Velosiped İle Bir Cevelan*, pp. 79, 97, 118.

In Conclusion: a New Type of Tourist

Ahmed Tevfik was not just a tourist in the sense of the entry in the dictionary mentioned above. Neither was he a mere passive consumer of well-known touristic spots or routes. Rather, he played an active role in order to experience nature as well as culture and especially to get in touch with the locals. Tourism, as practised by Ahmed Tevfik, was somehow the transfer of “everydayness” into a space outside his home and its working context.¹¹⁶ As a man of letters interested in diverse themes, he continued his practice of getting information and taking notes, just as he would do in Istanbul. Bicycling, like photography, was his passion and he indulged in touring in Bursa as he apparently did in Istanbul. Ahmed Tevfik was avant-garde, for he propagated bicycle tourism in the Ottoman empire at a time when a bicycle could be called a “devil’s cart” (“şeytan arabası”). Unfortunately (for him), he did not initiate a movement of bicycle lovers who would discover the Ottoman lands. To this day, bicycles remain a much neglected means of transport (mainly used by children) and their users are still somewhat seen as eccentrics.¹¹⁷

Ahmed Tevfik represents an individual tourist – in the most progressive sense – who intended to share his passion for bicycling with his contemporaries. He clearly was ahead of his time. As an Ottoman bureaucrat educated both according to a traditional Islamic system as well as according to Western norms, he adopted a means of transport and transformed it into a lifestyle object. His way of reporting about Bursa and its environs is also unconventional when compared to his contemporaries. He certainly had no problem adopting “the signs of borrowed culture” which “represented the combination of lust and fear with which the Ottomans confronted European culture”.¹¹⁸ It seems that he was indeed at ease with the cultural dualism that characterizes the late Ottoman period. His refraining from ingratiation with Sultan Abdülhamid II in his bicycle travelogue shows that his aim was not to deliver another book on the merits of progress, but a guide for cyclists. Contrary to Kayra’s assertion

116 Haldrup, Michael and Jonas Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient* (London: Routledge, 2010).

117 In 2011, for a two-part documentary based on the newly published versions of the travelogue, Aydan Çelik and Ertan Ayçetin travelled the route of Ahmed Tevfik and his friend once again. See <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xjplv2_seyyahların-izinde-bolum-25-velosipet-ile-bir-cevelan-1_travel> (accessed 17 September 2017). In 2004 the percentage of bicycle users in Turkey stood at between two and three per cent, in contrast to Europe, where the percentage is around 15 per cent, and East Asia, where it is up to 60 per cent. Ayverdi, Ebru, *Bisiklet Sektör Profili* (Istanbul: Istanbul Ticaret Odası, 2004), p. 10.

118 Brummet, Palmira, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 213.

that Ahmed Tevfik was a mere “conformist”, he appears more nuanced and even critically minded when we carefully read the bicycle travelogue and consider his published theatre work.

His travels and his way of performing it are probably unique within Ottoman history. He was surely not the simple prototype of a westernized Ottoman traveller who just imitated the way Europeans travelled and wrote. Certainly, few western travellers at that time would have travelled the way Ahmed Tevfik did. His text is an interesting mixture of instruction for use, personal experiences, facts and anecdotes, dialogues, and finally a declaration of his love for bicycles. His travelogue provides important information about local tourism, be it the leisure time activities of the well-to-do Ottomans, the places that were frequented by locals for recreation or the touristic infrastructure offered in the Ottoman province. At the same time, Ahmed Tevfik offers the reader an opportunity to experience mobility off the beaten track and available transportation routes. He failed to infect his contemporaries with his obsession. But he may at least initiate a future interest in the history of Ottoman tourism. For future research on tourism in the Ottoman empire, it will be necessary to (re) consider available travelogues, memoirs, and other sources, as well as to identify the local forms of leisure practiced by Ottomans and to search for the traditional places where they used to travel and spend their free time.¹¹⁹

119 For an excellent example of considering leisure and entertainment for Istanbul in the late Ottoman period see Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*.

Muslim Culture, Reform and Patriotism: Staging Namık Kemal in Post-Ottoman Bulgaria (1878-1908)

Milena B. Methodieva

In one of the scenes of what has become the most celebrated Ottoman play, Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahud Silistre* (The Fatherland or Silistra) written in 1872, the protagonist İslam Bey delivers an inspiring speech to a group of volunteers he is leading in the defense of the key strategic fortress against the enemy advance:

Friends! We will go the length of the Danube. The Danube is our spring of life. If the Danube is gone, the fatherland cannot live; if the fatherland does not live, no man can live in the fatherland.... May be there will be someone alive.... Yes! May be there will be someone. (Then with great anger) No, no. There will be someone alive, but this will not be a man. If a man sees the fatherland trampled he cannot live. If a man sees trampled the one who has nurtured and raised him he cannot live. The person who sees trampled the one who has nurtured and raised him and still lives, is lower than a dog. Brothers! Man is not lower than a dog! There is a God greater than man! God commands love for the fatherland. Our fatherland means the Danube. Because if the Danube goes, there is no fatherland. Wherever you dig on the banks of the Danube, a bone of your father or brother will be found. The land washed by the ripples of the Danube water is made up of the remnants of those who died fighting to protect it. Since the time when the name Ottoman was heard, the Danube was crossed several times, many times. But it was never conquered. While the Ottomans stand, it will not be taken once; if the Ottomans know what Ottoman patriotism is, it will never be taken. Are you ready to die for the fatherland?¹

This passage is noteworthy not only because it exudes fervent Ottoman patriotism, a concept by which the play and its author have since come to be

¹ Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, 7th print (Def'a-i Sab'i) (n.p.: n.p., 1308/1889-90), pp. 37-39, translation by author.

identified, but also because it underscores the significance of the Danube and the lands around it as an important place in the Ottoman patriotic imagination. In it the future of the fatherland is closely connected with the fate of the Danube. But even if the passage warns of the dangers looming over the Ottoman state with the loss of the Danube, it has the air of an uplifting prophecy aiming to inspire and reassure not only the characters of the play but also its audiences. Although danger was imminent, it would be overcome again. This was not complacency but a confidence in the future of the Ottoman state. These words perhaps reflected contemporaneous sentiments. In 1872-73, when the play was written and staged, in spite of the internal challenges the Ottoman state faced, few could imagine the permanent loss of the area around the Danube. At the time the lands south of the river made up the Danube *vilayet*, the Ottoman province where the Tanzimat reforms had scored the most remarkable successes. The Ottoman authorities had introduced there more regular administration in which they sought to address Christian grievances. Defenses were sound after the fortification of several fortresses, among them Silistra. The permanent loss of the area did not seem a realistic danger.

Six years after the play was written, however, events had taken such a turn that the inconceivable had come true. The former Danube province, along with the cherished banks of the Danube, had become part of the newly-established Bulgarian state. The play also experienced its share of vicissitudes. As Namık Kemal fell out of favor with the Hamidian regime so, too, did his works which reemerged prominently on Ottoman stages only after the Young Turk Revolution. But, in comparison, during the time of their eclipse in the Ottoman empire, the plays of Namık Kemal came to enjoy substantial popularity in Bulgaria among the local Muslims; indeed, many of them were introduced to modern theater through these works. What was the meaning and purpose of Namık Kemal's plays for Bulgaria's Muslims? What were their responses to these performances? And what was the role of theater in their communal life?

Along with addressing these questions this chapter aims to shed light on some aspects of the history of the Muslims in Bulgaria during the first decades of Bulgaria's existence. Most significantly, it challenges the common assumptions which portray the Muslim community as a conservative inert mass uninterested in any cultural endeavors by providing an insight into the activity of a locally grown Muslim movement for cultural reform and political mobilization. Theater was one aspect of its activities.

Western-style theater began gaining popularity in the Ottoman empire following the introduction of the Tanzimat. In addition to various European troupes the 1840s saw the appearance of the first professional Ottoman companies. The Naum Theater, the first lasting institution, opened its doors in

Istanbul in 1840. Theater acquired wider appeal in the Ottoman capital in the 1860s when performances began to be given in Turkish in addition to French and other European languages. The Gedikpaşa Theater, associated with the name of Güllü Agop, was founded in 1867. It turned into one of the most prominent establishments and enjoyed the patronage of the authorities. Armenians played an active role in Ottoman theater as company owners, actors, directors, playwrights and translators of European plays. Yet, Muslims also began participating in theater activities. Along with the expansion of theater institutions came the production of local plays where Ottoman Muslim authors assumed increasing prominence from the 1870s onwards.² Theater grew roots in some of the larger cosmopolitan Ottoman cities, such as Thessaloniki (Selanik) and İzmir, though it is difficult to determine to what extent the plays presented in Istanbul made their way into smaller urban centers. At the same time theatrical performances turned into a regular part of various non-Muslim cultural endeavors contributing to the transformation of cultural and political identities. The Bulgarians were no exception to this trend. The 1870s saw the establishment of over 100 Bulgarian reading rooms (*chitalishta*) with 60 theater centers.³

With the establishment of the modern Bulgarian state, theater became linked to the development of national culture. Most performing activity continued to be carried out by amateurs but professional troupes soon made an appearance. The first lasting professional company was founded in the 1890s. The year 1904 saw the foundation of the Bulgarian National Theater, an institution patronized by the state.⁴ Monumental theater buildings, usually centrally located, began substituting previous venues that in many cases had been ill-suited for the purpose.⁵ In Sofia the national theater was hosted in an impressive neo-baroque building specially commissioned from a notable Vienna architectural studio specializing in the construction of theatre and opera ven-

2 And, Metin, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu, 1839-1908* (Ankara: Mars Basımevi, 1972), and And, Metin, “Osmanlı Tiyatrosu” – Kuruluşu – Gelişimi – Katkısı (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1976), *passim*; Aytaş, Gıyasettin, *Tanzimatta Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2002), pp. 13-22.

3 Saev, Georgi, *История на българския театър. От Освобождението до 1904 г.* [History of Bulgarian Theatre. From the Liberation until 1904] (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1997), vol. II, p. 34.

4 Saev, *История на българския театър*, pp. 64-5, 99; Tosheva, Kristina, *История на българския театър. От 1904 г. до 1918 г.* [History of Bulgarian Theatre. From 1904 to 1918] (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1997), vol. III, pp. 78-9.

5 Saev, *История на българския театър*, pp. 74-5.

ues.⁶ Playwriting and theater repertoire also underwent transformation. From the 1890s onwards the patriotic genre began making way for plays delving into complex emotional and psychological subjects.⁷ In addition, foreign companies, some from the Ottoman empire performing in Turkish or Greek, also toured the country. Such performances were attended not only by the members of one particular community, language not seeming to be a barrier.⁸

The newly established modern Bulgarian state, however, was made up not only of Bulgarians but also of other groups who had their own communal institutions and cultural life. The Muslims, a living legacy of Ottoman rule in the region, were Bulgaria's largest and politically most significant minority. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century their number was about 650,000. Most of them were Turks, followed by smaller numbers of Muslim Roma, Pomaks and Tatars.⁹ The development of theatre among Bulgaria's Muslims was associated with the activities of a movement for cultural reform and political mobilization among them. The movement emerged as a response to their experiences in the aspiring Bulgarian nation state and encounters with modernity; it was an attempt to carve out their own place in Bulgaria while maintaining their own cultural traditions and identity. The rise of the movement can be traced to the mid-1890s, and was the product of several inter-related developments, such as the relative liberalization of the political climate in Bulgaria and the emergence of a generation of younger Muslim intellectuals who began challenging traditional communal leadership. Another crucial factor was the arrival of Young Turk émigrés from the Ottoman empire. The new Muslim intellectual elites and the Young Turks shared many common attitudes towards science, progress, religion and political authority, consequently there was a considerable overlap between these groups. The association of the reformers with the opposition organization was often used to discredit their initiatives by other Muslims loyal to the sultan. The impact of the Young Turks can also partly explain the popularity of Namık Kemal's plays. He emerged as an admired figure among the Young Turks because of his advocacy of constitutionalism. Staging his plays openly in Bulgaria was a way of keeping his work alive and gaining supporters for the opposition cause. For Young Turk sympathizers Namık Kemal's plays served several purposes: they raised the patriotic

6 Doytchinov, Grigor and Christo Gantchev, *Österreichische Architekten in Bulgarien, 1878-1918* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), p. 60.

7 Saev, *История на българския театър*, pp. 102-5, 108.

8 Saev, *История на българския театър*, p. 181.

9 *Статистически годишник на Българското Царство* [Statistical Yearbook of the Bulgarian Kingdom] (Sofia: Dürzhavna pechatnitsa, 1910), p. 38.

awareness of Bulgaria's Muslims, expanded their cultural horizons and defied the Hamidian regime in the most open way.

For the reformers the root of all problems for Bulgaria's Muslim community was its ignorance and lack of education suitable to the needs of the modern age. Consequently, reform of Muslim education became one of their main goals. But education, as well as progress along the path of intellectual, cultural and moral accomplishment would continue after completing school through various means such as reading books, following the press, as well as engaging in discussions in the newly established *kuraathanes*. Another important means was theater.

