

1969-2019
FIFTY YEARS
OF THE
VEHBI
KOC
FOUNDATION

PHILANTHROPY IN ANATOLIA THROUGH THE AGES

The First International
Suna & İnan Kıraç
Symposium on
Mediterranean
Civilizations

MARCH 26-29, 2019 | ANTALYA

PROCEEDINGS

Editors

Oğuz Tekin

Christopher H. Roosevelt

Engin Akyürek

 **AKMED**
KOC UNIVERSITY
Suna & İnan Kıraç
Research Center for
Mediterranean Civilizations

 **ANAMED**
KOC UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH CENTER FOR
ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS



KOC UNIVERSITY
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION
CENTER FOR
LATE ANTIQUE AND
BYZANTINE STUDIES

Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages

The First International Suna & İnan Kırac
Symposium on Mediterranean Civilizations
March 26-29, 2019 | Antalya
Proceedings

Editors

Oğuz Tekin
Christopher H. Roosevelt
Engin Akyürek

Assistant Editors

Remziye Boyraz Seyhan
Arif Yacı

All papers published in this proceedings have been peer reviewed.

Advisory Board

Mustafa Adak
Angelos Chaniotis
Christian Marek
Leslie Peirce
Amy Singer

Translations from Turkish to English

Özgür Pala

English Editing

James Norman McKay Jr.

Layout & Graphics Design

Gökçen Ergüven

Cover Design

Çağdaş İlke Ünal

Printed by

12.matbaa
Certificate no: 46618
İbrahim Karaoğlanoğlu Cad. 35/1 Kâğıthane, İstanbul
info@onikincimatbaa.com

This proceedings is published for the 50th anniversary of the Vehbi Koç Foundation by three research centers of Koç University: AKMED, ANAMED, and GABAM.

ISBN 978-605-7685-27-8

© 2020 Koç Üniversitesi
Certificate no: 18318

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the Koç University, and the authors.

Mailing Address

Koç Üniversitesi Suna & İnan Kırac Akdeniz
Medeniyetleri Araştırma Merkezi (AKMED)
Barbaros Mah. Kocatepe Sok. No: 22
Kaleiçi 07100 Antalya, Turkey

PHILANTHROPY IN ANATOLIA THROUGH THE AGES

**The First International
Suna & İnan Kiraç Symposium on
Mediterranean Civilizations**

March 26-29, 2019 | Antalya

Proceedings

Editors

Oğuz Tekin

Christopher H. Roosevelt

Engin Akyürek



Table of Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Introductory Comments: Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages</i>	ix
Greco-Roman Philanthropy	1
Benjamin Gray Debating the Benefits and Problems of Philanthropy in Later Hellenistic Anatolia	3
Pierre Fröhlich <i>Philanthropia</i> in Context: Civic Virtues and Praise of Officials in the <i>Poleis</i> of Hellenistic Asia Minor	13
Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen Civic Philanthropy in the Cities of Roman Anatolia	29
Christina Kokkinia Large Epigraphic Dossiers and Euergetism in Roman Asia Minor	39
Mustafa Adak Civic Notables and Their Honorific Titles in Roman Pamphylia and Pisidia	47
Mustafa H. Sayar Local Donors and Euergetism in the Cities of Cilicia Pedias between the First Century BC and Second Century AD	73
Aşkı̇m Özdizbay Euergetists of Italic Origin in the City of Perge and Their Contributions to Urban Development	83
Recai Tekođlu and Taner Korkut Activities of <i>Euergesia</i> from the Ancient City of Tlos	97
Angelos Chaniotis Benefactors in Aphrodisias and the Socio-Cultural Limits of Philanthropy	111
Matthias Haake Philosophy and Philanthropy: Diogenes of Oenoanda and an Act of Mega-Euergetism	121
Early Christian and Byzantine Philanthropy	133
Christian Marek Philanthropy and Early Christianity in Asia Minor	135
Rustam Shukurov Barbarians, Philanthropy, and Byzantine <i>Missionism</i>	141
Esra Güzel Erdođan <i>Philanthropia</i> in the Byzantine Monasteries of Constantinople	153

Medieval Islamic and Ottoman Philanthropy	165
Suzan Yalman Hospitals and Philanthropy in Seljuk Anatolia	167
A.C.S. Peacock Waqf Inscriptions from Medieval Anatolia	183
Leslie Peirce Sultans, Saints, and Philanthropy: Selim I and the Province of Aintab	195
Lucienne Thys-Şenocak (Re)presenting Royal Ottoman Women through “Other” Sensory Modalities	203
A. Hilâl Uğurlu Philanthropy in the Form of a Hair Strand: Sacred Relics in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lands	215
Efi Kanner Education as Philanthropy within the Ottoman Modernization Project: Aspects of Educational Activity in Greek Orthodox Communities During the Reform Era	225
Eyal Ginio The Use of Sultanic Philanthropy under Constitutional Rule: New Perceptions and Directions	235
Epilogue	245
Amy Singer Concluding Reflections: Philanthropy in Anatolia/Anatolian Philanthropy?	247
<i>Contributors</i>	251
<i>Index</i>	255

Foreword

The Symposium on Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages was organized jointly by three research centers of Koç University, namely the Suna & İnan Kırac Research Center for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED), the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED), and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (GABAM). The symposium was held in Antalya between March 26-29, 2019 in the framework of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Vehbi Koç Foundation. This foundation was founded on January 17, 1969 as the first private foundation in Turkey and has historically displayed the role of civil organizations in social development.

The symposium provided the opportunity to share information and views on different topics such as the understanding of philanthropy and the functioning of charities and their roles in the societies of city-states in Hellenistic and Roman Anatolia as well as those in Byzantine, Seljuq and Ottoman societies.

This book contains the proceedings of the highly productive talks and discussions over the three days of the symposium. It is an important scientific resource for those who want to understand intellectually the history of civil society in Anatolia and to direct its future.

While we have provided services for the development of our country and of our society by saying “the onus is on us” for the last fifty years in the fields of education, culture, and health, we are delighted to continue to support scientific studies and to produce new resources within the literature of cultural heritage.

I would like to thank Oğuz Tekin, director of AKMED, who shared this idea of a symposium during meetings with our managers for the 50th anniversary of the Vehbi Koç Foundation and who served as host for the symposium; I would also like to thank Christopher Roosevelt, director of ANAMED, and Engin Akyürek, director of GABAM. These directors all played a major role in the successful implementation of the symposium as well as to the teams at these centers who worked meticulously.

