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Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire

Erdem Sönmez* 

Department of History, Social Sciences University of Ankara

*Corresponding author. E-mail: erdem.sonmez@asbu.edu.tr

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Although the establishment of history as a discipline has been examined extensively for European, North American, and, partly, Asian contexts, the Ottoman case still constitutes a neglected issue in the study of the global history of historiography and, in broader terms, of modern intellectual history. The present article focuses on the late Ottoman intellectual world and explores the making of the historical discipline in the Ottoman Empire. It argues that this transformation was the consequence of a number of interrelated factors, such as the turbulent developments in late Ottoman politics, Ottoman(ist) efforts to forge a “national” historical master narrative after the 1908 Constitutional Revolution, and Ottoman historians’ engagement with European historical thought and writing. Besides examining these factors and the ways in which they interacted, the article deals in detail with the works of late Ottoman historians to probe the Ottoman case of the professionalization of history.

In early 1916, an Ottoman graduate of the Sorbonne named Kâzım Şinâsi (Dersan) wrote a book review for the inaugural issue of the *Journal of the Faculty of Literature of Dârülfünûn*. In this review, the young scholar, who was then serving as the teaching assistant for the historical methodology course given at Dârülfünûn (later Istanbul University), examined the recently published critical edition of the fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicle *Âşıkpaşazâde’s History*. Commissioned jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ottoman Historical Society, this work was also reviewed a few months earlier by another historian, Mehmed Ârif, in a different newly founded scholarly periodical, the *Journal of National Studies (Millî Tettebular Mecmûası)*. In their reviews, both Kâzım Şinâsi and Mehmed Ârif underlined the importance of editing the sources of Ottoman history for the development of scholarly historical writing in the Ottoman Empire and welcomed the publication of *Âşıkpaşazâde’s History*. The reviewers, nevertheless, also pointed out a number of shortcomings that the work suffered from due to the “neglect of certain scholarly rules and principles which have been followed ... by European historians ... in the preparation of critical editions.”¹ Kâzım

¹Kâzım Şinâsi, “Tarihî Âsardan: Âşıkpaşazâde Tarihi,” *Dârülfünûn Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmûası* 1/1 (1332 (1916)), 114–15; A. [Mehmed Ârif], “Kitâbiyyat: Âşıkpaşazâde Tarihi,” *Millî Tettebular Mecmûası* 2/4 (1331 (1915)), 171–90.

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Şinâsi, in the end, suggested two different publications for such historical accounts: one, edited according to the aforementioned rules and principles, to be used by the *monde savant*; and the other, a simplified version of the manuscript, prepared for the utilization of the *grand public*.²

These two reviews written in the 1910s and the lively scholarly milieu surrounding them point to a long list of novel developments in the Ottoman intellectual/academic realm: a historical methodology course at the university, a national historical association commissioning source publications, emerging academic journals with book review sections, historians preparing critical editions and reviewing recent works, a particular emphasis on contemporary methodological principles of historical scholarship, and, last but not least, a clear distinction between learned people and laypeople. All these, it is safe to say, constitute concrete manifestations of a significant intellectual–scholarly transformation: the institutionalization and professionalization of history as a discipline.

Indeed, history and historical writing did undergo such a major transformation in the Ottoman Empire in its final decades. Following the Young Turk Constitutional Revolution of 1908, which raised great hopes for the future of the Ottoman state and society, the Ottomans ironically engaged more closely with history and their pasts. This engagement was ironic because while the political vision of the Young Turks was future-oriented, its realization, according to them, was tightly dependent on the creation of a sense of a shared past among the inhabitants of the empire. These considerations revealed themselves in various forms throughout the constitutional period of 1908–18: sometimes in parliamentary decisions for the identification of the precise founding date of the Ottoman state,³ sometimes in official celebrations organized for the commemoration of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople—the capital of the empire⁴—and sometimes in the naming of the newly purchased battleships after the earliest and (supposedly) greatest sultans, such as Osman I, Mehmed II, and Selim I.⁵

Of all these new history-related efforts and acts, the most ambitious and influential was the launching of a project for the writing of an extensive history of the Ottoman Empire. Aiming to construct a historical master narrative for the “imagined” Ottoman nation, this major project and the historiographical campaign that had engendered it soon led to the establishment, for the first time in the empire, of historical associations, journals, archival institutions, and a history department at the university, all of which constitute the essential building blocks of the modern historical profession. These institutions and the new intellectual/academic milieu they created substantially affected the ways in which the Ottomans engaged with history, which, in time, began to be considered a scholarly activity—or, put more clearly, a *Wissenschaft*—whose task was to reach factual knowledge about the past and describe it “wie es eigentlich gewesen”

²Kâzım Şinâsi, “Aşıkpaşazâde Tarihi,” 115.

³*Meclis-i Mebûsân Zabıt Cerideleri* (Minutes of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies), Term 1, Year of Session 1, vol. 1 (26 Jan. 1909), 320–23.

⁴Gavin D. Brockett, “When Ottomans Become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and Its Contribution to World History,” *American Historical Review* 119/2 (2014), 399–433, at 408–9.

⁵Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans’ Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, 2018), 70–73.

(“as it really was”). Although the collapse of the Ottoman state in the aftermath of World War I disrupted all these historiographical efforts and projects, history had already entered into the process of professionalization and disciplinization in the Ottoman realm.