Theater, of course, in its various forms was commonly perceived as entertainment. But for reformist Muslims, theater also had to be an educational experience if it were to have any benefit or esthetic value. Consequently, along with theater they sought to promote a new understanding of entertainment which was about cultivating higher moral traits rather than spending time in leisure or yet worse, giving oneself over to the enjoyment of vulgar pursuits. For them theater was one of the necessities of civilization. It portrayed human feelings and spirit. It brought to life great historical events allowing audiences to experience them. Its impact on people was more profound than that of sermons pronounced by religious functionaries, one author asserted.¹⁰ While extolling its virtues Muslim reformers frequently evoked the phrase "Theater is a school of culture/morals" ("Tiyatro bir mekteb-i edeb"), a quote some attributed to Namık Kemal.¹¹ There is no evidence to suggest that Namık Kemal coined this expression. The quote was probably a variation of Friedrich Schiller's famous characterization of theater as a moral institution that had entered Ottoman vocabulary and intellectual domain. In his piece on theater Namık Kemal argued that theater was not so much a "school of morals" ("ahlak mektebi") but entertainment, yet the most beneficial of all entertainments. It was an imitation of the "human condition" ("ahval-ı beşer"), and because of the emotions it portrayed and provoked it had moral services greater than those of newspapers and books.¹² Nevertheless, the frequently repeated phrase, with or without attribution to Namık Kemal, became an invariable part of any discussions of this art among Bulgaria's Muslims.

To many reformist Muslims true theater had a certain gravitas. Unless it offered moral guidance, expanded one's knowledge or inspired patriotic senti-

10 "Tiyatro", *Uhuvvet*, no. 100 (28 February 1906), p. 4.

11 "Osmanlılarda Tiyatro", *Uhuvvet*, no. 108 (2 May 1906), p. 1.

12 Namık Kemal, "Tiyatro", in *Külliyat-ı Kemal. Birinci Tertib. 3. Makalat-ı Siyasiye ve Edebiye* (Istanbul: Selanik Matbaası [1909]), pp. 395-400.

ments it was not worth attending. Thus, they were often skeptical of the merits of lighthearted works meant for pure entertainment. Prior to its visit to Plovdiv, the Bengliyan Theater was advertised by the prominent reformist journal *Muvazene* as one of the finest Ottoman troupes. However, subsequently the journal's editorial team found its rendition of *Leblebici Horhor Ağa*, a comic operetta and favorite piece for numerous audiences, disappointing. The plot was lacking, they ruled, and the incorporation of music into what one expected to be a proper play was distasteful and ruined the experience.¹³

At the same time theater was put to philanthropic use. On various occasions theater performances were used to raise funds for the local Muslim schools, *kuraathanes* and aid poor Muslim students, thus augmenting their benefits for education.¹⁴ The acclaimed performance of *Vatan Yahud Silistre* given in Varna in March 1905 brought record amounts of donations.¹⁵

Reformist journals occasionally published in serialized form major Ottoman plays, particularly historical ones, such as Namık Kemal's *Celaleddin Harezmsah* and Muallim Naci's *Gazi Ertuğrul*.¹⁶ From around 1900 theater performances began to be staged by local Muslims. The plays were performed by amateur troupes made up of students and teachers, but sometimes they were aided or directed by professional actors. Non-Muslim actresses, mostly Armenian, were occasionally hired to play the female roles, though men too were cast in such parts. Theatrical performances, short sketches or parts of plays of a didactic nature were incorporated into school celebrations in which even the youngest students participated.¹⁷ By 1906 there was sufficient popular interest for a group of Muslims from Tutrakan, Silistra, Ruse and Dobrich to suggest establishing a professional Muslim troupe.¹⁸ Another Muslim, who in all likelihood was a Young Turk émigré from the empire who had settled in

13 "Geçen hafta...", *Muvazene*, no. 242 (13 August 1902), p. 2. It is also possible that the quality of the production was not particularly high. The Bengliyan Company had become associated with performing operettas but by the late 1890s its heyday had passed, And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, pp. 251-7.

14 "Bazı mahallarda...", *Muvazene*, no. 216 (8 January 1902), p. 2; "Tiyatro", *Uhuvvet*, no. 100 (28 February 1906), p. 4.

15 "Varna'da Vatan...", and photo, *Uhuvvet*, no. 118 (16 August 1906), p. 1.

16 Namık Kemal, "Celaleddin Harezmsah", in the following issues of *Uhuvvet*, no. 93 (26 December 1905), pp. 2-3; no. 94 (3 January 1906), pp. 2-4; no. 96 (24 January 1906), pp. 2-3; no. 97 (30 January 1906), pp. 2-3; no. 98 (14 February 1906), p. 2; no. 100 (28 February 1906), p. 3. Muallim Naci, "Gazi Ertuğrul", in some of the following issues of *Sebat*, no. 19 (9 June 1895), pp. 7-8; no. 20 (16 June 1895), pp. 7-8; no. 21 (29 June 1895), pp. 7-8; no. 24 (13 July 1895), p. 8.

17 "Aferin Yavrular", *Balkan*, no. 128 (2 February 1907), p. 3.

18 Behzad and Ali Şakir, "Mektub", *Tuna*, no. 206 (22 May 1906), pp. 3-4.

Bulgaria, was so inspired by the performances he saw that, noting the lack of a book on the history of Ottoman theater, declared his intention to write a short work on the subject.¹⁹

However, among Bulgaria's Muslims theater became a polarizing venture. While a number of Muslims showed considerable enthusiasm, many shunned it and yet others even opposed the staging of theater plays. In 1907 when the Agopyan Theater visited Plovdiv, the reformist Muslim newspaper *Balkan* lamented that only a few Muslims could be seen among the diverse audience in the salon even though the plays were in Turkish, their "national language".²⁰

From the modest information we have it appears that the critics of theater resented the venture as they found it at odds with religious customs and potentially subversive to moral character. Others doubted its educational value seeing it as little more than vulgar entertainment. The question of women's presence and possible participation in theater performances was another sensitive topic. In the plays staged by local Muslim reformers female roles were often played by local non-Muslim actresses, most often Armenian, or by men. There is no indication that any local Muslim woman appeared in such plays nor that reformers made any explicit arguments for the participation of Muslim women in theater, at least in writing. Yet, perhaps their arguments in support of the merits of theater were interpreted as veiled calls for the acceptability of Muslim actresses as well.

The conflicting sentiments boiled up to the surface on several occasions. In 1902 a performance of Abdülhak Hamid (Tarhan)'s *Tarık* in Tutrakan was cancelled because of the protests of certain people disparagingly called "sarıklı" (turbaned) that it would coincide with a Kandil evening, one of the Muslim religious celebrations.²¹ In Dobrich theater provoked enthusiasm and resentment in equal measure. On one side some of the teachers and young people were ardent theater enthusiasts and their performances attracted large audiences. But their endeavors provoked bitter opposition among other Muslims. In 1901 the local Muslim education commission revoked its permission for staging Namık Kemal's *Akif Bey* along with plans for hiring two actresses for the female roles as it came under pressure from more conservative Muslims. The latter pointed out that the planned performance coincided with Ramazan and such entertainment was contrary to religious customs during the holy month.²² Over the next few years, however, the locals managed to organize

19 "Osmanlılar'da Tiyatro", *Uhuvvet*, no. 108 (2 May 1906), p. 1.

20 "Tiyatro ve Mekteb-i Edeb", *Balkan*, no. 145 (25 February 1907), pp. 1-2.

21 Muhlis, "Tutrakan'dan Mektub", *Muvazene*, no. 257 (3 December 1902), p. 2.

22 "Dobriç'ten Mektub", *Muvazene*, no. 172 (2 January 1901), p. 2.

several plays before another incident took place in 1906. This time the planned performance did not coincide with any religious holiday. The head of the Muslim education commission went to extraordinary lengths to prevent the staging of another play by Namık Kemal, *Gülnehal*, given in part to aid Muslim schools. After running out of ploys, he eventually approached the municipality to stop it from renting the theater salon. His actions were publicized in the pages of one Muslim journal.²³ A supporter or perhaps even a member of the Muslim education commission responded to the accusations. It was not the commission itself who opposed theater, he insisted, but the people who did not want money earned in immoral ways. When the locals found out that the amateur actors were rehearsing tirelessly in a disused *medrese* building, they chased them away. The theater enthusiasts were accused of being men of low morals trying to corrupt the people around them. They were scorned for their claims that actors and actresses were refined and educated individuals. The critic emphasized that no honorable Muslim woman would think of exposing herself on stage in this way, such conduct befitting only foreign women. At the same time he alluded to their seditious nature hinting at their association with the Young Turks. He mocked them for blindly reading some “liberal” (“ahrar”) newspapers and “the French letters” (“elifba-yı fransevi”) becoming “patriotic in the European manner” (“alafranga hamiyetli”). Finally, he underscored that he was not against theater or the plays of the acclaimed writer Namık Kemal, but opined that it was more beneficial to read them rather than enact them on stage. Instead, he suggested a more innocent solution: a school performance where the students would show off their knowledge and pronounce a few inspirational speeches about education.²⁴

The letter drew a fiery response from Mustafa Ragıb, a Young Turk émigré from the empire residing in Bulgaria. The incident served as an opportunity to lambast the Hamidian regime, as well as its conservative supporters. As he fulminated in his typically explicit style, Mustafa Ragıb pointed out that if theater was a sin the *padişah*, who was also a caliph, would not be watching plays in his own palace. While the sultan was enjoying theater just by himself, the young people of Dobrich gave performances for everyone and in order to aid poor Muslim students. And while the sultan spent public money from the Muslim state treasury to bring the most attractive young actresses from France and Britain to “wiggle their bellies” for him, the young men from Dobrich sought to

23 Gündüz, “Dobriç’ten”, *Rumeli*, no. 20 (29 April 1906), pp. 2-3.

24 Kınmi M. Abdüssamed, “Dobriç’ten Mektup”, *Şark*, no. 50 (13 May 1906), pp. 1-2; “Dobriç Mektubun Mabadi”, *Şark*, no. 51 (20 May 1906), pp. 1-2.

alleviate the misery of their Muslim sisters.²⁵ Yet, not all religious functionaries shunned theater. The mufti of Silistra was among the audience of the play *Zavallı Çocuk* (The Poor Child) presented by the Bengliyan Theater.²⁶

Advocates of reform further sought to disperse misconceptions about theater. Indeed, they conceded, the old kind of theater was indecent and Muslims had every right to shun it as “forbidden” (“haram”) but the new one was different. This art was not simply “karagözcülük” (*karagöz* buffoonery), nor was theater a “brothel” (“fuhuşhane”). They reiterated the claim that even sultan Abdülhamid II himself watched performances in his palace, and pointed out that if theater promoted vice, then the *şeyhülislam* would surely have banned it from Istanbul a long time ago.²⁷ In order to underline that theater was a respectable entertainment and a patriotic venture, performances were often called “milli tiyatro”, national theater,²⁸ a qualification that also referred to their content.

In addition, theater troupes from the Ottoman empire also toured some of the larger Bulgarian cities. The Bengliyan Theater, a company that enjoyed a certain success, toured some Bulgarian cities in 1898, 1899 and 1902.²⁹ In the 1890s another group directed by Tomas Fasuliyecyan, one of the most distinguished theater artists of the time, delivered a series of performances in the 1890s. Some of the works it presented were Bulgarian plays translated into Turkish.³⁰ The motives and authors of this initiative remain unknown but it is possible that it was an attempt to make the Muslims more familiar with Bulgarian culture for the ostensible purpose of reinforcing their allegiances to the Bulgarian nation. In 1906 and 1907 the Osmanlı Şark Theater, headed by Agopyan Efendi, toured several Bulgarian cities, including Plovdiv, Pazardjik, Peshtera, Haskovo, Burgas and Silistra.³¹ Their performances were in Turkish,

25 M[ustafa] R[agıb], “Şark Ceridesine Cevab ve Teshih”, *Feryad*, no. 24 (30 May 1906), pp. 2-3.

26 “Silistre’den Mektub”, *Muvazene*, no. 48 (3 August 1898), pp. 2-3.

27 “Tiyatro ve Mekteb-i Edeb”, *Balkan*, no. 145 (25 February 1907), pp. 1-2; “Bazı mahallarda...”, *Muvazene*, no. 216 (8 January 1902), p. 2.

28 H. ‘A., “Milli Tiyatrolar”, *Balkan*, no. 382 (5 March 1908), p. 2.

29 “Silistre’den Mektub”, *Muvazene*, no. 48 (3 August 1898), pp. 2-3; “Çoktan beri...”, *Muvazene*, no. 235 (5 June 1902), p. 2; “Bu hafta...”, *Gayret*, no. 179 (11 January 1899), p. 4.

30 Saev, *История на българския театър*, II, p. 181; And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, pp. 257-64.

31 “Hokkabazın Nedameti Vicdaniye”, *Balkan*, no. 126 (29 November 1907), pp. 1-2. The company or its director was not among the troupes discussed in the detailed study of And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 152-99. It is difficult to establish the identity of the company or whether it was a later reincarnation of the Şark Theater that operated in Istanbul in the 1860s. Some of its cast were disciples of the famous Mardiros Minakyan, though he was not part of the troupe. It is possible that it was an offshoot of the famous Osmanlı Dram Kumpanyası, though “Osmanlı” was an adjective present in the names of other groups. If the company was based in Istanbul then perhaps its visit in 1906 was no coincidence since

so they catered to Muslim audiences. However, there were a number of non-Muslims among the spectators. It remains unknown whether such troupes visited the country on their own initiative or acted upon local invitation. Some of their performances proved remarkably popular even among Bulgarian audiences. Similarly, it is unclear whether Ottoman representatives played any role in bringing them to Bulgaria or shouldered some of the expenses. Most likely, though, these groups acted primarily upon their own initiative. The fortunes of travelling companies were uncertain, so they had to take advantage of various opportunities to ensure their existence. In the Ottoman empire uncertainty had the potential of turning into hostility at times of crisis involving the Armenians. Thus, such theater troupes resorted to touring neighboring Ottoman territories, such as Transcaucasia in the Russian empire, Bulgaria and Greece.