With this publication, I hope that we will contribute to the efforts to create a good, just, and healthy world for everyone.

Erdal Yıldırım

Introductory Comments: Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages

The papers in this volume were brought together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vehbi Koç Foundation in a tribute to its significant philanthropic achievements in Turkey. Earlier versions of the papers were first presented at a symposium bearing the same name as the volume, organized by Koç University's Suna & İnan Kiraç Research Center for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED), Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED), and Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (GABAM), and held in Antalya in March 2019. A product of the collaborative efforts of these research centers, this volume now highlights the topic of "Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages" as a permanent record of thanks to the Vehbi Koç Foundation made within its 50th year and brings to wider scholarly audiences a selection of the growing body of research on philanthropy, its roots and history, especially as witnessed by the rich philanthropic heritage of Turkey.

The first use of the word *philanthropia* (*philos* + *anthropos*) with love and humanity at its root, appears in the myth of Prometheus, recorded first in the 5th century BC. Prometheus, with his *philanthropos* nature, that is, his "human-like character," stole fire in rebellion against Zeus and gave it to humanity to save people suffering the wrath of the gods. The myth makes clear that fire was not just a flame but symbolized knowledge, skill, technology, art, and science. The acquisition of fire meant humanity's first step towards civilization. The Prometheus story is an important cornerstone, then, in the historical development of the concept of philanthropy. It can be said that the word *philanthropia* lies at the root of words such as *humanitas*, and later even humanism. The papers collected in this volume indicate further that *philanthropia* as a concept was always diverse and sometimes the topic of great debate; it indicates "love of humanity" in its literal sense and yet takes on myriad meanings, from charity and generosity to just and good citizenry, often echoing its essence as the civilizing force it was in the hands of Prometheus.

Although the origins of the word *philanthropia* date back to classical times and acts associated with it might be found in texts associated with even earlier civilizations, the earliest robust evidence of *philanthropia* in Anatolia appears in the Hellenistic period, from which time forward it can be traced clearly through and past the end of the Ottoman period. To present both case studies and the historical development of *philanthropia* in Anatolia, then, this volume was designed in three chronological sections, following the design of the earlier symposium. Each chapter is therefore presented within a chronological section, highlighting thematic and geographical themes relevant to each broad period and providing an overarching framework.

Greco-Roman Philanthropy

The first and longest section of the volume is devoted to Greco-Roman philanthropy. The chapters in this section discuss the word *philanthropia* and its conceptual meanings as well as the varied perspectives on and approaches to philanthropy recorded in the inscriptions of Hellenistic and Roman Anatolian city-states. In a pair of complimentary chapters on philanthropy in Hellenistic Anatolia, Benjamin Gray and Pierre Fröhlich

highlight the competitive nature of civic benefactions among the well-to-do, the rhetoric of good citizenry, and the moral virtues that came to be associated with civic donors. Such donors were often rewarded with showy titles and statuary that served as public advertisement, with potentially anti-democratic tendencies tempered only by an appropriate balance between generous philanthropy and civic justice. Whereas civic *euergetism*, or “good deeds,” returned immediate benefits to donors in such terms, the unconditional compassion or selfless generosity often assumed of *philanthropia* could be recognized in a civic leader’s disbursement of justice to citizens and non-citizens, alike.

Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, Christina Kokkinia, and Mustafa Adak provide both generalizing and particularizing overviews of philanthropy in Roman Anatolia. Taking the long view, Bekker-Nielsen suggests that Roman and earlier modes of civic philanthropy, including legally enforceable trusts and endowments, were eventually replaced by the Medieval Islamic waqf, following the seeming disappearance of similar instruments in the Late Antique period. With the intervening rise of the church, he suggests, previously individual philanthropic acts and obligations were institutionalized, in part overcoming problems deriving from hereditary endowments. Kokkinia presents five examples of exceptional “epigraphic dossiers,” introducing readers to Opramoas of Rhodiapolis and Diogenes of Oenoanda, among others, whose philanthropic works, if not only their voluminous epigraphic records, are now touchstones for understanding philanthropy in second-century AD Asia Minor. Among other conclusions, the inscriptional evidence demonstrates the value of and controversies surrounding honors bestowed on civic benefactors, as well as the importance of being well-connected to Roman officials. Similarly, in his quantitative analysis of honorific titles bestowed in exchange for benefactions in Pamphylia and Pisidia, Adak shows how empire-wide and intraurban competition for imperial honors among civic notables were akin to paid popularity contests and how honorific titles received in return for benefactions were ample exchange payment.

A series of chapters focusing on the benefactions of particular local notables and officials to their home cities highlights how benefactions typically enabled the construction of roads, city walls, temples, assembly buildings, theaters, and other structures of public benefit typical to classical cities. Mustafa H. Sayar cites numerous examples of private building benefactors in the cities of Cilicia Pedias as evidence of increasingly Roman ways of life. Aşkıım Özdizbay focuses on benefactors of Italic name and their particular contributions to the urban development of Perge. Recai Tekoğlu and Taner Korkut discuss benefactors at Tlos, who gave not only for theater and bath constructions, but also for disbursements to the poor of grain and money as well as for certain religious celebrations.

The section on Greco-Roman philanthropy is rounded out with contributions from Angelos Chaniotis and Matthias Haake, with quantitative analysis and synthesis of around 500 inscriptions from Aphrodisias, from the former, and an in-depth analysis of a single inscription, albeit the longest Greek inscription known, from the latter. Excluding benefactions obligatory of certain offices and thus focusing only on “voluntary” benefactions, Chaniotis demonstrates how the modern concept of anonymous philanthropy was alien to well-to-do Aphrodisian citizens, whose names were always publicly visible in recorded benefactions and whose giving might today be criticized as self-dealing, predominantly benefitting citizens, the elite, and men, as they did. Rarer benefactions for buildings, feasts, and various agonistic or showy festivals were more publicly beneficial, yet patterns of reciprocity involving benefactions for power were the norm. As if in response to this general characterization of Roman philanthropy, Haake’s discussion of the famous inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda, and its implicit criticism of self-dealing in favor of a more “need-blind” sort of philanthropy, shows how Diogenes framed philanthropy and *euergetism* in then-current Epicurean terms, as a cure to certain social diseases (namely, self-benefitting benefactions). Haake suggests that the dismantling of Diogenes’ inscriptional monument already in antiquity, albeit exactly when we do not know, may reflect a general antipathy towards its message and a preference for perpetuating traditional modes of civic beneficence.