In Bulgaria the repertoire of these companies resembled that in the Ottoman empire. For the duration of its stay in Plovdiv, the Osmanlı Şark Theater presented plays, such as *Othello*, *Faust*, *Aida*, *The Gioconda*, *Cesar Borgia*, Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci's *Çoban Kızı* (The Shephard Girl) as well as several lesser known plays whose authorship is difficult to establish, such as *Altıyüzbin Frankluk Piyango Bileti Yahud Bigünah Kurban* (The Six-hundred-thousand Frank Lottery Ticket or an Innocent Victim) and *Hokkabazın Nedameti Vicdaniye* (The Knave's Remorse). Comic plays and sketches, among them a play called *İki Ahbab Çavuş* (Two Pals), occasionally followed some of the heavy dramas or were performed on their own.³² None of these belonged to the patriotic genre though in 1906 the company contributed to the staging of *Akif Bey* in Silistra.³³

In comparison, the plays organized by the Muslims of Bulgaria came from the body of Ottoman dramatic works that drew on Ottoman and Islamic history, and showcased patriotism, courage and self-sacrifice. In this context the plays of Namık Kemal, hailed by one Varna Muslim as "the great writer, immortal poet and lamenting nightingale of the Ottoman nation", enjoyed overwhelming popularity.³⁴ Before exploring the content, meaning and reception

Turkish language performances in the city were closed between 1904 and the first months of 1906 upon the order of the city governor, for details see And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 197-8.

32 "Hokkabazın Nedameti Vicdaniye", *İlan*, *Balkan*, no. 126 (29 November 1907), pp. 1-2, 4; "İlanat", *Balkan*, no. 144 (24 February 1907), p. 4; "Tiyatro ve Mekteb-i Edeb", *İlanat*, *Balkan*, no. 145 (25 February 1907), pp. 1-2, 4; "İlan", *Balkan*, no. 147 (2 March 1907), p. 4; "İlan", *Balkan*, no. 151 (7 March 1907), p. 4; "İlan", *Balkan*, no. 157 (14 March 1907), p. 4; "Şehir Mektubu Veya Kiseden Hisse", *İlanat*, *Balkan*, no. 165 (26 March 1907), pp. 2-3, 4; "İlanat", *Balkan*, no. 170 (31 March 1907), p. 4; "Şehir Mektubu", *Balkan*, no. 167 (28 March 1907), pp. 2-3.

33 M ... m, "Tiyatro", *Uhuvet*, no. 100 (28 February 1906), p. 4.

34 A. Ş., "Varna'dan Yazılıyor..", *Balkan*, no. 402 (28 March 1908), p. 4.

of Namık Kemal's plays in Bulgaria it is necessary to trace their fate in the Ottoman empire.

Namık Kemal was not only one of the most prominent literary figures in the late Ottoman empire but was also a member of the Young Ottoman society whose members emerged as critics of the Tanzimat reforms in the 1860s.³⁵ The son of an official affiliated with the court, he attended a *riüşdiye* school, one of the new institutions linked to the Tanzimat, but was also influenced by classical Ottoman literary traditions. In the aftermath of the Crimean War he joined the bureaucracy of the Translation Bureau. At the same time he became familiar with other literary figures, such as İbrahim Şinasi and bureaucrats critical of the Ottoman regime. Namık Kemal was among the founders of the Patriotic Alliance (İttifak-ı Hamiyyet) in 1865 whose members came to be known as the Young Ottomans. Because of his contributions and association with publications critical of the Ottoman regime he, along with other Young Ottomans, was forced into exile in 1867. While residing in France and Britain, where he experienced European culture first hand, he continued his vocal criticism. Upon receiving amnesty in 1870, Namık Kemal returned to the Ottoman empire followed by many of the remaining members of the society. However, he continued his critical activities through publications such as *İbret* and *Basiret*. Until his return from exile his literary output consisted mainly of criticism and poems. Subsequently he began producing plays and novels. Namık Kemal wrote his first and most influential play *Vatan Yahud Silistre* in 1872. The play was staged a few months later in April 1873 at the Gedikpaşa Theater by Güllü Agop's troupe. The play provoked enthusiasm and upheaval among audiences who stormed out onto the streets shouting "Long live the fatherland!" and headed to the headquarters of *İbret*.³⁶

After the acclaim and turmoil accompanying the first productions of *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, the play and its author experienced their share of vicissitudes. Because of the reactions following the play and suspicions of subversion, Namık Kemal was sent into exile to Cyprus where he completed two other plays – *Akif Bey* and *Gülnehal*.³⁷ He received amnesty and permission to return to Istanbul in 1876 following the deposition of Abdülaziz. But less than a

35 For some sources on Namık Kemal's life, as well as political and literary activity see Mardin, Şerif, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: a Study of the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), *passim*, and more specifically pp. 283-336; Akiün, Ömer Faruk, "Namık Kemal", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. xxxii (2006), pp. 361-78.

36 Sevengil, Refik Ahmet, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi. Tanzimat Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1961), vol. III, pp. 178-97.

37 And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 103-4.

year later, as Abdülhamid II began consolidating his authority, Namık Kemal was dispatched into virtual exile as a governor of the Aegean islands. He passed away in Chios in 1888. While he was not the target of vicious persecution, he was treated with suspicion and purposefully kept away from the capital. The play endured similar changing fortunes, though many details remain uncertain. According to some sources, after its tumultuous start in the spring of 1873 it continued to be performed during the new theater season. It was also staged for Abdülaziz, presumably in the palace. In addition to Istanbul, it was presented in Thessaloniki and İzmir. Some suggest, however, that the play disappeared from public performances shortly after the demonstrations.³⁸ The play enjoyed a resurgence during the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-78) when a performance organized by Ali Suavi in Taksim brought 30,000 *kuruş* for the Ottoman war efforts.³⁹ But after Abdülhamid II's first years on the throne and with its author banished, the play gradually fell out of favor.⁴⁰ From around the late 1880s as the Hamidian regime tightened its control it appears that the play was not performed or published in the Ottoman empire, or perhaps at least not in Istanbul, until the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution. In 1888 an Ottoman émigré in Bulgaria lamented the unfortunate fact that the play was banned from sale in Istanbul and, extolling its merits, he urged its reprinting.⁴¹ There is also evidence that some editions published during the period were modified, most likely because of censorship or self-censorship. A later 1889/90 or seventh edition of the play ends with the slogan "Long live the Padişah!", whereas the original continues further with a patriotic speech by the fortress commander and ends with "Long live the fatherland!", the incendiary words that spurred the disturbance during the first performance.⁴² This complies with common practices during the Hamidian regime. While theater activities expanded during the Hamidian period, the contents of plays presented in Istanbul theaters were formally censored.⁴³ It is also possible that this edition was published

38 Akün, "Namık Kemal", p. 368, the author refers to Ahmed Midhat's exile memoirs; Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 111, pp. 197-200.

39 And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 176.

40 And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 104.

41 "Seyahatname", *Varna Postası*, no. 44 (6 June 1888), p. 3. In 1907 a Young Turk journal published in Cairo also lamented that "The Fatherland" could only be staged outside of the fatherland because of the tyrannical regime in the empire, "Mısır Tiyatrosunda: Vatan Yahud Silistre", *Türk*, no. 152 (3 January 1907), pp. 3-4.

42 Compare Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, 1st print (Def'a-i Evveli) (n.p.p.: n.p. 1289/1873), pp. 168-9, and Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, 7th print (Def'a-i Sab'i) (n.p.p.: n.p., 1308/1889-90), p. 150.

43 Sevengil, Refik Ahmet, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi. Saray Tiyatrosu*, vol. iv (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1962), pp. 148-9.

underground, as the name of the publisher is missing. What edition theater troupes in Bulgaria used remains unknown. Given the Young Turk sympathies of many reformers it is quite likely that salutations to the sultan were limited, if pronounced at all. It is also possible that the performances ended with a version of the final speech adapted to the local circumstances. In the Ottoman empire the play was performed again after the Young Turk Revolution.

In contrast to the Ottoman empire, Namık Kemal's plays gained exceptional popularity in Bulgaria among the local Muslims, many of whom were even introduced to modern theatre through his works. In Bulgaria *Vatan Yahud Silistre* and *Akif Bey* were the two most widely performed pieces. Both plays celebrate courage, self-sacrifice, honor and personal devotion. At the same time they explore romantic and personal relationships providing moral examples to their audiences. Both works are set at the time of the Crimean War, although they do not specifically mention it, nor do they identify the adversaries, leaving a certain openness of interpretation. *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, inspired by true events and personalities,⁴⁴ acquired symbolic and historical significance for introducing the concept of "fatherland" to wider audiences. In it the protagonist İslam Bey bids farewell to his fiancée Zekiye in order to sign up as a volunteer to defend the fortress of Silistra on whose survival depends the fate of the fatherland. His devotion to Zekiye is only surpassed by the higher ideal of love for the country. Seeing life as meaningless without her beloved, Zekiye dresses up as a man and follows him to fight for the fatherland as well. At the fortress İslam Bey is wounded bringing his fiancée further anguish. As the defenders are hard pressed he, along with Zekiye and another officer, volunteer to blow up the enemy arsenal. The play ends in an upbeat way: the siege is broken and the fortress of Silistra is saved though with much sacrifice. Zekiye's identity is revealed, while the commander of the fortress turns out to be her long-lost father. The young couple marry with his blessing. In the final scene Ottoman courage is extolled, and audiences are naturally drawn to join the patriotic chorus.⁴⁵

Akif Bey also celebrates courage, patriotism and honor. But the romantic plot juxtaposes loyalty with deceit. Akif Bey, an experienced seaman, goes to fight at Sinop, while he leaves his beloved new bride Dilruba at home. In the event of his death he pledges to wait for her in the afterworld but only if she loves the fatherland as much as he does. But Dilruba is a woman of low morals who has managed to conceal her nature and only feigns genuine affection for her husband. She schemes to abandon him for another man soon after he

44 Aytaş, *Tanzimatta Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi*, p. 279.

45 Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, 7th print (Def'a-i Sab'i).

leaves. As Akif Bey performs courageous feats eventually leaving his ship to burn so that it does not fall into enemy hands, Dilruba spreads rumors of his demise while preparing to marry a friend of his. Upon learning of the deceit Akif Bey denounces his wife, and returns home to settle scores with his rival, both men mortally wounding each other in the fight. However, Akif Bey's father, the old Süleyman Kaptan exacts a deadly vengeance upon the unfaithful woman.⁴⁶ Though not as upbeat as *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, *Akif Bey's* end brings a certain sense of closure and justice served. The courageous seaman Akif Bey fights to defend his country's honor but also dies trying to restore his own honor. His father, who has passed onto his son his courage and impeccable moral character, kills the adulteress punishing her for her deceit. He thus avenges his son's death, and restores the family honor.

The two plays were presented several times in Varna, Dobrich, Eski Cuma, Osman Pazar and Tutrakan in the period between 1905 and 1908. Silistra, however, saw only *Akif Bey*. Perhaps the Muslims were concerned that staging *Vatan Yahud Silistre* in Silistra would be provocative, stirring up Bulgarian nationalist sensitivities and raising suspicions of subversion. The performance of *Akif Bey* in this city, however, was enjoyed by Bulgarian audiences.

The two plays proved popular as Bulgaria's Muslims could relate to them in various ways. They were representations of Ottoman literary traditions with which local Muslims identified. Furthermore, Silistra was a city in Bulgaria. Both plays are set during the Crimean War, in the not so distant past, so memories of this event were probably still alive, while some of the older generations might even have had first hand experiences. Their protagonists possess superior moral qualities and courage, also shared by other characters, such as the ordinary soldiers. And just as significantly, they celebrate Ottoman invincibility: the Ottoman volunteers bravely repel the siege of Silistra, and Akif Bey leaves his ship to burn rather than let it fall into enemy hands. Silistra's Muslim inhabitants could have pointed to other facts reaffirming the resilience of their city. During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 the fortress was besieged but it was not taken, and Silistra along with other cities in the north-east, such as Varna and Shumen, was surrendered after the signing of the Berlin Treaty. Both works also had considerable literary merits. So the local Muslims, who, along with the Ottomans were frequently scorned as backward and culturally inferior, took pride in these plays seeing them as worthy of being presented to wider audiences. Such sentiments are exemplified in the announcement of the education board in Eski Cuma, which organized a performance of *Vatan Yahud Silistre* in March 1908 "[i]n order to present our national language and

46 Namik Kemal, *Âkif Bey* (Istanbul: Hayal Matbaası, 1291/1874-75).

literature to the general public, to portray these famous historical events, sources of our national glory".⁴⁷

In the Bulgarian context the organization of such plays had another important role – boosting community morale and pride. In many cases patriotic plays were staged around the time of Bulgarian national holidays, such as the commemoration of the signing of the San Stefano Treaty on March 3rd.⁴⁸ These occasions were marked by mass festivities that included church services, firework displays, visits of Russian dignitaries and public demonstrations where prominent figures delivered impassioned speeches.⁴⁹ Spectacular celebrations and military maneuvers also took place in 1902 to mark the anniversary of the Shipka battles, the epic standoff between Russian armies and Bulgarian volunteers on one side, and Ottoman forces on the other largely regarded as the war's tipping point and the most notable example of Bulgarian courage.⁵⁰ Displays of Bulgarian nationalism and anti-Ottoman rhetoric were an invariable part of such events. Ceremony participants and spectators vividly relived the defeat of the Ottomans. Witnessing these events probably evoked an array of sentiments among the local Muslims – resentment, nostalgia, uncertainty about the future but also a desire to mend hurt pride and draw attention to more glorious times. Theater could provide an outlet for such sentiments and a response to the narratives presented at these celebrations. It gave local Muslims the opportunity to carve out their own space and tell their own story. In theater performances, particularly in the past, the line between reality and the play presented on stage could become blurred, so audiences responded intensely to them. Thus, even if only for a short while, the Muslims could transport themselves into other times and circumstances to stand honorably against the enemy and deliver a symbolic victory. But the outcome was not short-lived escapism. Theater boosted communal morale, while at the same time encouraging people to contribute to various reform initiatives.

47 "Milli Tiyatrolar", *Balkan*, no. 383 (6 March 1908), p. 3.

48 See for example "Varna'da Vatan...", *Uhvvet*, no. 118 (16 August 1906), p. 1 referring to a performance that took place on 6 March 1905; "Milli Tiyatrolar", *Balkan*, no. 383 (6 March 1908), p. 3, in the same issue there were also reports of the celebrations commemorating the 30-year anniversary of the signing of the San Stefano Treaty, "Aya Stefanos Şenlikleri", pp. 2-3. A couple of weeks later the troupe presented the same play in Osman Pazar, Süleyman Nuri, "Osman Pazarı'ndan Yazılıyor", *Balkan*, no. 391 (15 March 1908), p. 3; A.Ş., "Varna'dan Yazılıyor...", *Balkan*, no. 402 (28 March 1908), p. 4.

49 The 30-year anniversary was understandably particularly festive, see "Aya Stefanos Şenlikleri", *Balkan*, no. 383 (6 March 1908), pp. 2-3.

50 "Bulgaristan'da 25 Sene...", *Muvazene*, no. 250 (9 October 1902), pp. 2-3; "Şıbka Manevralarına...", *Muvazene*, no. 252 (23 October 1902), p. 2.

For many Muslims attending such plays proved a transformative experience. A Muslim from Razgrad, for example, felt that during a performance of “our national play ‘The Fatherland Silistra’” (“milli oyunumuz Vatan-ı Silistre”) given by the local *rüşdiye* students he was overtaken by powerful feelings he had never experienced before upon hearing the word “fatherland”. He could not help falling into ecstasy (*gaşy*) when the actors began chanting in chorus “Rise up, people of the fatherland” (“kalkın ehl-i vatan”).⁵¹ Another man from Silistra, probably a teacher, claimed to feel a sense of “national awakening” (“intibah-i milli”) among the audience following the staging of *Akif Bey* in his city.⁵²

There is no information on how the Ottoman authorities regarded these plays. Since Bulgaria was beyond direct Ottoman control, Ottoman representatives could not prevent their production. But it is also possible that those genuinely interested in the fate of the Muslims did not want to protest. Stifling such endeavors would mean putting hurdles before the community’s development and severing its links with Ottoman culture. Perhaps it was better to tolerate these theater performances for the sake of contributing to the community’s cultural uplifting and maintaining its morale. After all, the plays themselves did not target the sultan or the Ottoman regime in any way. This kind of attitude was not exceptional. Abdülhamid II showed keen interest in the presence of Muslim representatives in the Bulgarian parliament, although he was critical of the very concept of parliamentarism in the Ottoman empire.⁵³

Bulgarian reactions are difficult to gauge given the available sources. In 1907 at the performance of *Akif Bey* there was a large Bulgarian audience in the theater salon who was just as enthusiastic as the Muslims about the play. While the historical context probably was not lost on them, perhaps many viewed it in a different way. For them *Akif Bey* would have been a drama about a courageous soldier who fights bravely, and then seeks redress for his hurt family honor.

Judging from the way they embraced Ottoman theater and how they related to Ottoman experiences there is little doubt that the Muslims of Bulgaria identified closely with the Ottoman empire. It was surely their fatherland but for many, it was not the only one. They also associated closely with their native

51 Hafız İsmail Hakkı, “Yaşayın Evladlar!”, *Balkan*, no. 329 (28 December 1907), p. 2; “Milli Tiyatrolar”, *Balkan*, no. 383 (6 March 1908), p. 3.

52 “Tiyatro”, *Uhuvvet*, no. 100 (February 28, 1906), p. 4.

53 For such sentiments see Централен Държавен Архив [Central State Archive – Sofia], f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1050, Istanbul Agent Dimitrov to Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nachovich, 15 October 1894, pp. 27-9.

places in Bulgaria, which they considered their home as well. To them loyalties to the two entities were not mutually incompatible. The purpose of theater was not only to maintain a connection with Ottoman culture but also to aid Muslim reform initiatives and in such a way to build their own respected place in Bulgaria.

Warriors in Drag: Performing Gender and Remaking Men in Prisoner of War Theater

Yücel Yanıkdağ

Playwright İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri's (1874-1935) one-act comedy *Gerdaniye Buselik* (roughly, Pendant Worthy of a Kiss) is about a young couple having a disagreement on their first anniversary (Fig. 1).^{*} Twenty three year old and recently wed Nevber is unhappy with her husband Fahir Bey. The night before, Fahir ridiculed his live-in sister's use of foreign words in everyday speech, Nevber, who does the same thing, interpreted the criticism as also intended for her. The lifting of the curtain is supposed to reveal a "decorated salon" with "elegant furniture". Then enters a distressed Nevber in a chic, "medium décolleté" ("nim dekolte") house-dress. When Fahir shows up a little later, she does not respond to his greeting and questions. Fahir's young sister Feriha becomes the messenger between the comically feuding couple. There is even talk of ending the marriage on its first anniversary. "What can we do, *kismet* was only this long for our marriage, I guess", says Fahir. Nevber adds that he might have better luck with an older and more traditional woman "with henna on her hands". Fahir responds "what can I do? It seems that I cannot get along with those wearing red nail polish". Pulling out a little box from his pocket, Fahir reveals a pendant necklace that was meant to be an anniversary gift; he suggests that it might now have to adorn the neck of another woman. As expected, the sight of the necklace ends Nevber's playful anger. After some more flirtatious back and forth, Nevber asks Fahir to put it on her neck. The play ends as

* The author would like to thank Nilüfer Hatemi, Çiğdem Kılıç, Arzu Öztürkmen and Zafer Toprak for offering assistance in trying to locate Mehmed Rauf's play *Diken*, and Ayten Alkan, Chris Bischof, Jordana Cox, Jennifer Fronc, and Carol Summers who read various versions of this chapter and provided valuable comments. Sheryl Yanıkdağ read multiple versions. The author is grateful for their time and help. Any shortcomings are his own. The author would also like to thank Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar for inviting him to Newnham College, Cambridge, and including him in this volume. Prof. Bingür Sönmez and Mr. Kemal Giray provided most of the images in this article; the author appreciates their kindness.

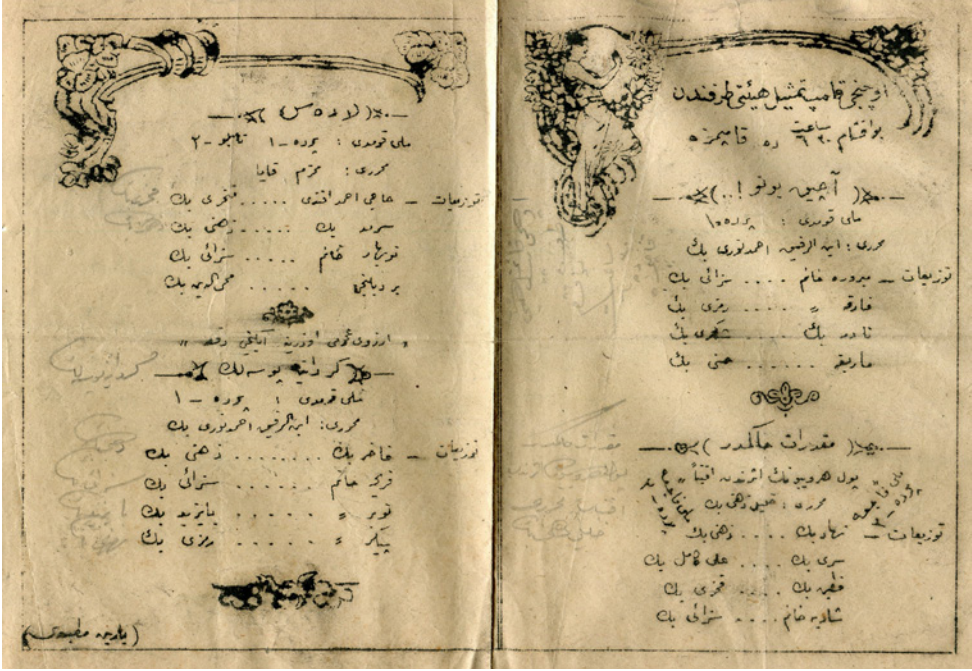


FIGURE 11.1 Playbill for *Açık Bono*, *Mukadderat Hakimidir*, *Lades*, and *Gerdaniye Buselik*, courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.

Fahir, with an invitation from Nevber, kisses her neck as he clasps the “Pendant Worthy of a Kiss”.¹

The location of the play was a prisoner of war (POW) camp for Ottomans interned by the British in Egypt. Nevber, Feriha, and other female characters, like the audience, are all Ottoman soldiers, who were cross-dressed to play female roles. Presumed to be the epitome of manliness and masculinity in Ottoman-Turkish culture, which fashioned itself as a “military nation” where every Turk was born a soldier, hardened men in uniform impersonating women might sound unusual at first. Yet, this was just one of the dozens of plays staged in POW camps, and it imitated the seemingly humbler versions staged near frontlines during the war. Cut off from daily life of a normal society both at the front and the POW camps, especially officers but also enlisted men stepped up to play female roles. Female impersonation allowed the actors and their prisoner comrades at least a temporary release from the homosocial world of the

1 İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri, “Gerdâniye Buselik”, *İnci* (Temmuz 1335/1919), pp. 9-11; Baraz, Mehmet Rebiî Hâtemi (ed.), *İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), vol. 11, pp. 94-102.

front and the prison camps. Theater, with its warriors in cross-dress, provided the prisoners with a sense of prewar “normalcy”, comfort and agency. They might not have had quite the decorated salon with “elegant” furniture the playwright intended for a peacetime theater, but in terms of the actors and “actresses”, it seems, they were not lacking.

This chapter examines Ottoman prison camp theaters in Egypt, from where more sources have survived. With the exception of some passing mentions in scholarship, entertainment in general, and theatre in particular in the Ottoman military is a neglected subject. Scholars of European history studying troop and prisoner of war entertainment during the two world wars have produced a noteworthy amount of material. Many have even focused specifically on soldiers’ cross-dressing or female impersonation in theater on various fronts and prisoner of war camps.² Older scholarship viewed female impersonation as mere entertainment, but more recent studies have taken up gender related issues.³ Drag performance could be a challenge to social norms regarding appropriate male behavior, argues Rachamimov in his examination of German speaking POWs in Russia, though some officers thought that female impersonators, by preserving the image of woman, could be an effective measure against outbreaks of “epidemic” homosexual behavior in prison camps.⁴ Another scholar has recently argued that female impersonation “allowed for a rich cultural lexicon based on ambiguity and mutability rather than referencing only gender identity or erotic object choice”.⁵ Of course, gender analysis has not been the only way to interpret prison camp theaters. Other scholars viewed prison camp theaters and other cultural pursuits as curative or therapeutic activities, which helped prisoners deal with debilitating boredom, keep

2 Rachamimov, Alon, “Disruptive comforts of drag: (trans)gender performances among prisoners of war in Russia, 1914-1920”, *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006), pp. 379-82; Draskau, Jennifer K., “Prisoners in petticoats: drag performance and its effects in the Great War internment camps in the Isle of Man”, *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 12 (2009), 187-209; Eldredge, Sears, “We girls: female impersonators in prisoner-of-war entertainments on the Thailand-Burma railway”, *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 5 (2014), 74-99; Boxwell, David, “The follies of war: cross-dressing and popular theatre on the British front lines, 1914-18”, *Modernism/Modernity*, 9 (2002), 1-20; Sigel, Lisa Z., “‘Best love’: female impersonation in the Great War”, *Sexualities*, 19 (2016), 98-118; Crouthamel, Jason, “Cross-dressing for the fatherland: sexual humor, masculinity and German soldiers in the First World War”, *First World War Studies*, 2 (2011), 195-215.

3 Sigel, “Best love”, p. 99.

4 Rachamimov, “Disruptive comforts of drag”, pp. 379-82. Rachamimov discounts this “safety valve” argument.

5 Sigel, “Best love”, p. 99.

their sanity, and survive both mentally and physically.⁶ Going further and turning to the issues of gender and masculinity, this chapter will suggest that theater, namely those featuring female impersonators, was much more than a tool for dealing with boredom. It was therapeutic in helping heal and reaffirm the prisoners' sense of manliness and masculinity, which I will argue had been undermined by their capture and treatment. Of course, theater was also fun for both the performers and the audience. First, a brief historical background and context is needed.