Early Christian and Byzantine Philanthropy

The second short section of the volume is devoted to Early Christian and Byzantine philanthropy, when theological concerns gradually come to the fore and Christian perceptions of the afterlife must have played a role. Mercy and charity were worthy acts in Christian society. For this reason, one can expect that auspicious works of public benefit were eventually prioritized. The number of charities established by the state and church communities across imperial landscapes was not small, including hospitals, hospices or houses for old people (*gerokomeia*), orphanages, and guesthouses (*xenon*) for foreigners and travelers from other cities. All such institutions can be seen as manifestations of Byzantine philanthropy. They had their own laws, rules, and patterns of management; they also benefited from tax exemptions, echoing Hellenistic and Roman traditions. Unfortunately, however, data on philanthropic institutions is scarce in this period, except for those relating to the capital Constantinople, and are even scarcer for the early Christian period.

Contributions to this section come from Christian Marek, Rustam Shukurov, and Esra Güzel Erdoğan. Echoing how Hellenistic and Roman philanthropic acts might be seen as “investments” whose dividends were paid in units of authority and power, Marek shows that some new types of philanthropy in Early Christian times were explicitly non-ostentatious, providing little to no publicized returns, and involved networks of benefaction defined not by family or city administration but by new church communities. Newly emphasized variants of charitable philanthropy included leniency towards slaves and prisoners, providing alms and funerals to the poor, and other assistances to women, widows, orphans, and others in need. Nonetheless, Marek questions how different this “new” Christian philanthropy was from earlier Hellenistic and Roman precedents, given the simultaneous continuity of those traditions and documented abuses, or at least misuses, of ostensibly Christian charities for profane purposes.

Shukurov and Erdoğan’s contributions bring us deep into the Byzantine period, by which time certain variants of “Christian” philanthropy were well engrained, while others appeared anew. Among newer trends was the “civilization” of barbarians, now couched in philanthropic terms. Shukurov frames this as Byzantine *missionism*, in which barbarian captives, including widows and orphans, were schooled in Christian principles as well as the Greek language (see also Kanner, this volume), and sees it as a precursor to the Ottoman practice of *değişirme*. Erdoğan, in turn, shows that although Palaeologan monastery *typikons* frequently mentioned philanthropic goals, such as food distributions to the “poor at the gate,” and possibly also guesthouse and hospital provisions, monasteries seem to have pulled increasingly away from such public services at times, in part, perhaps, because of decreasing resources.

Medieval Islamic and Ottoman Philanthropy

The third and final chronologically defined section of the volume on Medieval Islamic and Ottoman philanthropy provides discussions of concepts and case-studies of a variety of philanthropic acts and instruments in Seljuk and Ottoman societies. Focusing on Seljuk examples, Suzan Yalman and Andrew C.S. Peacock discuss what become some of the most enduring features of Medieval and Ottoman philanthropy, namely hospitals and waqfs, or pious endowments. Citing Amy Singer’s earlier work, Yalman shows how Seljuk philanthropy was predicated on religious principles that demanded both piety and charitable deeds. She provides examples of princesses who not only gave to the poor but also established the first hospital in Seljuk Anatolia, perhaps drawing on Byzantine models. In an in-depth study of the Medieval Anatolian waqf, Peacock argues that stone-inscribed sections of waqfiyas are abridged versions of specific sections of the full documents. He argues that such waqf inscriptions, then, display the philanthropy of the endower at the same time as they emphasize the legality of the endowment, in a time in which claims to land may have been tenuous or frequently disputed.

In a chronologically and thematically diverse group of papers, Leslie Peirce, Lucienne Thys-Şenocak, and A. Hilâl Uğurlu provide numerous examples of what could constitute charitable giving and other philanthropic behavior over the course of the Ottoman period. In her analysis of colorful stories and records concerning Selim I's benefactions in and around Aintab (modern Gaziantep), Peirce shows how sultanic philanthropy could be realized in the form of respect, support, and gratitude given to holy places and people in return for previous support of military conquest. Applying her lens to royal female Ottoman philanthropists, Thys-Şenocak disdains the blatant sexism and Orientalism of recent presentations and urges a focus on the physicality of their philanthropic endowments—mosques, madrasas, fortresses, etc.—as well as more holistically sensory, phenomenological approaches. Uğurlu, in a sense, takes just such an approach in arguing that the loosening of strictures on the royal ownership of relics—in this case hair relics—served as a sort of public beneficence. The royal court's generous compensation for donations of such relics, perhaps exhibiting a willful ignorance of the dubious authenticity of many, was another new form of philanthropy found alongside more typical philanthropic acts such as providing mosques and *masjids* around the empire with excess relics (see also Ginio, this volume), similar to better known architectural benefactions.

Completing this chronological section, Efi Kanner and Eyal Ginio turn their gaze towards the end of the Ottoman period. Kanner shows how new initiatives of the Greek Orthodox community in the nineteenth century included women and the poor in more than just primary levels of schooling funded through philanthropic giving. As such, education—and the philanthropy that supported it—was valued for its civilizing effects on commonly marginalized communities. Ginio, on the other hand, shows how royal philanthropy under the constitutional regime can be seen in part as an attempt to legitimate what remained of sultanic (and caliphal) power. With a focus on activities in Edirne in the time of Mehmed Reşad, he shows how royal philanthropy looked both backward to traditional acts (*e.g.*, support of religious, educational, and health institutions, including the Ottoman Red Crescent) and forward to recipients with more nationalistic associations (*e.g.*, naval and military groups).

Giving Thanks for Giving

For rounding out this broad-reaching volume with a synthetic epilogue, we remain grateful to Amy Singer, well-known scholar of Islamic philanthropy, who contributed to the volume despite not being able to participate in the symposium. Singer deftly parses the very unifying concepts of the volume—philanthropy and Anatolia—displaying the diversity of meanings associated with both and underlining what challenges this creates for their study. She highlights trends that seem to unify Anatolian philanthropies, including long-term continuity in philanthropic activity, public display of its sponsors and recipients, and the diversity of philanthropic traditions resulting from the intermingling of cultures in and across each of the periods studied. Looking to the future, she points several ways forward for next steps in studies of philanthropy, highlighting potential impacts for understanding the practice within Anatolia and in global contexts.

Of course this meaningful epilogue could not have been compiled without the contributions of all authors, and to them we are extremely grateful for helping to bring the volume to fruition in such a short time. We hope that the chapters included here, revised and expanded significantly since the symposium, will serve not just as a record of the current states of research on philanthropy in Anatolia, but will help inspire future research of the types Singer advocates, perhaps further emphasizing the importance of, as well as continuities and divergences in, philanthropy as practiced through the ages. We are also very thankful to those who contributed significantly to the symposium, but whose work does not appear in this volume, including opening speaker Scott Redford and the participants of the lively final panel moderated by Seçil Kınay, including Filiz Bikmen, Ali Çarkoğlu, and Erdal Yıldırım, who brought the discussion of philanthropy up to the present.

The production of this volume and the earlier symposium were supported in all ways by the philanthropy of the Vehbi Koç Foundation, and for this we express our sincere gratitude to the institution, in general, as well as to its President, Erdal Yıldırım, and Special Projects Manager, Seçil Kınay. Neither symposium nor publication would have been possible without institutional support for our Koç University research centers. For this we are deeply grateful also to University President Umran İnan, Vice President for Research and Development İrşadi Aksun, and College of Social Sciences and Humanities Dean Aylın Küntay. For managing the workflow and helping to bring this volume to publication, we remain very thankful to Remziye Boyraz Seyhan and Arif Yacı, whose significant efforts went well beyond what appreciation here can repay, Gökçen Ergüven, and Rana Alpöz and Hülya Hatipođlu of Koç University Press. Many other invaluable contributions were made both in the preparation of the volume and in the realization of the symposium. With hopes for understanding that we will surely fail to name everyone here, we would like to highlight the invaluable help of Burcu Topkaya Şeneren from AKMED; Buket Coşkuner, Naz Uđurlu, and Alican Kutlay from ANAMED; Barış Altan from GABAM; and Hande Sarantopoulos, Zeynep Cengiz, Pelin Maktav, and Elif Yılmaz from Koç University's Communications Directorate.

Christopher H. Roosevelt, Ođuz Tekin, and Engin Akyürek

Philanthropy in the Form of a Hair Strand: Sacred Relics in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lands*

In 1788, the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid I (r. 1774-1789) was informed that a stone containing the Prophet's footprint (*kadem-i şerif*) was acquired from Busra Castle in Damascus and was asked for his preference regarding where the newly discovered relic should be placed.¹ One option was to build a new visitation room near the maqam of the Prophet Yahya in the Great Mosque of Damascus. The second alternative was to transfer the sacred relic to the capital and find a suitable location close to the tomb that was being constructed at the time for the sultan himself. In his written response, Abdülhamid inquired if a visitation space could be included for this relic in his own tomb. If that was not possible, he suggested that it should stay in Damascus. Eventually, a way to incorporate a visitation space to the tomb of the sultan was found and the relic was brought to the capital (fig. 1).

This back-and-forth over a sacred relic took place at a time when the Empire had recently lost Crimea to Russia and commenced another war to regain this majority Muslim territory. The sultan's failure to fulfill his duty as the defender of the faith weakened imperial legitimacy and must have affected Abdülhamid's desire to identify the relic with his own tomb. It would undoubtedly confer not only a great deal of honor to the building itself but also a much-needed religious authority to its owner.

Starting from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, many other crises posed an unprecedented threat to the imperial legitimacy of the Late Ottoman sultans: territorial losses; the French invasion of Egypt in 1798; the rise of the Wahhabi movement that advocated for the liquidation of the caliphate; and the Crimean War (1853-1856), which was triggered by a dispute over the protectorship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.²

During the long nineteenth century, the Ottoman rulers utilized various strategies to overcome the subversive effects of these constant threats on their image as the protector of Muslim lands and servant of the two noble sanctuaries (*hâdimü'l-haremeynü's-şerifeyn*). One of the most visible and influential of these strategies was the re-appropriation of sacred and most venerated places. Either in the form of restorations, constructions, or reconstructions, these projects usually coincided with major catastrophic events, most probably to influence and direct public opinion.

For example, Selim III (r. 1789-1807) rebuilt the mosque of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the spiritual patron of the capital, at a time when his religious legitimacy was challenged on various fronts, but especially when the Wahhabis obstructed the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.³ Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) rebuilt the shrine of the

* Author's note: This paper presents my preliminary findings from an ongoing research project that analyzes the interventions of nineteenth-century Ottoman sultans in sacred places and objects in the context of their political agendas. For the present work, I would like to express my gratitude to Emily Neumeier and Christiane Gruber for their support and insightful suggestions. I am also indebted to Gülşah Akçal for all her help and to Sami Yücel, who digitally visualized the data I analyzed.

1 BOA HAT 1451-25, AE. SABHI 3-245. Both of these documents are undated. However, they were dated to 6.04.1789 in the archives catalogue. The date for HAT 1451-25 should be a year prior to the other document so if the dating is correct for the AE. SABHI 3-245, which I highly doubt, it coincides to the day prior to Abdülhamid's death by a stroke of apoplexy.

2 On the birth and initial rise of the Wahhabi movement in the late eighteenth century and Ottoman-Wahhabi relations, see Al-Rasheed 2015, 117-34; DeLong-Bas 2004; Abir 1971, 185-200; Kurşun 1998.

3 See Uğurlu 2019.



Fig. 1. Tomb of Abdülhamid I, Interior view showing the visitation space designated for the Prophet's footprint (*kadem-i şerif*) (photo: A. Hilâl Uğurlu).

Prophet Muhammad (*Ravza-i Mutabbara*) in 1817, the same year the forces of Ibrahim Pasha, son of Mehmed Ali of Egypt, eliminated the Wahhabi threat under the Ottoman sultan's name.⁴ In 1839, the year when the quasi-constitutional Gülhane Rescript was proclaimed, the great mosque of Mecca underwent another extensive restoration. This time, the whole mosque was reorganized, and a fifth minaret was built and named after Abdülmecid (r. 1839-1861). These major interventions were highlighted with new inscription panels that replaced the old ones.⁵ During the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909), when the state officially adopted a pan-Islamist policy, other projects that aimed to establish a direct connection between the Ottoman capital and the sacred lands were initiated, such as a direct telegraph line between Mecca and Istanbul and the Hejaz Railway project.

Although these building activities were visible and powerful manifestations of their patron's religious authority, their direct impact was only on the lives of local inhabitants in the holy lands and the capital, especially when the means of communication and transportation was limited. The concurrent proliferation of interest in

4 Küçükaşcı and Bozkurt 2004, 281-90.

5 BOA C.EV. 444-22495.

the ownership of the Prophet Muhammad's sacred relics, however, provided the Ottoman court a new and more widespread sphere of bolstering their legitimacy.