Historical Background

During the First World War, Britain, Russia, France, and Romania captured nearly 250,000 Ottoman soldiers and officers. The British held just over 150,000 of them in Egypt, India, Burma, and a number of temporary camps before they were sent to permanent ones. Russia captured between 65,000-90,000 Ottomans, who were just a small proportion of the total 2.4 million prisoners interned in the vast Russian empire in some 200 camps of various sizes. The tendency in Russia for the comparatively smaller number of Ottoman POWs was to be scattered in a number of camps. Though they could be in adjacent or nearby camps, the enlisted men and officers were kept separately from one another in both locations. The enlisted men had to perform labor for the captor power for their upkeep. The officers did not have to work and received salaries. While a small number of prisoners were repatriated in 1918 at the end of the war, many had to stay in prison camps until the early 1920s in both Russia and Egypt. When their physiological needs were at least minimally satisfied, the younger junior officers turned to cultural activities to keep busy. Some officers, worried about the future of the nation, took advantage of being in close proximity to thousands of illiterate enlisted men and established informal prison camp schools, where they taught the men how to read, write and more. Many others learned languages, a few turned to sports, some to music, and some to theater.⁷ Actively engaging both the actors and the audience, theater was a more collective and uniting activity.

Despite the focus on entertainment in this chapter, the POWs had difficult, challenging, and even deadly experiences; many did not live to see their families again. Speaking of British POWs in Turkey during the same war, one Turkish

6 Yanıkdağ, Yücel, *Healing the Nation: Prisoners of War, Medicine and Nationalism in Turkey, 1914-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 30-1, 66-7, 91, largely in passing.

7 Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*, pp. 30-2.



FIGURE 11.2 An unidentified Ottoman military unit entertaining at a village circumcision ceremony. Location unknown, ONB/Wien, WK1/ALB058/16102.

newspaper, basing its conclusions on an academic's statement, produced the following truly unfortunate headline: "The British prisoners [in Afyonkarahisar, Turkey] spent all their days on music and staging plays".⁸ The outrageous implication is that their lives were one of comfort, entertainment, and nothing else. Just as it could not have been for the British, it was not for the Ottoman POWs either.

Capture and Emasculation

Scholars of European history have argued that the First World War "provoked a crisis in masculinity as nineteenth-century notions of the 'heroic', patriotic defender of the nation were challenged by the reality of dehumanizing, industrialized violence experienced".⁹ Elif Bilgin makes a similar observation and states that the war mutilated heroic masculinities, as it fragmented narratives about masculinity and created "vacuums of doubt through which gender

8 "Şahin: İngilizlerin Esareti Müzik ve Tiyatro ile Geçmiş", *Afyon Haber* <<http://www.afyonhaber.com/sahin-ingilizlerin-esareti-muzik-ve-tiyatroyla-gecmis/144121/>> (accessed 1 December 2017).

9 Crouthamel, "Cross-dressing for the fatherland", p. 195.

teachings and traditional male roles could be plausibly questioned".¹⁰ Arguably, having gone through the same experiences as the front soldiers before they were captured, those who became POWs were doubly exposed in terms of how war and captivity undermined their sense of manliness.

In examining cross-dressing German POWs, Iris Rachamimov interprets "capture by the enemy as a metaphoric castration and as a precipitous loss of status in social and gender hierarchy".¹¹ Without a doubt, the moment and experience of being captured was one of anxiety, fear, helplessness, and even shame for the Ottoman POWs as well.¹² In a popular and military culture that increasingly fashioned itself since the late nineteenth century as a "military nation", Ottoman and Turkish conceptions of manliness and masculinity were clearly linked to military service and warrior qualities.¹³ Although some individual soldiers challenged the militaristic discourse of 'die, do not become a prisoner of war', one's 'fate' of being captured could stir suspicions that a warrior forfeited those qualities, and therefore, his manliness.¹⁴ Ottoman prisoners report that at first they could not look at each others' faces out of a feeling of shame.¹⁵ Those who had to raise their hands in the air and surrender their weapons were no longer facing their enemies as equals in battle, but as vulnerable victims. What is clear is that a drastic change took place at that moment. Gone was the heroic masculinity as the men marched into enforced passivity in the lands and under the guns of the enemy. Hilmi Erbuğ, an officer taken on the Russian front, remembered his moment of capture in explicitly gendered terms: "I stood there without a weapon, defenseless, as if like a woman".¹⁶ Some, like Başkatıpzade Ragıp Bey, noted: "I could not comprehend anything; I lost

10 Bilgin, Elif, "An Analysis of Turkish Modernity through Discourses of Masculinities", Ph.D. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2004, p. 31. See also my "Cihan Harbi'nde Korku, Cesaret ve Erkeklik", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 243 (2014), 48-55.

11 Rachamimov, "Disruptive comforts of drag", p. 364; Feltman, Brian K., *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), p. 106 highlights the shame angle much as I did in *Healing the Nation*. Matthias Reiss, challenges this idea in "The Importance of being men: the Afrika-Korps in American captivity", *Journal of Social History*, 46/1 (2012), pp. 25-7.

12 Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*, pp. 251-52.

13 Altınay, Ayşegül, *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

14 A. Süleyman, "Esaret Hatıraları", *Vakit*, 21 September 1920, p. 2; Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*, pp. 251-2.

15 Başkatıpzade Ragıp Bey, *Tarih-i Hayatım: Tahsil-Harp-Esaret-Kurtuluş Anıları* (Ankara: Kebikeç, 1996), p. 80.

16 Erbuğ, Merih Baran (ed.), *Kaybolan Yıllar: Mülazım Ahmet Hilmi'nin Sarıkamuş, Sibirya, Afganistan Hatıraları ve Hayatı* (İstanbul: Vadi, 2007), p. 172.

my nerves; my body felt gelatinous".¹⁷ This is nothing short of terror and utter vulnerability.¹⁸ While Rachamimov and others argue that emasculation lasted until repatriation, I argue here that the work of reclaiming masculinity started while they were POWs through various means, and female-impersonation in camp theater was one important step, especially for those in Egypt.¹⁹

Entertainment in the Ottoman Military

Some original sources provide sporadic evidence of unit commanders arranging for occasional plays and concerts to boost the soldiers' morale during the Great War. Organized entertainment could only happen during times of lulls in fighting or in the rear lines. One officer briefly mentioned that his division put on such a show near the Gallipoli front. As the soldiers constructed the stage for a play from whatever materials were available, such as blankets and tents, the division's musical section played Carmen. As he commented "how strange! A field theater in a battle zone", it is safe to assume that this was the first and possibly the only one he witnessed.²⁰ Vasfi Şenözen, who was asked to play the lead in an Abdülhak Hamit play on the eastern Anatolian front, did not find it as strange, even if he declined the offer.²¹ Whereas 80 percent of British divisions had theatrical sub-units to entertain the men on the field,²² Ottoman frontline theaters seem to have taken place at the initiative of some divisional and regimental commanders as ad-hoc entertainment. A pre-1914

17 Başkatıpzade Ragıp Bey, *Tarih-i Hayatım*, p. 80.

18 Captivity narratives of Ottomans in British hands do not generally have such vivid descriptions of anxiety and terror at capture. For them, that moment likely was when they were forced to undress completely for delousing purposes before entering the prison camps. As they stood in line, ashamed of each other, they attempted to cover their private parts with their hands. The British soldiers yelling, laughing, and poking at them with sticks to keep the line moving is remembered by many as the most humiliating and torturous experience. Arguably, this was the moment of emasculation for them. See, Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*, pp. 143-4 and Figure 4.5 therein, where the POWs bowing their heads is indication of the shame they felt.

19 Besides Rachamimov, see also Heather Jones, who states that men entered the camps with a "virile image of soldierly masculinity", but the prison camps unraveled their sense of themselves as men, "A missing paradigm? Military captivity and the prisoners of war, 1914-18", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 26/1-2 (2008), 19-48, quote at p. 25.

20 Hasan Cevdet Bey, *Kıyamet Koptuğunda: Hasan Cevdet Bey'in Çanakkale ve Doğu Cephesi Günlüğü* (Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2015), pp. 40-1.

21 Şenözen, Vasfi, *1. Dünya Savaşı Yılları ve Kafkas Cephesi Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Okuyan Us, 2013), p. 90.

22 Boxwell, "The follies of war", p. 5.



FIGURE 11.3 *Kadın Dersi* at Pervaya Rechka prison camp, Russia, courtesy of Prof. Bingür Sönmez, Private Collection.

example from Ottoman Yemen shows that commanding officers occasionally encouraged men to entertain themselves. An actor himself, the officer was disappointed in his Anatolian soldiers because when left alone to entertain themselves, they resorted to crude forms of cross-dressing, resembling *Orta Oyunu*. That is, they simply “belly-danced” (“göbek atıp”) and made “coquettish movements with their heads” (“gerdan kırdılar”).²³ The officer had hoped that his Anatolian soldiers would sing “martial songs” or perform “war-plays”, as the local Ottoman-Yemeni gendarme reportedly did. His soldiers’ behavior tells us

23 Kemal Emin, “Sulh ve Tiyatro”, *Temaşa*, 10 (17 Teşrin-i evvel 1334/1918), pp. 2-3. In *Orta Oyunu*, literally meaning “the performance in the middle”, because the play took place outdoors and in the middle of a round crowd of watchers, men known as *zenne* played women’s roles. Kılıç, Çiğdem, “Men acting as women: The *zenne* in nineteenth-century popular theatre”, in *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (London: Seagull Books, 2014), pp. 303-18. *Zenne* also appear in shadow plays popular in the Middle East since the thirteenth century. However, the *zenne* in the shadow play is a woman rather than a female impersonator, Zeevi, Dror, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 136.

that they did not see anything unmanly in cross-dressing. Soldiers were quick to obtain women's clothes for impromptu entertainment (Fig. 2). Especially, the 'woman' on the right visible playing spoons might indicate some evidence of belly dancing and more.²⁴

Prison Camp Theaters

The practice of battlefield theatrical performances with female impersonators naturally passed into prison camps. While those in Egypt thrived after slow starts, Ottoman theater endeavors in Russia were modest affairs at least in terms of their repertoire. There are at least a couple of reasons for this. First, the captivity conditions were significantly more difficult in Russia; frequently the prisoners were in dire straits financially. Secondly, Ottomans tended to be a small minority among the prisoners captured by Russia. There were over 2 million Austro-Hungarians and at least 168,000 Germans in Russian prison camps. The smaller numbers hindered a livelier theater life. Frequently, there was not a large enough pool of people to draw actors from and also form a reliable audience base. For instance, Krasnoyarsk, a large prison camp which held thousands of Central Powers' prisoners, had only 400 Ottoman officers. German speaking prisoners there had numerous successful productions, which even attracted local civilians.²⁵ Probably taking advantage of the stage built by European POWs, the 400 Ottoman officers still staged at least several plays including Hüseyin Rahmi's *Mürebbiye* (1895, Governess). Başkatıpzade Ragıp Bey listed three other plays in Krasnoyarsk: *Çoban Kızı* (Shepherd Girl), *A be Karı* (Oh, What a Woman!), and *Paşa'nun Keyfi Yerinde* (The Paşa Enjoys Life).²⁶ Ottomans in other camps also note the staging of a play or two (Fig. 4). Even in places with only a few dozen Ottomans, prisoners still attempted to entertain themselves even if it meant sitting around in a room and reading lines informally. As M. Fuad Tokad noted, there was no cross-dressing, but only oral mimicry of female characters. Still, men could be "very good in female roles."²⁷ As the number of Ottomans in British captivity jumped considerably starting in 1917, cultural and theatrical activity in the camps increased. With thousands of Ottomans in each of the several prison camps, Egypt had a much larger actor, director, and audience pool, which helped turn the initially modest efforts into

24 In this case, it seems that they came across a "sünnet düğünü", a circumcision ceremony, at a village near an unidentified battlefield.

25 Rachamimov, "Disruptive comforts of drag", p. 372 and note 49.

26 Başkatıpzade, *Tarih-i Hayatım*, pp. 100-1. I could not identify the latter three. They might be original plays or Ragıp Bey did not remember the names correctly.

27 Tokad, M. Fuad, *Kibrit Kutusundaki Sarıkamış-Sibirya Günlükleri*, 2nd printing (Istanbul: Timaş, 2010), p. 187.



FIGURE 11.4 *A Kampı Heyet-i Temsiliyesi* (Camp “A” Theater Committee) Egypt, courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.

nearly nightly entertainment. Prisoners who had some connection to theater or were active theater-goers led the way as they became actors, “actresses”, and directors. To ensure that it was a united effort, they established a “Theatre Committee” (*Heyet-i Temsiliye*, Fig. 4) in each camp consisting of about up to two dozen people.²⁸ Thus, by 1918 every one of the nearly ten camps in Egypt featured a play every three to five days. Some nights even had double and triple features (See Fig. 1). The prisoners staged both national and European plays from Namık Kemal’s patriotic play *Gülnehal* to *Don Juan* or Alexander Dumas’s *the Women’s War*.²⁹

Ottoman prisoners relied on a variety of ways to acquire or create texts for the plays they eventually staged. One common method mentioned is reliance on the memory of those who were pre-war actors or theater-goers. Former officer prisoner Nureddin stated that “a friend with a good memory who had

28 N. K., “Mısır’da Üsera Kararğahlarında Osmanlı Sahneleri”, *Temaşa*, 22 (Mayıs 1336/1920), p. 14.

29 N. K., “Mısır’da”, p. 14; Altınay, Ahmet, *Katran Kazanında Sterilize: Bir Türk Subayı’nın İngiliz Esir Kampında Üç Yılı* (Istanbul: Tarih Düşünce Kitapları, 2004), pp. 44-5; Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*, p. 30.