Utilizing items associated with the Prophet Muhammad, such as his mantle (*birka*), sword (*kılıç*), standard (*sancak*), hair (*libye*), or footprints (*kadem*) to enhance the strength of imperial legitimacy was not a novel practice.⁶ Just like earlier Muslim rulers, Ottoman sultans had also claimed the sanctity of these objects in their custody. As was the case with other rituals, such as sending imperial gifts called *Surre-i Hümayun* to the Hejaz annually or attending weekly processions to the mosque for Friday prayers, importing sacred relics to Istanbul and regularly visiting them was a powerful public attestation to the piety of the sultans.⁷ During the nineteenth century, a new aspect of the rituals related to the sacred relics emerged.

This paper examines the growing market for these relics, with a particular focus on the hair strands of the Prophet (*libye-i şerif*) that intensified during the nineteenth century. I argue that the active involvement of the Ottoman court in this market created a dynamic network that established new pathways of communication between the center and the province, the sultan and his subjects, and the caliph and other Muslims from all around the world. The involvement of people from various social strata including rulers, members of the dynasty, the elite, and also individuals from every walk of life all around the Islamic—and even the non-Islamic—world, made this market a viable sphere of legitimacy.

In 1852, Saraylı Hoş Eda Hanım—a manumitted female palace slave—gave a petition to the court. After stating that her house, located close to her business, was under construction, she asked for permission to build an additional room to house a strand of the Prophet's hair that she had in her possession. After a lengthy correspondence regarding the appropriateness of this request and its compliance with the newly implemented building code of 1848 (*Ebniye Nizamnamesi*), a permission was finally issued.⁸ The private ownership of these kinds of relics, especially the hair strands of the Prophet, was not unprecedented.⁹ However, the proliferation of custom-built rooms incorporated into private residences was a new phenomenon.

In his work titled “Ottoman Traditions, Ceremonies, and Expressions,” first published in 1912, Abdülaziz Bey writes that in the mansions of dignitaries (*ekabir konakları*), there usually existed a chamber called *libye-i saadet dairesi* to keep the Prophet's hair in possession. This chamber would have a special entrance and would consist of an entrance hall, a room converted to a masjid, and a special room just to house the sacred relic.¹⁰ He not only gives spatial details but also devotes a whole section to explain the visitation rituals in these mansions. According to his account, the hair strands of the Prophet were placed either in a specially hand-crafted cylindrical glass container or a carnelian box with a golden frame. This container would be wrapped with 40 layers of precious textiles and kept in a drawer that was put into another—specially made—closet. Visitation of the relic was limited to the holy nights. During such times, the special room dedicated to the relic would be decorated with incense burners and oil lamps. The household and their guests would first perform the night prayer (*yatsı*) in this

6 On the sacreds relics of the Prophet Muhammad that were kept in the Topkapı Palace, see Aydın 2004 and Beyoğlu 2000, 36-44. For a contextual overview of the Prophet Muhammad's relics, see Gruber 2019, 269-85.

7 Karateke 2005, 111-29.

8 For more information on building regulations in Istanbul, see Çelik 1986, 49-82.

9 In many cases establishing a foundation and donating these sacred properties in a public religious building was seen as a pious, philanthropic act. It was a continuing tradition. Just like Mustafa Agha (Ağa), chief coffee maker of the sultan in 1760, who established a foundation and donated the *libye-i saadet* to be kept in the imperial pantry, more than a century later, in 1897, another foundation was established by Ahmed Nureddin and Selahaddin brothers, both clerical officials. This time the relic was donated to the newly built mosque in Darülaceze. Both owners probably were expecting to acquire merit in the sight of God. However, it could also be considered as a means to gain recognition or to win the favor of the court. (For the *wakıfname* of Mustafa Agha, see BOA TSMA.d. 6950. For correspondence regarding the donation of Ahmed Nureddin and Selahaddin brothers see BOA İ.HUS 62-69, A.MKT.MHM. 706-14, Y.A.HUS. 382-68).

10 Abdülaziz Bey 1995. The full title of the original, published in 1912 is “*Adat ve Merasim-i Kadîme, Tabirât ve Muamelat-ı Kavmiyye-i Osmaniyye*”.

room and after the prayer everyone would stand up forming a line and chant salutes to the Prophet.¹¹ Meanwhile, the owner of the house would bring the relic into the middle of the room, carefully and slowly uncover the 40 layers of textile, and finally place it on a small table that was covered with a fine cloth. After every individual that attended this ceremony kissed the relic in its glass container and paid their respects, it was put back in place.

Abdülaziz Bey's accounts demonstrate the normalization of this practice less than fifty years after Saraylı Hoş Eda Hanım's petition. Within this time period, sacred relics, once associated mostly with the benevolence and piety of the sultans, had obviously become an integral part of the daily lives of a larger community towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In another account, Aşçı Dede Halil İbrahim, an Ottoman bureaucrat and a devout dervish of the Halidiyye Sufi order, recounts a similar ceremonial visitation ritual, but this time in a provincial setting.¹² According to the memoir of Halil İbrahim, his Sheikh, Fehmi, returns to Erzincan from a long journey. During this journey, the sheikh met the acting head of the Office of the Imperial Divan (*Beylikçi*) Abdullah Niyazi Efendi in Istanbul.¹³ After becoming devoted to the sheikh, Abdullah Niyazi Efendi donated a sacred hair strand of the Prophet to his lodge, and Sheikh Fehmi brought this sacred relic back to Erzincan. After the sheikh's arrival, the previously started construction of a lodge building was completed.

Aşçı Dede describes the special place that was built specifically for the relic:

A place was made, like a little dome with glass sides, in the center of the mosque and on the ceiling; and the hair was put in a coffer (*sanduka*) made of iron and placed in its special place in the dome with a big long ladder. When it became necessary to take it down, this poor soul would put the ladder in place, take the coffer on my head, and bring it down. In the same way, I would go back up and put it back in its place.¹⁴

In 1867, the opening ceremony of the lodge was probably intentionally organized on the same day with the birthday of the Prophet (*mevlid-i şerif*). Since it was accustomed to visit relics on special religious nights, it was an opportunity to make the holy relic of the newly built lodge available for public veneration. Many people were invited to this gathering: dervishes, high state officials, and military officers. The wide social spectrum of the invitees reflects the complex social structure that made the mobility of these relics possible. That also explains how a *libye-i şerif* could end up in Erzincan as a present from a foreign ministry state official in the capital to a provincial sheikh.

Unlike the popular sheikh from Erzincan, not all the *libye-i saadet* owners were capable of protecting such relics, mostly due to their poverty. In such cases, many people sought ways to hand it over to the court's protection. Although this transfer of guardianship included a significant transaction, it was usually presented as a subject's donation to the court, in return receiving the sultan's largesse. For instance, a register book dated to 1810 specifies the amount bestowed to a woman who donated a *libye-i şerif* to the court as 500 *kuruş*.¹⁵ To put that amount into perspective, the same register book records the price paid for paintings commissioned for a shadow theatre show (*haya*) as only 25 *kuruş*. Comparing these two amounts reveals the extent of the court's generosity and makes it more understandable why in almost every volume of the monthly register at least one or more donations of *libye-i şerif* is recorded.¹⁶

11 Abdülaziz Bey describes these as *Salât ü Selam*. However, this must be *Salat-ı Ümmiye* that was composed by the reknown Ottoman musician Buhurizade Mustafa İtri (d. 1711). This prayer that saluted the Prophet was chanted during the visitation of Prophet Muhammad's relics such as his mantle, his foot prints, or his hair strands in religious days and ceremonies.

12 Findley 1989, 186; Findley 1983, 129-44.

13 *Beylikçi*: A foreign ministry officer, acting head of the office of the Imperial Divan.

14 Findley 1983, 129-44.

15 BOA TSMA.d. 2456: 0028.

16 In many of these monthly-held register books of the nineteenth century, one can come across accounts of this kind of reception of sacred gifts.

Another case of seeking imperial support reveals a more implicit aspect of this market: the question of *authenticity*.¹⁷ In 1884, three petitioners with seven sacred relics supposedly containing four mantles that belonged to Ali, Hasan, Hüseyin, and Üveys el Karani, a belt, a turban (*tac*), and a hair strand of the Prophet in their possession, gave a petition to the court.¹⁸ They claimed to have these relics in their family's possession since the seventeenth century and said that they kept them in a separate room near their house until this room was destroyed in the great fire of Hocapaşa in 1826. After the fire, their father had submitted a petition seeking imperial help, and the sultan at that time, Mahmud II ordered these relics to be placed in the Valide-i Atik Mosque in Üsküdar. The petition of the three sons from 1884 raised concerns for the safety of the relics and requested them to be placed in the royal treasury. Their concern might have been genuine, as theft of books and holy relics from mosques was not unheard of.¹⁹ However, it is also entirely possible that the brothers were seeking the monetary compensation that they expected to receive in return for their sacred donation.

The genuine sacredness of this donation though, was another issue. After a thorough examination of the relics, the officials found no sign indicating their originality.²⁰ However, they concluded that these objects should be kept within the mosque and continued to be visited and venerated by Muslims as if they belonged to the holy personages, since “deeds are only rewarded according to their intentions.”²¹

It is striking that although the originality of the relics that were presented to the court was questioned, no matter the conclusion, they were received and almost always rewarded with a considerable amount of money. This was related to the court's positioning of itself as the main authority within this wider network. The Ottoman sultan's claim to be the universal caliph made it necessary to control the relic market.²² The increased transfer of various relics to the capital during the long nineteenth century was central to this claim. These accumulated relics were not only kept in the imperial repository but disseminated to various locations within the capital. Most of the imperial mosques and tombs were given a *libhye-i saadet* to infuse their sacredness to these imperial buildings. For example, in September 1821, two hair strands of the Prophet were bought and placed in the tombs of Abdülhamid I and Nakşidil Valide Sultan (d. 1817).²³ In 1835, another one was located in the Nusretiye Mosque and another two were placed in Asariye and Büyük Çırağan mosques in 1851.²⁴ These relics were opened to the visitation of Muslims during festive commemorations of the Prophet or other religious holidays as a sign of the sultan's piety and benevolence.

In 1808, Kadı Şevki Hasan Efendi, the chamberlain to the governor of the Mora, requested the *libhye-i şerif* that was found among the confiscated estate of the recently executed Yusuf Agha, a renowned Nizam-ı Cedid figure.²⁵ Stating that his home town, Yanya, was a populous large city, he implied the legitimacy of his request and added that if he was given the honor, he would build a new visitation place for this sacred relic near his

17 The question of authenticity was also at stake for other kinds of relics such as the Prophets footprints or teeth. See Gruber 2013, 297-305.

18 BOA Y.MTV. 16-65, p. 1

19 For theft of a Quran and several *libhye-i şerifs* from various mosques in the capital, see BOA DH.MKT.1704-128, DH.MKT. 1715-67, Y.A.HUS. 271-90.

20 BOA Y.MTV. 16-65, p. 2.

21 Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 5, Book 58, Hadith 238 and Sahih Muslim Vol. 5, Book 20, Hadith 4692.

22 Two types of ownership and their demands, preferences, and needs defined the relic market: private and imperial. Private owners either established charitable foundations (ar. waqf, tr. *vakıf*) and placed these relics in an appropriate building or kept them in their possessions. In many cases establishing a foundation and donating these sacred properties in a public religious building was seen as a pious, philanthropic act. It was a continuing tradition. Just like Mustafa Agha, chief coffee maker of the sultan in 1760, who established a foundation and donated the *libhye-i saadet* to be kept in the imperial pantry (TSM.A.d. 6950), more than a century later, in 1897, another foundation was established by Ahmed Nureddin and Selahaddin brothers, both clerical officials (İ.HUS 62-69). This time the relic was donated to the newly built mosque in *Darülaceze* (the hospice that was established in 1896 by Abdülhamid II). Both owners probably were expecting to acquire merit in the sight of God. However, it could also be considered as a means to gain recognition or to win the favor of the court.