FIGURE 11.5 *Yarın*, Sidi Bishr camp newspaper (Egypt), cover page, courtesy of Milli Kütüphane, Ankara. “Sabık C Kampı Bakıyetü’s-suyfütu para yerken” (Former remnants of a defeated army as they spend money in Camp C).

attended theater frequently in Istanbul” before the war “reconstructed” İbn-ür Refik’s play *Hisse-i Şaiya* (Shared Possession, see Fig. 10) “almost exactly the same as the original”.³⁰ Because some plays had to be rewritten from memory, the prisoner writers or directors might have taken some liberty in their reconstruction. They might have also acquired plays through Red Crescent efforts to send books to Ottoman POWs.³¹ Since it was in the interest of the camp commandants to keep the prisoners occupied because they were still holding them two to three years after the war, it is possible that camp officials even helped obtain such plays.

Most theater troupes and the stages on which they performed started amazingly modestly. Nureddin wrote that some POWs always imagined building a stage and having a troupe from the first days of their captivity. At first, they pushed large tables together in the mess tent to form a stage; for background they stitched together blankets. Because the set-up and rearrangement was too arduous they could only do “simple plays” and poetry reading at first. It seems what drove the “Turkish” prisoners like Nureddin is the competition Arab-Ottoman prisoners “started” by staging a short play about Salah al-Din and Richard the Lionheart, where Richard planted the contemporary British flag in Jerusalem. Thus, the “Turkish” prisoners wanted to upstage them for their insulting behavior and “cow-towing” to the British to win their favor.³² Turkish-Ottomans responded with a patriotic play which resulted in red-white decorations and flags all over the modest stage. As the competition heated up, help came from a seemingly unlikely quarter: the Zekazik camp commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Jenkins. In a post-repatriation newspaper article, Nureddin publicly recorded his “appreciation” of Jenkins for his “effort and activities” to help theater lovers. Jenkins, an engineer, drew the plans for the stage and supervised its construction. He procured necessary material, attended plays, and even played violin, along with a few other British soldiers, in the camp orchestra.³³ Simple beginnings of these theatrical efforts and the assistance offered by the British camp officials are seconded in Reşad Nuri’s *Son Sığınak* (The Last/Final Shelter) novel; the narrator in the novel, Süleyman, is a former prisoner of war in Zekazik, where he was both actor and co-director.³⁴

30 Nureddin, “Esaret Karargahında Temaşa Hayatı”, *Vakit* (28 June 1924), p. 4. See also, N. K., “Mısır’da”, pp. 14-15.

31 See, Anameriç, Hakan, “Türk Kızılayı’nın (Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti) Savaş Esirlerine Kitap ve Kütüphane Hizmetleri”, *Erdem*, 58 (2010), 19-44.

32 Nureddin, “Esaret”, p. 4.

33 Nureddin, “Esaret”, p. 4.

34 It is likely that Reşad Nuri Güntekin either read how the prisoners did this in a memoir like that of Nureddin or heard it in person from one of the former prisoners who

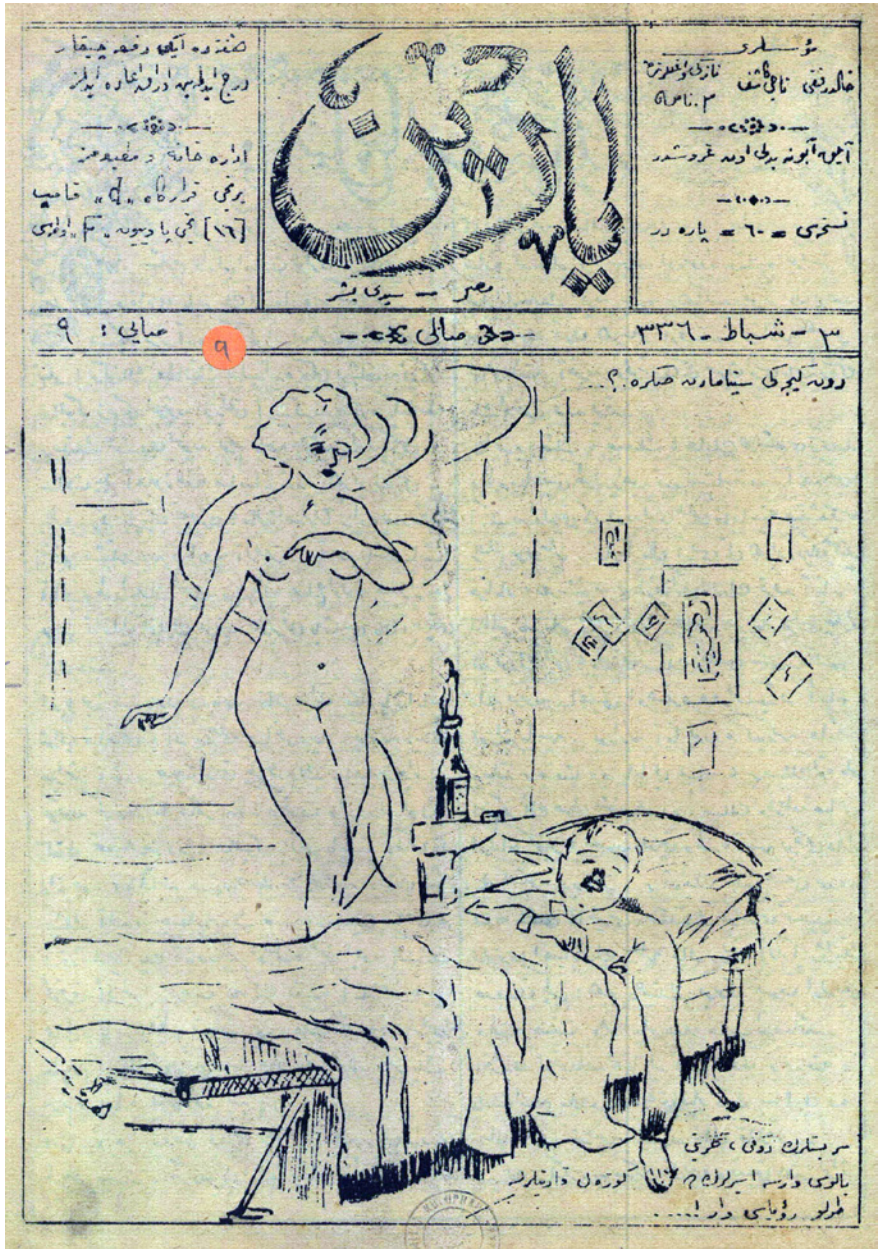


FIGURE 11.6 *Yarn*, Sidi Bishr camp newspaper (Egypt), cover page, courtesy of Milli Kütüphane, Ankara. "Dün geceki sinemadan sonra?" (After last night's cinema?).



FIGURE 11.7
Unidentified location
and actors, courtesy of
Kemal Giray, Private
Collection.

Later on, stages became more sophisticated as interested officers likely pooled salaries, received assistance from the captors, and charged a small admission fee. One unidentified example of a theater in the Egyptian camps was a stand-alone structure covered with canvas cloth, or basically, a large tent. Officers supervised the enlisted men's construction of the stage measuring five by seven meters, but took charge of scenic designs and paintings. It cost 240 Egyptian pounds near the end of the war to construct and decorate.³⁵ While we have no panoramic photographic images of any of the stages, a drawing in one of the prison camp newspapers might give us some idea of what they looked like; the fact that the image also features an alluring 'woman' tells us what was on the minds of the prisoners (Fig. 5).

With building of permanent stages and increased number of prisoners in the camps, theater life became extraordinarily active. Along with those plays they reconstructed from memory or through publications acquired, Ottoman theater enthusiasts in one camp alone wrote half-a-dozen original pieces, which, as one former prisoner wrote in a premiere theater journal after the

continued his theater life after repatriation. Süleyman Bey says "we decorated our simple stage very carefully. We could move it from one place to another and never paid any attention to its laughable, simple condition", p. 20. In his account the help from the British is much more modest, *Son Sığınak* (Istanbul: İnkilâp, 1961), pp. 30-1.

35 Roughly the same amount of pound sterling, which equaled 1,000 Turkish lira in 1920. N. K., "Mısır'da", p. 14.

TABLE 1 Plays staged in Egypt and Russia^a

Vatan Cüda (Homesickness for the Fatherland)	Türk Ruhü (Turkish Soul)
Zehirli Menekşe (Poisonous Violet)	İstiklal-i Osmani (Ottoman Independence)
Altun Kaya (Golden Rock)	Çaldıran Seferi (Çaldıran Campaign, 1514)
Kırmızı-Mavi (Red-Blue)	Musa bin Gazan (Musa al-Ghazani)
Hisse-i Şayia (Shared Possession/ <i>La pretexte</i>)	Öksüz Turgut (Orphan Turgut)
Dördüncü Madde (The Fourth Element/Clause)	Şeytan (The Devil)
Gülñihal (Gülñihal)	Uçurum (The Abyss/ <i>La flambeé</i>)
Diken (Thorn)	A be Karı (Oh, What a Woman!)
Çoban Kızı (Shepherd Girl)	Paşa'nın Keyfi Yerinde (The Paşa Enjoys Life)
İki Ahbap Çavuşlar (Two Cronies/Pals)	Mürebbiye (The Governess)
Karanlıklar İçinde (In Darkness)	Balmumcu (<i>L'homme aux figures de cire</i>)
Don Van (Don Juan)	Hukuk-i Nisvan (Women's Rights)
Otello (Othello)	Muhterem Sefile (Esteemed Prostitute)
Kadınlar Muharebesi (<i>La guerre de femmes</i>)	Fırtına (The Storm)
Hadise – Adese (Incident – Lens)	Açık Bono (Blank Check)
Lades (Wishbone)	Gerdaniye Buselik (Pendant Worthy of a Kiss)
Cem Sultan (Cem Sultan)	Mukadderat Hakimdir (Fate Rules the Day)
Besleme (Live-in Servant)	Kadın Dersi (Woman Lessons)
Don Kişot (Don Quixote)	Metres (Mistress)
	Kördüğüm (A Very Complicated Situation)

a Sources are too many to list for the construction of this list. Most are listed in N. K., "Mısır'da", p. 14. Others are collated from passing mentions in various sources. Some are adaptations from European plays, where I could identify them, I provided the original name.

war, were worthy of being considered for staging in the theaters of Istanbul.³⁶ The list of staged plays (Table 1) should be considered partial.

Creating the Feminine Presence

As the play titles like *Kadın Dersi* (Woman Lessons), *Metres* (Mistress), *Çoban Kızı* (Shepherd Girl), or *Kadınlar Muharebesi* (*La guerre de femmes*) indicate, many such productions required female characters. Given the environment, this might have seemed like an almost insurmountable challenge at first, but it was turned into a great opportunity for the directors and actors through initiative and creativity. By creating the feminine presence in the camps, the prisoners could entertain themselves, normalize their lives, and heal and remake their sensibilities. Actors in various female roles served multiple purposes.

36 N. K., "Mısır'da", p. 14.



FIGURE 11.8 An unidentified play, Pervaya Rechka prison camp, Russia, Courtesy of Prof. Bingür Sönmez, Private Collection.

Anthropologists argue that cross-dress provides men with a release from the “abnormal” state in homosocial environments. They call this the “safety valve” interpretation. They argue that female impersonators simply affirm the two-gender system by reintroducing a feminine presence, which maintains both gender and political hierarchies. They create a “safety valve” for conflicts but do not undermine the basic social and gender order.³⁷ However, some historians,

37 Rachamimov, “Disruptive comforts of drag”, pp. 364, 375-7; and as noted by historian Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 130; Makepeace, Clare, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 118.



FIGURE 11.9 An unidentified play, Pervaya Rechka prison camp, Russia, Courtesy of Prof. Bingür Sönmez, Private Collection.

challenging the safety valve argument, have asserted that cross-dressing can also destabilize gender identities.³⁸ Similarly, David Boxwell states that there were two kinds of performances among female impersonators: mimesis and mimicry. For him, the former was defined by glamor whereas the latter by the “dame” tradition. The dame tradition, a comedic effort, allowed men to dress and act as women without any erotic allure. Motivated by a “misogynistic animus”, it was an effort, he argues, to render women in a “hypercarnalized” manner, as the “grotesque” and “ugly”. Mimetic performances, the focus of his article, however, emphasized glamor and eroticism.³⁹ In a mimetic perfor-

38 Rachamimov’s argument was noted earlier in the article.

39 Boxwell, “The follies of war”, pp. 13-14.

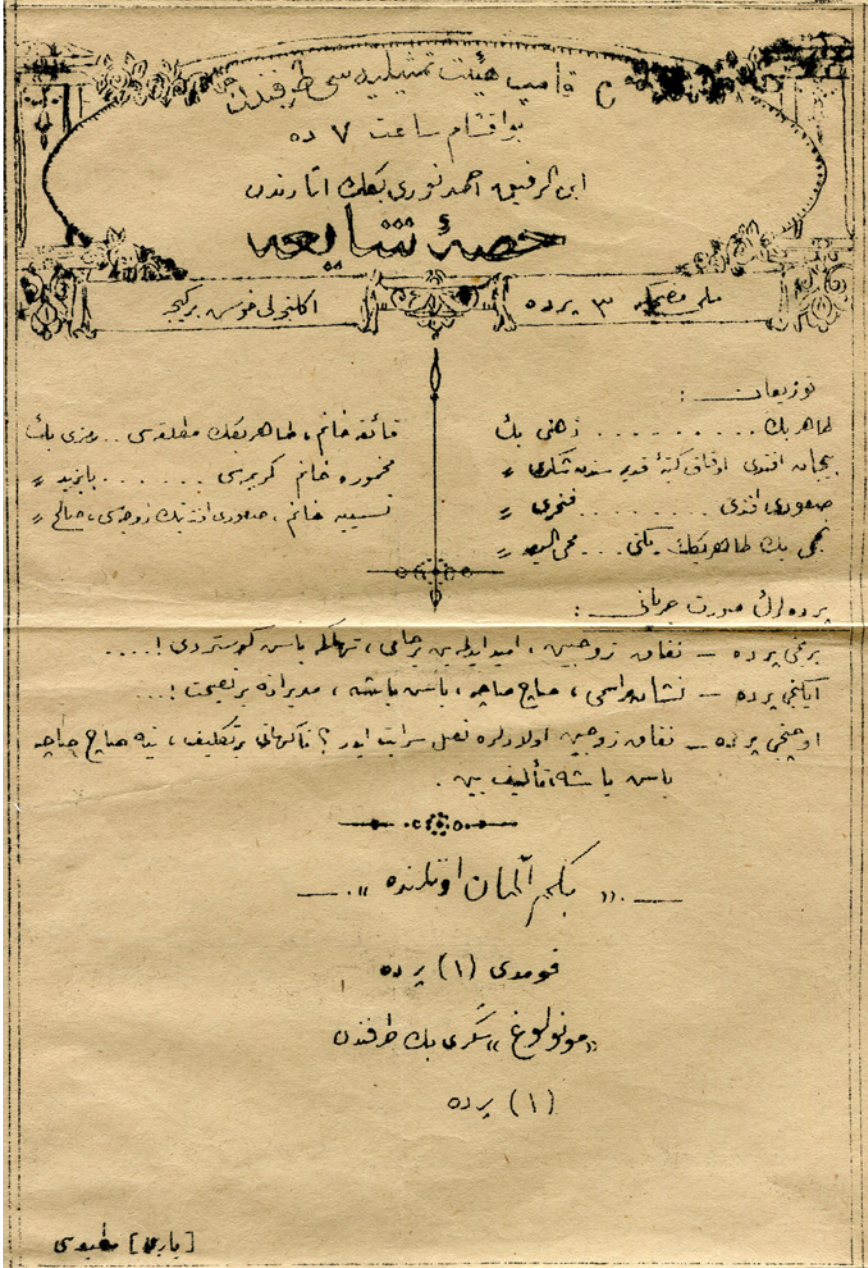


FIGURE 11.10 Playbill for İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri's *Hisse-i Şaiya*, Egypt, Courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.

mance, he writes, a spectator's desiring gaze "on a soldier in drag was not simply a matter of pleasure in a 'surrogate' woman; rather, his gaze was directed at a fellow man in drag".⁴⁰ That is, such a gaze means the possibility that some men were transgressing the threshold of heterosexual desire. Of course, we cannot say that it did not happen among the Ottoman POWs, but in the available evidence, there is no indication that the gaze was directed at the male prisoner in cross-dress. Furthermore, Boxwell's split seems to overlook the category of mothers and maternal types, who would fit neither the glamorous nor the grotesque. Ottoman plays featured all kinds of femininity from young alluring women – Ottoman as well, but especially foreign – to mothers, sisters, and elderly maids, who were considered as part of the family.⁴¹ If the aim was to normalize their lives, wouldn't a variety of women make more sense to fulfill different roles? We do not possess the texts of the plays as staged, but what is clear is that the camp "actresses" reportedly successfully played them all. Different kinds and roles of women as portrayed on stage helped rehabilitate the masculinity of the actors and the audience. The performances were not all necessarily about sex and sexual desire, but a desire for a return to normalcy and 'regular' gender roles which affirmed the man's status at the top of the social and cultural hierarchy.

Creating womanly presence in the camps by transforming an actor into an "actress" was a complicated process and required much attention to detail and creativity. Thanks to Daloğlu Fuad, an actor-director POW in the Sidi Bishr officer camp and an actor-writer after repatriation to Turkey, we have a marvelous description of the transformation. By using "patent leather shoes", hair pins and "women's vests featuring artificial breasts ... our actresses went through a metamorphosis towards femininity", to be as convincing as possible.⁴²

An incredible competition existed among these men. Everyone shaved their faces; frequently, they shaved their arms and chests; they let their hair grow. On the play nights, they spent hours in front of mirrors to the point of arguing over whose turn it was to use the mirror. Face powder, rouge, nail polish, lipstick, and other items were unnecessarily heavily

40 Boxwell, "The follies of war", p. 17.

41 Unfortunately, we do not have adequate and detailed photographic examples of female impersonators to see how convincing they might have been as actresses.

42 Daloğlu Fuad, "Sanatda Ahlak", *Şebab*, 4 (3 Ağustos 1336/1920), p. 88. The word used here is "kadınlık", which I am translating in this instance as femininity. I first encountered the mention of Daloğlu Fuad pieces in Sönmez, Kevser, "'Şebab' Mecmuası Tahlilî Fihrist, İnceleme, Seçme Metinler", M.A. Dissertation, Gazi University, 2015, pp. 29, 173-4, 209-10.

used [israf olunuyor] by each actress to the point that they started to hide it from one another. Finally, we were forced to issue separate makeup items to each actress. Some spent their own money on such things. Some substituted other items when they could (for example, for face powder chalk powder was substituted).⁴³

Clearly, the camp theaters had come a long way from the days of pushing together lunch tables in the mess hall to “women’s vests”. Daloğlu Fuad not only describes the metamorphosis, but his writing actually demonstrates that transformation. He begins with the competition among “the men”, and ends up referring to them as “actresses”. It is noteworthy that there is no use of quote marks around the word “actresses”, though it would be unwise to put too much emphasis on this.⁴⁴

Who played the female roles? Was it the enlisted men who were pressed into service? Not at all. Though occasionally enlisted men are mentioned, by all indications, young junior and reserve officers formed the overwhelming and willing majority of the actors and “actresses”. Evidence indicates that there was tough competition for the female roles. Describing the prison camp theater experience to his readers in a theater magazine after repatriation, one former prisoner had to ease his readers into this different world known only to those who experienced it. He asked his readers to avoid the assumption that female roles somehow fell to those who were not very good actors, or could not play leading male roles. This was not the case. Playing female roles were demanding and required a great deal of talent, certainly more than playing male roles. To convince the uninformed, he assured them these men were not the kind of actors “who appeared as women on the stage but were unaware of femininity”. On the contrary, “these ‘pretend women’s’ femininity [kadinlığı] is not about makeup and costumes alone. They have to be women with their voice, manners, all their emotions, and perform the [whole] play in this manner”.⁴⁵ These men in female roles had to be convincing enough to pull forth those emotions from the audience, the emotions that could only be accessed by women. In plays representing private Ottoman life, mothers and sisters likely occupied different places in the universe of filial piety than brothers and fathers, especially for men who had fought and suffered for their nation. Among a number of talented men, one stood out as better than others in playing female roles. Having first taken the stage with the play *Muhterem Sefile* (Es-

43 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 88.

44 Quotes are not used consistently in these Ottoman texts or camp newspapers.

45 N. K., “Mısır’da”, p. 14.

teemed Prostitute) Bayezid Bey was judged to be exceptional in both “Istanbulite” and “western” women’s roles.⁴⁶ A review appearing in the camp newspaper of the play *Hukuk-i Nisvan* (Women’s Rights) in which Bayezid played the leading female role, noted his exceptional talents. Despite the title, the play seems to have contained contradictory messages. Educated prisoners were always interested in giving Ottoman women more rights since they saw this as part of being modern and civilized, but they did not mean absolute equality, nor did it exclude the likelihood of portraying at least some women as “ill-tempered” (“*hırçın*”) or irrational. In the play, Refik Bey finds himself in the position of having to put a “stop” to his wife’s continued “ill-tempered behavior”.⁴⁷ Thus, Bayezid has to play the role of a *hırçın* woman being reined in by Refik Bey. “Especially for us Ottomans, who do not really allow their women on stage, it is great to see that our men also have similar subtleties in their abilities”.⁴⁸ “Our young brother” showed an amazing “determination” to master his art. Apparently, Bayezid Bey was so good that one could only detect the minimum of “unnaturalness” in his voice; “it was impossible not to be astonished by this”.⁴⁹ It was important for the impersonators to maintain the illusion of femininity not only in their costume and makeup, but also in their stage voices. Another prisoner noted that though it did not happen often, “one problem that could ruin the moment was the actress suddenly losing the accord of her voice”.⁵⁰ Even the smallest hint of a cracking, masculine voice or inappropriate posture could easily pierce the illusionary bubble and undermine the belief that a woman stood before them on stage; thus, the performance had to be as complete as possible to maintain the illusion of women in the camps.

Reportedly, the “actresses” were highly successful in creating the physical image of women in the camps. Again, Daloğlu Fuad writes that those enlisted men seeing the “women” on stage for the first time briefly confused them for the real thing as they uttered the following among themselves: “These officers are really capable and resourceful men [*ne yaman şeyler*]; they somehow managed to bring in women from Alexandria just for the play”.⁵¹ Similarly, another officer stated that a British general visiting the camp took the “actresses” as biological women and was amazed that they would be allowed in the camp.⁵²

46 Bayezid Bey also played Nevber Hanım in *Gerdaniye Buselik*, see Fig. 1.

47 A. F., “Bayezid Bey: Şahsiyeti ve Eseri – Hukuk-i Nisvan Temsili Münasebetiyle”, *Yarın*, 14 (14 Şubat 1336/1920), p. 8. The text implies that Bayezid Bey wrote the play *Hukuk-i Nisvan*.

48 A. F., “Bayezid Bey”, p. 8.

49 A. F., “Bayezid Bey”, p. 8.

50 N. K., “Mısır’da”, p. 14.

51 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 88.

52 Nureddin, “Esaret”, p. 4.



FIGURE 11.11 Playbill for the fifth showing of *Diken*, Egypt, Courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection. “Kızı kendi haline bırakırsan ya davulcuya varır ya zurnacıya” (If you leave the decision to your daughter, she will marry either the drum player or the clarion player).

As noted, the transformation of these actors into “actresses” was not only physical; most successful “actresses” needed to know something about women and femininity as well, or at least the way they imagined it. Without stating it explicitly, Daloğlu Fuad’s description of the competition among the “actresses” reveals an implicit sexist or even misogynist attitude about the kind of women he and other prisoners imagined. He seems to be saying that as the actors transformed into “actresses”, they also acquired certain assumed “female characteristics”, that we might call emotional or psychological attributes.

Something secretly invented by one actress in the morning would be copied and perfected in a hundred different ways by others by the evening. Jealousy, quarreling, fights, complaints had become routines. There was a sense of purity and innocence attached to avoiding the roles of a married or a dishonorable woman. No one wanted to play the role of an old or ugly woman.⁵³

53 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 88.

The competition took on different dimensions when “actresses” wanted to be the prettiest or to be seen in the best light on stage. At times like that, they worked to undermine each other or took delight in seeing others play those undesirable roles. Daloğlu Fuad continues:

It took us a week to convince a[n actress] friend of ours that a scene, which required [her] to hide in the fireplace and come out stained with soot, was necessary. The other actress, who [eagerly] volunteered to put the soot on [her] competitor, gave [our friend] a completely black face.⁵⁴

Petty jealousies, undermining fellow “actresses”, and one-upmanship both as practiced and narrated in the article is meant to show both what the prisoners thought of women, and that these men had successfully played women’s roles to the point of becoming and acting petty and jealous like them. Misogynistic as it is, this is clearly how the prisoners imagined women’s behavior. Seen in this light, the implication is that these “actresses” were more “womanly” than women; as the following will show, this is a repeating theme. Apparently, some “actresses” created trouble for actors as well: “Just like our mother Eve causing the fall of our father Adam from paradise”, Sidi Bishr “actresses” became the cause of some actors deciding to abandon the stage.⁵⁵ Thus, even the pretend women could easily become “troublemakers” and directly linked all the way to biblical evidence.

The audience seconded the observations about the “metamorphosis” noted above by those who participated in theater in various capacities. However, rather than seeing the transformation itself, they observed the results of it on stage. On a night when Camp C Theater in Sidi Bishr had two plays on for the night with leading female characters, everyone had the chance to compare the two “actresses”. A review appeared in one of the camp newspapers doing just that. The first play was an unnamed “Frenk comedy”, or a European comedy, while the second was *The Governess*, a play based on the highly influential 1895 novel by Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar), which is the story of a French governess employed in a well-off Ottoman household in Istanbul.⁵⁶ Speaking for the audience, the reviewer first protested the British camp authorities’ censorship of *The Governess*. A serious social commentary, the original novel boldly attacked the prevalent upper class custom of entrusting Ottoman children to the care of

54 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 88.

55 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 89. Although this version of the “fall of man” from the Garden of Eden partially contradicts the story in the Quran, it represents the popular interpretation.

56 *Mürebbiye* was also made into a movie in 1919, during the Allied occupation of Istanbul.

European governesses. The criticism was that such children did not properly learn their own Ottoman customs and traditions, but that of Europe.⁵⁷ The *Frenk* comedy, the reviewer admitted, was funnier than they had assumed at first. His attention quickly turned to the “dance-loving and whimsical” mademoiselle in the play. This “man-chaser” was something else:

She had on a beautifully crafted outfit as she appeared on the stage like a rising sun. With her doe-eyed flirtatious looks and coquettish moves, she was something to see. The way she held her skirt as she moved about and how she moved her shoulders mischievously as she spoke, to tell the honest truth, *she was more womanly than a woman*. Especially when she pouted her lips as she talked, she seemed like a coy-mannered young woman from head to toe.⁵⁸

The review did not name the mademoiselle, but she certainly seems to have captivated the audience. Stated publicly in camp newspapers, the observation that she was more womanly than a woman actually reminds the reader, as before, that the “actress” was more convincing as woman than a biological woman.