23 BOA HAT 1557-48.

24 BOA HAT 1591-70.

25 BOA C.EV. 6372.

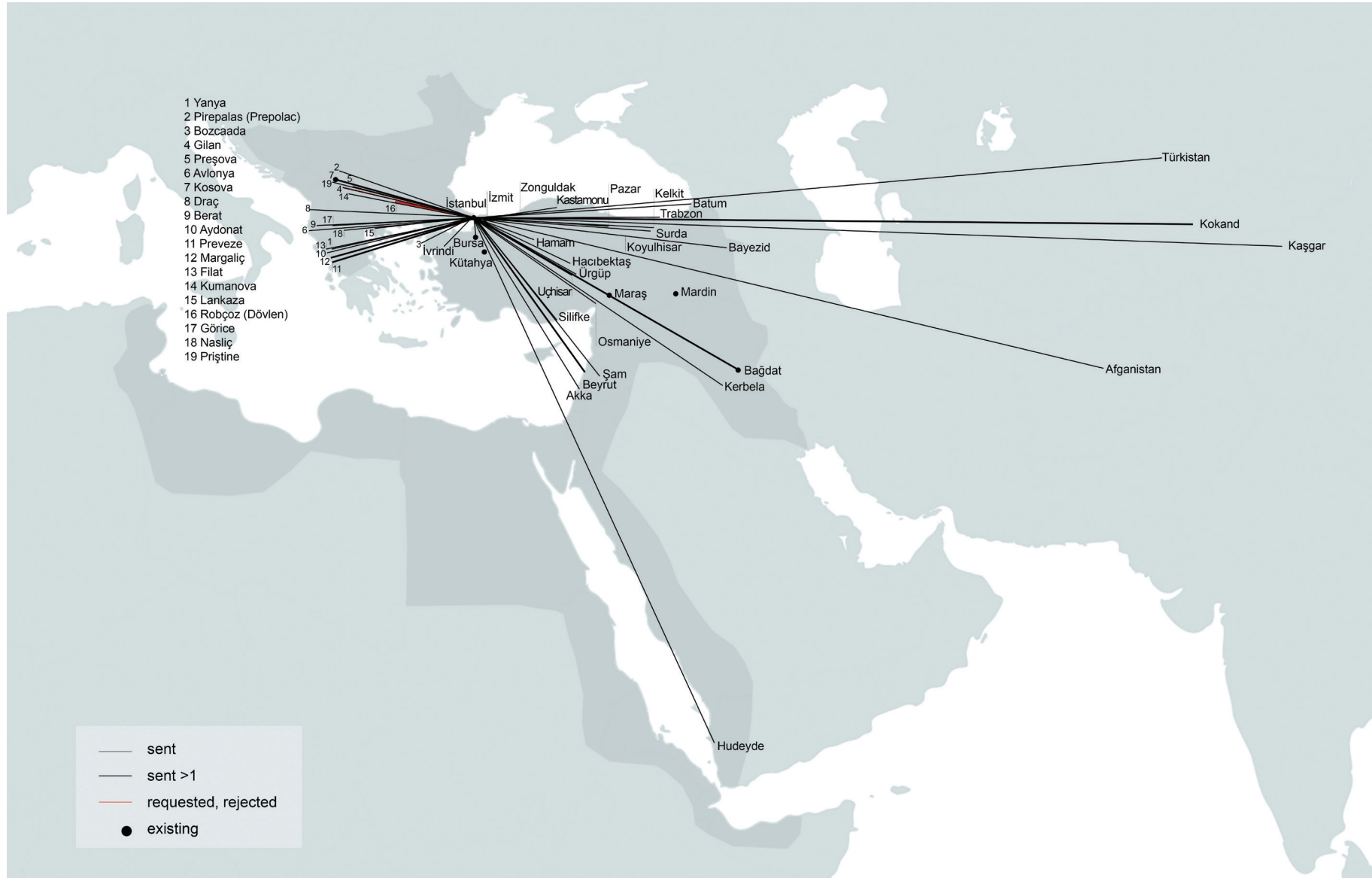


Fig. 2. Map showing the requested and sent sacred hair strands of the Prophet from the capital (drawn by: Sami Yücel).

mosque. Within a few decades such requests multiplied and in the last quarter of the century, coinciding with the reign of Abdülhamid II, the demand from all over and even outside the empire boomed (fig. 2).

The court started to receive innumerable requests of “a single strand of hair of the Prophet.” Some of these requests were for already “sacred” places such as the maqams of prophets or the tombs of holy personages.²⁶ It was as if the governmental officials were trying to maximize the sacredness of these places by incorporating an additional holy relic that was identified with the generosity of the caliph. In this way, although indirectly, they were strengthening the bond between the sultan and his subjects in the furthest corners of the empire.

Moreover, the court was sending relics to sacred places that were contested by the Sunnis and Shi’is, namely the Ottomans and Qajars. The *libye-i saadet* sent to Karbala in 1892 to be placed in the tomb of Imam Husayn, the martyred grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was one such example.²⁷ In the decade that followed, another relic was sent to the tomb of the seventh Shi’a Imam Musa al-Kadhim (d. 799), the fifth-generation grandson of the Prophet. Along with these holy relics, the Ottoman court dispatched custodians for their protection and provided for their upkeep. By means of these holy gifts and services, the Ottomans stressed, strengthened and legitimized their claims over these sacred places. In this way, they also aimed to initially gain the gratitude and later the loyalty of the local audience.

Another type of frequent request came from the local people (*ahali*) themselves. In many cases, after constructing small mosques—or rather masjids—local communities would request a sacred relic and the court tried to respond to every single request from Kashgar to Pristina, from Beirut to Trabzon. For example, when the local people from the nearby villages built a mosque in Pirepalas—a large village in the Balkans, in the Sanjak of Pristina—in 1892, they requested a sacred hair strand of the Prophet from Istanbul. The court not only sent a *libye-i şerif* but also a Ka’ba cover (*settare-i şerif*) to wrap the sacred relic.²⁸

By the end of 1901, local people of Gilan and Preşeva—two other small towns (*kaza*) in the Balkans very close to Pirepalas—also requested two *libye-i şerifs* for their mosques. However, this time, the request was rejected due to the lack of *libye-i şerifs* in the repository of the charitable foundations (tr. *evkaf*).²⁹

In the next three years, the court must have overcome this temporary lack of relics in their possession, perhaps by becoming more active in the wider network, accepting more relic donations from private owners, and buying or even confiscating them.³⁰ Between 1904 and 1909, the court sent *libye-i şerifs* to various mosques or lodges in the provinces commissioned by Abdülhamid II himself, such as the Hamidiye mosques in Osmaniye, Silifke, lower Domaniç (close to the Serbian border of Pristina), or the Hamidiye Mevlevi lodge in Maraş. For this period, overall, I could trace eleven relics that were sent from the court. Between the deposition of Abdülhamid II in 1909 and 1911, this number tripled. At least thirty-three relics were sent to various small provincial mosques in response to requests of the people (*ahali*).³¹ Most petitions contained the note “urgent,” suggesting a certain crisis was taking place that could be alleviated by these relics. In 1912, the court started rejecting the requests it received. Although their stated reason was the decrease in the number of sacred hair strands in the imperial repository, the concurrent start of the First Balkan War might be another explanation.

26 One example of that might be the *libye-i şerif* that was sent to the lodge of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli in Nevşehir. BOA BEO 896-67197.

27 BOA Y.PRK.AZJ. 23-110.

28 BOA Y.PRK.AZJ. 22-112.

29 It is not known if this was really the case and the number of sacred hair strands in the court’s possession was really depleted, or if the court did not want to send sacred relics to these specific locations because of the escalating tension in the region. I was not able to locate any official requests or responses from the court for the next two years, between 1902 and 1904.

30 In 1892, a *libye-i şerif* that major of Mardin had under his possession, was taken away by the state, due to his “*inappropriate manners*”. Although it is a slightly previous case, it demonstrates that the court was in control of the private owners of the relics and confiscation was a possibility.

31 The trip of Sultan Mehmed Reşad (r. 1909-1918) to the Balkan lands of the empire in 1911, with an underlying mission to reinforce the loyalty of these lands to the empire, might have a role in this sudden increase. (At least 15 of the 33 *libye-i şerifs* that were sent to the provincial mosques between 1909 and 1911, were sent to various mosques in the Balkans.) I am currently engaged in a research that aims to explicate this shift.

The increase in the number of venues where people could visit the Prophet's relics, both in the capital and the provinces, brought about a feeling of gratitude which was manifested in appreciation letters sent to the court. In almost all letters, the caliphal status of the sultan was stressed, and their prayers embodied the local peoples' appreciation.³² For instance, after the sultan granted a *libye-i şerif* to the tomb of Imam Husayn, the people of Karbala expressed their indebtedness to their caliph in an official letter. The court received many such letters from within and outside the Ottoman domains and every letter contained praises and prayers to the caliph. They predominantly emphasized the caliphal titlature of the sultan. Some of these caliphal sacred gifts and their reception by local communities even found their way to European newspapers, such as a case in Aleppo which reflected the local people's excitement and rejoicing.³³ These letters and news all emphasized the caliphal role of the Ottoman sultan.

During the long nineteenth century, the claim to universal caliphate gradually gained more importance and became an important political tool that the Ottoman sultans utilized both within the empire and in the international arena. One of the most tangible signs of the caliphate was manifested with the right to possess, exhibit, and distribute prophetic vestigia and other sacred relics. The court's active role and involvement in this sacred network established around various relics of the Prophet Muhammad not only propagated the piety and philanthropy of the sultans but also helped to reinforce and reproduce their caliphal image.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

Primary source abbreviations

A.MKT.MHM.	Sadâret Mektubî Kalemi Mühimme Kalemi
AE. SABHI	Ali Emiri Tasnifi, Sultan Abdülhamid I
BEO	Babiali Evrak Odası Evrakı
BOA	T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri
C.EV.	Cevdet Tasnifi, Evkaf
DH.İD.	Dahiliye Nezareti İdare
DH.MKT.	Dahiliye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi
HAT	Hatt-ı Hümayun
HR.İD.	Hariciye Nezareti İdare
İ.HUS	İrade Hususi
TSMA.d.	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi. Defter
Y.A.HUS.	Yıldız Arşiv Tasnifi, Sadâret Hususî Maruzâtı
Y.MTV.	Yıldız Arşiv Tasnifi, Mütenevvi Maruzât
Y.PRK.AZJ.	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Arzuhal Jurnal

Primary sources

Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 5, Book 58.

Sahih Muslim, Vol. 5, Book 20.

32 BOA Y.PRK.AZJ. 23-110; Y.PRK.AZJ. 55-75; HR.İD. 103-69; DH.İD. 112-9; DH.MKT. 920-50; BEO 2295-172089; BEO 4198-314780.

33 Buckingham Express, Saturday 05 April 1890, p. 2. The same news, with the same text, was published in many other British newspapers as well.

Secondary sources

- Abdülaziz Bey. 1995. *Osmanlı Adet Merasim ve Tabirleri Toplum Hayatı*, edited by K. Arısan and D. Arısan Günay. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.
- Abir, M. 1971. "The 'Arab Rebellion' of Amir Ghālib of Mecca (1788-1813)." *Middle Eastern Studies* 7/2:185-200.
- Al-Rasheed, M. 2015. "The Wahhabis and the Ottoman Caliphate: The Memory of Historical Antagonism." In *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts*, edited by M. Al-Rasheed, C. Kersten, and M. Shterin, 117-134. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Aydın, H. 2004. *The Sacred Trusts: Pavilion of the Sacred Relics, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul*. Somerset, NJ: Light.
- Beyoğlu, S. 2000. "The Ottomans and the Islamic Sacred Relics." In *The Great Ottoman Turkish Civilization*. Vol. 4, edited by K. Çiçek, 36-44. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye.
- Çelik, Z. 1986. *The Remaking of Istanbul Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- DeLong-Bas, N.J. 2004. *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Findley, C.V. 1989. *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Findley, C.V. 1983. "Social Dimensions of the Dervish Life, as Seen in the Memoirs of Aşçı Dede Halil İbrahim." In *Economie et sociétés dans l'Empire ottoman (fin du XVIIIe-début du XXe siècle)*, edited by J.L. Bacque-Grammont and P. Dumont, 129-44. Paris: CNRS.
- Gruber, C. 2013. "The Prophet Muhammad's Footprint." In *Ferdowsi, the Mongols, and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia. Studies in honour of Charles Melville*, edited by R. Hillenbrand, A. Peacock, and F. Abdullaeva, 297-305. International library of Iranian studies 45. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Gruber, C. 2019. *The Praiseworthy One: The Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Texts and Images*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Karateke, H. 2005. "Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for the Ottoman Sultan." In *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, edited by H.T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski, 111-29. Leiden: Brill.
- Küçükbaşçı, M.S., and N. Bozkurt. 2004. "Mescid-i Nebevi." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 29:281-290. Ankara: TDV Yayınları.
- Kurşun, Z. 1998. *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti: Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı*. Ankara: TTK.
- Uğurlu, A.H. 2019. "The Role of 'Sacreds' in the Political Agenda of the 'Reformist' Ottoman Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807)." In *Sacred Spaces and Urban Networks*, edited by S. Yalman and A.H. Uğurlu, 105-18. 11th International ANAMED Annual Symposium. Istanbul: ANAMED.