The same reviewer then turned to *The Governess* to compare the décor, players, and performance of the two female impersonators. Mademoiselle Angel, or the Governess herself, was no less impressive in comparison. In the play, an oversexed western woman, Angel, seduces the all-too-eager males in the household, including the cook, one by one and turns them against each other, where the members of the family confront one another with knife in hand. As she “manages” everyone in the household with “clever simplicity”, she becomes an irresistible object of desire for every male including the patriarch, who is discovered hiding in Angel’s closet by the rest of the extended family members. As an “actress”, Angel was beyond impressive; those who looked only at “her innocent face”, the play reviewer suggested, could not possibly comprehend “the sexual desire and greed in her heart. The way this man-chaser exited her bedroom in the middle of the night was delightful enough to enter into the dreams of those who slept a dreamless sleep”.⁵⁹ We will shortly return to the “reliving” of the scene, but the havoc Angel, not only as woman, but especially

57 The original play scheduled for the night was *Mürebbiye*. Perhaps seeing some “anti-European” sentiment in the play, the commandant allowed it to go on with reduced cultural criticism. Because of the censorship, the “Theatre Committee” and the directors decided to compensate by offering a second play for the night, which was the *Frenk* comedy.

58 Halid Rifki, “Temaşa”, *Yarın*, 18 (19 Mart 1336/1920), p. 6.

59 Halid Rifki, “Temaşa”, p. 7.

as western woman, causes in the household is also important here, even if it was the weaknesses of these men who chased after or gave into her.

The prisoners “relived” the image of Angel as performance, at least because such a comment is made in a camp newspaper for everyone to read. The desire was for what Angel represented. I suggest that while this desire is similar to the same feeling felt for women in other plays, Angel being a foreign woman gives this production an added amount of frisson for the POW audience. The same is true for the unnamed mademoiselle in the *Frenk* comedy. Although there were not many of these play reviews in the camp newspapers, what is available gives a clear indication that there is much more sexualizing of European women. Either by being loyal to the original texts or possibly to the slightly overacted performances in the homosocial prison camp theaters, European women are clearly represented as seductive, “available” or even oversexed. Due to her assumed loose morals, desiring a European woman is not only more acceptable because she is not one of “our women”, but she is especially desirable precisely because she is the enemy’s woman. Arguably, such objectifying of the foreign female Other did not only reclaim the prisoners’ manliness, but also that of their patriotic and national sensibilities given the context of the war.

In reviews of plays representing Ottoman domestic life without foreigners, sexualizing comments are toned down or absent. Whether staged in a prison camp or at home, this is probably a reflection of the plays themselves. Even if some of these plays were adaptations from European ones, they were likely changed to represent Ottoman social and cultural lives and values. Though there might be flirtatious characters like Nevber in *Gerdaniye Buselik* or Farika in *Açık Bono* (Blank Check, see Fig. 1), they flirt with their husbands or it is part of a clever game and therefore not serious.⁶⁰ For instance, Farika, a young woman of 20 from a wealthy family, agrees to an unusual transaction with the manager of a fabric shop. Nadir Bey, the manager, offers to sell Farika the fabric she likes at “one kiss per meter”. Farika agrees and asks Nadir to deliver the fabric in person to her house and collect the fee. However, when Nadir appears, he also finds Marika, the 55-year old non-Muslim Ottoman servant, and Farika’s friend, Mebrure present. Since Mebrure is unaware of Farika’s plan, she is aghast at the idea of paying with kisses. That is, until Farika outsmarts Nadir by asking Marika to give the kisses owed to him, which he protests.⁶¹ Thus, traditional Muslim gender roles and behavior are not upset, but reaffirmed as Farika cleverly avoids a compromising situation.

60 İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri, “Gerdaniye Buselik”, pp. 9-11; and Baraz, *İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci*, 11, pp. 94-102 for *Gerdaniye Buselik*.

61 Baraz, *İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci*, 1, pp. 160-4. The deal was for “metresi bir buse”.

Cult Following of Actresses or Return to the Masculine Self?

A number of scholars studying female impersonation among European POWs of different nations have shown that many impersonators maintained their female stage personalities off stage and had a cult following of admirers. Rachamimov writes that some “actresses” in Russia had admirers, whose task it was to wash and iron women’s undergarments and other items of clothing.⁶² Others reportedly had “boyfriends” and bodyguards to keep these admirers at bay; yet, some enjoyed all the attention they received.⁶³ It is abundantly clear that Ottoman female impersonators did not stay in character after the plays and they did not have the kind of attention European “actresses” did. First, there is no indication of such a following in any of the sources. Secondly, a reviewer in the camp newspaper first acknowledged Bayezid Bey’s talents in impersonation, but he immediately followed that with a comparison: “The difference between the Bayezid with an astrakhan hat (*kalpak*) on his head and jacket on his back, and the Bayezid in women’s clothes on stage is as stark as the difference between masculinity and femininity.”⁶⁴ There was no blurring of gender boundaries here. We should acknowledge, however, that the nature of the prison camp meant that perhaps it was a role that could never be fully shaken. Because these actors and “actresses” lived alongside their fellow actors and the audience, it is possible that their performance characters did not disappear as quickly as changing into one’s jacket and *kalpak*, as it might have with a traditional performance in a peacetime environment.⁶⁵ Despite the likely possibility of a “residual” stage personality, what is significant here is the reviewer’s pointed assertion about the difference between the two Bayezids.

Of course, it would be silly to suggest that no Ottoman POWs somehow felt some same-sex desire for the man behind the performance. If, as the European POWs and international doctors visiting prison camps suggested, theater and “pin up pictures” of women curbed outbreaks of homosexuality,⁶⁶ then “outbreaks” must have existed for them to be curbed by one method or another. In fact, in a rare occurrence, one Ottoman POW in Burma openly wrote about “sexuality in the camp” among his enlisted male comrades, even though he blamed the Burmese, Indians and the British for “introducing” Ottomans to

62 Rachamimov, “Disruptive comforts of drag”, pp. 377-8.

63 Eldredge, “We girls”, p. 87.

64 Halid Rifki, “Temaşa”, p. 6.

65 I would like to thank my colleague Chris Bischof for making this point.

66 Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, p. 131 and Vishcher, Adolf L., *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoners of War* (London: Bale and Danielsson, 1919).



FIGURE 11.12 Crowded theater scene, *Yarın*, Sidi Bishr camp newspaper, Egypt, courtesy of Milli Kütüphane, Ankara. “Tiyatromu? Tazyik makinesimi?” (Is it theater or pressure machine?).

such practices.⁶⁷ Could there have been instances of blurring of boundaries from the perspective of some audience members in the homosocial environment of a prison camp? Of course. We do not have evidence in this regard, however. When the POW in Burma writes about the sexual practices in the

67 Peker, Nurettin, *Tüfek Omza* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009), pp. 202-5.

camp there, it is certainly not in the context of theater, which is not mentioned at all in the memoir.

With its female impersonators of various kinds of women – glamorous, maternal, and others – prison camp theater allowed the prisoners to heal or reaffirm their masculine identity through sexualizing these women or using them to confirm traditional gender relations. Yet, this was not the only method. Whether triggered by the plays or movies they occasionally saw in the camps, talking about heterosexual sex and expressing desire for female company was also another way to constantly reaffirm their masculine identity. Talking about women seems to have happened among those in Russia more, likely because most of the prisoners came into relatively regular contact with Russian women, or at the very least were able to observe them from a nearby distance. In fact, many even established romantic and sexual relationships with Russian women in the absence of their male relatives.⁶⁸ While the first person narratives from Egypt do not reveal conversation about women, the camp newspapers featured translated novels about women.⁶⁹ These newspapers featured numerous drawings of women – some completely naked, some not.⁷⁰ In another issue, where the prisoner is dreaming of a naked woman “after last night’s cinema”, there are also pictures on the wall (see Fig. 6).⁷¹ Though what kind of pictures on the wall is unclear, female pin ups are much more likely given the context of the dream. Some officers kept cut out pictures of women in their diaries or notebooks even if they did not pin them up.

Everything is Performance?

A brief story Daloğlu Fuad relates from Egypt reminds us that sometimes in the absence of further evidence all we can do is speculate about gender and sexuality in the camps. He wrote that a young officer who volunteered to play one of the female roles presented the theater director with a photo of himself in officer’s uniform. The note on the photo read “your [future] actress in the role of an officer”.⁷² If the competition was as tough as we saw, was he simply trying to attract attention with his enthusiasm and creativity? Or in a marvelous flip of the script, was it a suggestion that being an officer was the “real” performance? Given the rest of the article by Daloğlu, where he talks about the com-

68 Yanıkdağ, Yücel, “Flirting with the enemy: Ottoman prisoners of war and Russian women during the Great War”, article in progress.

69 One of the camp newspapers, *Yarın*, for example, featured a serialized story called “Women’s Letters”. See *Yarın* (1 Nisan 1336/1920), p. 6 for an example.

70 *Yarın*, 21 (12 Nisan 1336/1920), cover page.

71 *Yarın*, 9 (3 Şubat 1336/1920), cover page.

72 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, pp. 88-9.

petition and jealousy among the “actresses”, the former is much more likely.

Meanwhile, there was arguably yet another layer of performance going on all along that involved the actors, “actresses” and audience in the camps. This implicit idea, rather fleeting and barely perceptible in first person sources, is made explicit in Reşat Nuri’s *Son Sığınak* by Süleyman, the former POW and camp actor. A fellow former POW says of Süleyman and other camp actors to a Turkish general they meet well after the war that these men were “heroes”, in the role of “artists”. Furthermore, Süleyman writes that the “brightest young men ... of my unfortunate generation, dove into the desert theater like they were diving into water” in the middle of a desert. The “desert theater” not only allowed them to make fruitful use of their time, it helped them to survive captivity, and gave them agency to resist the captor. Süleyman wrote: “The British soldiers who came to watch [our shows] never realized how we escaped the guards standing sentry by the camp’s barbed wire during those hours and strolled through the streets of Istanbul, Bursa, and Konya”.⁷³ In other words, even as they remained in the camps, the audience became part of the performance along with those actors on stage, which allowed them mentally to escape the guards and the camps. Unbeknownst to the captor, at those times they were free. True, the captors were in charge of the captives and influenced their lives, but the prisoners also influenced the captors by their behavior; enlisting the captor’s help to establish the theater which allowed them mentally to escape is one example of this. These performances were another way of reminding themselves and others, including the guards who might have organized their own theater, that everything was a performance, including their everyday behavior as docile POWs. Put differently, if they could make such convincing women so as to fool a British general and other captors who watched their shows regularly, perhaps their everyday role as compliant POWs itself was nothing but a role.

Despite all their talent in performing female roles, was there anything at which the POW “actresses” failed? Again, Daloğlu Fuad writes that “despite all of our successes, we could not do any better than reminding ourselves with longing of the kind angel-like finesse specific to *our women*. It is because of this, love had minimal presence in our plays”.⁷⁴ Love was something only the biological women waiting at home could properly offer to the men in the audience. Furthermore, the reference to “our women” makes them different than the foreign women portrayed on stage, on the one hand, and reaffirms their sense of patriotism and nationalism.

73 Güntekin, *Son Sığınak*, pp. 20 and 31.

74 Daloğlu Fuad, “Sanatda Ahlak”, p. 88.



FIGURE 11.13 Scene from an unidentified play in Egypt, courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.



FIGURE 11.14 Actors from an unidentified play in Egypt, courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.



FIGURE 11.15 Actors from *Rivayet-i [Banu] Adiy*, Malta, courtesy of Kemal Giray, Private Collection.

Conclusion

Many POWs interpreted capture and captivity as shameful and emasculating experience. While some scholars have argued that remasculinization had to wait until after repatriation, this chapter has argued that the prisoners started that process in the prison camps, and theater with its female impersonation was a crucial factor in this endeavor. Masculinity and femininity are relational constructs. “Characterization and validation of either one...depends on the very existence of the other”. Thus, it is impossible to understand one “without an overt or subtle reference” to the other.⁷⁵ Because the POWs could not and did not compare well to the manliness the captor soldiers represented, as those who captured and held power over them, all they could do was to reaffirm their manliness and masculinity by objectifying, sexualizing, and confirming traditional gender roles over foreign and domestic women. Prison camp theaters helped them do just that. For this, they needed all kinds of women: nationalized “our women”, foreign women, as well as glamorous and maternal types. Objectifying and sexualizing the glamorous female Other, especially the Euro-

75 Bilgin, “An Analysis of Turkish Modernity through Discourses of Masculinities”, p. 33.

pean women, in the form of the female impersonators, POWs most directly emphasized their manliness. Yet, the performances were not only about sexual desire, but also a desire for a return to normalcy and 'regular' gender roles which affirmed the man's place at top of the social hierarchy. Other types of women allowed them to confirm these traditional gender roles at home. Descriptions of how actors transformed into "actresses" also tell us what these men thought of perceived "women's behavior". In their misogynistic view, women were jealous, greedy, back-stabbing, and scheming. And these were qualities men like them supposedly did not possess. They were better at being female than were women themselves, which made the prisoners superior to women. Plays represented the home life and an idealized femininity as the actors and "actresses" saw it and as it was imagined by male writers, directors, and the audience. The female impersonation helped to heal and reassert their masculine sensibilities in relation to women they represented in the homosocial environment of the prison camps. Moreover, as a form of much-appreciated entertainment, theater also provided a means of mental escape from the camps, and therefore resistance to the captor, for both the players and the audience.

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