Tracing the evolution of late Ottoman historiographical practices, the present paper explores how the Ottomans turned history into a discipline in the early twentieth century. In this effort, the paper builds on and aims to contribute to the recent scholarship that expands the scope of the history of historiography beyond Western European and North American contexts. More explicitly, although the history of historiography has developed over the past thirty years into an increasingly established field within general history writing, its focus was long centered exclusively on Western European and North American contexts. Therefore historiographies and history-related practices in other parts of the world have until recently been either neglected or paid only scant attention.⁶ This situation has begun to change from the late 2000s onwards, partly in connection with the rise of global history and of “the desire to understand the intellectual traditions of non-Western societies and the various itineraries of text and thought.”⁷ Accordingly, the scope of the field has been significantly broadened with the appearance of both wide-ranging studies that examine global practices of historiography in a comparative manner and seminal monographs that trace the evolution of historical writing in specific non-Western cases. Besides revealing the historiographical traditions and transformations of the cases they engage with, these monographs also incorporate the latter into the wider framework of the history of historiography and made us aware of transnational intellectual interactions and of the connectedness and simultaneity of historiographical practices in regions far apart.⁸

Inspired by this flourishing literature, the present paper attends to the Ottoman case of the professionalization of history, which still constitutes a neglected issue in

⁶For a detailed discussion see Matthias Middell, “From Professionalisation to Global Ambitions: The History of History Writing at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century,” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 1/1 (2013), 87–99; Q. Edward Wang, “History of Western Historiography: The Views from China—Introduction,” *Chinese Studies in History* 53/2 (2020), 73–8.

⁷Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 2009), 17. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, “A Global and Multicultural ‘Discipline’ of History?,” *History and Theory* 45/1 (2006), 101–9.

⁸For some recent examples of the literature on the global history of historiography see Stefan Berger, ed., *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007); Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow, 2008); Susana Carvalho and François Gemenne, eds., *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and Representations* (Basingstoke, 2009); Daniel Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge, 2011); Woolf, *A Concise History of Historiography: Global Historiography from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2019). For some recent works that trace the evolution of historical writing in specific non-Western cases see Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past*; Derek R. Peterson and Giacomo Macola, eds., *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, OH, 2009); Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, 2010); Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow, eds., *Transforming History: The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong, 2012); Jörg Matthias Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia: Globalization and the State in the Middle East* (London, 2014); Farzin Vejdani, *Making History in Iran: Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture* (Stanford, 2015); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth* (Chicago, 2015); Rosie Bsbeer, *Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia* (Stanford, 2020).

the study of the global history of historiography and, in broader terms, of modern intellectual history.⁹ Taking place in a highly particular context, which was framed by a constitutional revolution and the collapse of a six-century-long empire that had long been regarded by Western powers as “the sick man of Europe,” the Ottoman case represents one of the most striking examples of the professionalization and disciplinization of history. In addition to being an outcome of the efforts to rejuvenate the old multiethnic empire, it also illustrates the uses and redefinitions of the past in a profoundly turbulent and equally transformative present, as well as the course of historical writing from a literary activity to a scholarly practice.

As the course of late Ottoman historiography was directly affected by the developments in late Ottoman politics, I first deal with this relationship and survey the changing political perceptions, and increasing public uses, of history in the Ottoman Empire from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Next, I focus on the historiographical campaign that was fueled by the ideals of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution and examine how the Ottomans established, first, a national historical association to write a comprehensive history of their empire, and then other institutions of modern historiography in an era of what can be called the “golden age of historical professionalism.”¹⁰ The third part concentrates on the changes in the Ottomans’ understanding of historiography and analyzes the ways in which they sought to turn the historian’s craft into a scientific mode of inquiry. One of the striking points made in this part is that Ottoman historical writing experienced the rise of methodological interest under the powerful influence of French historiography, so much so that some local observers would later identify this “Rankean moment” in late Ottoman historical writing with the name not of Leopold von Ranke or his German disciples, but of the renowned French historian Charles Seignobos.¹¹ Lastly, the article concludes with a brief epilogue on such peculiarities of the Ottoman case as well as their impact on the evolution of historical scholarship in post-Ottoman Turkey.

The uses of history in the late Ottoman Empire

As in many parts of Europe, the Americas, and Asia, historical writing and thinking underwent significant changes in the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century. Closely connected to the transformation of the Ottoman state and society, and of the relationship between them, these changes began to surface in parallel

⁹One exception in this regard is Ferdan Ergut’s 2015 article, which examines the creation of an institutional infrastructure for historical writing in the Ottoman Empire. The present article builds largely on Ergut’s significant work, but besides focusing on the establishment of this infrastructure, it deals in a more detailed manner with the activities of the institutions and historians operating within it. See Ferdan Ergut, “Institutionalization of History in the Ottoman Empire,” *Turkish Studies* 16/2 (2015), 219–39.

¹⁰See Simon Larsson, “Temporalization and Professionalization: The Case of Lauritz Weibull and the Swedish Discipline of History,” in Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi, and Marja Jalava, eds., *Regimes of Historicity in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945: Discourses of Identity and Temporality* (Basingstoke, 2014), 101–15, at 103.

¹¹I borrow the term “Rankean moment” from Michael Facius’s fascinating article. See Michael Facius, “A Rankean Moment in Japan: The Persona of the Historian and the Globalization of the Discipline, c.1900,” *Modern Intellectual History* 19/1 (2022), 217–40.

with the formulation of an imperial state ideology by Ottoman governments that had been implementing ambitious projects to construct an effective central authority since the beginning of the century. In their search for the reproduction and transmission of the newly created state ideology called Ottomanism, which was expected to absorb manifold loyalties of the heterogeneous residents of the empire and turn them into—at least formally—equal citizens, Ottoman authorities soon realized the critical role that history could play in this effort. Accordingly, they set out to look for the public uses and applications of history, which had hitherto been regarded by the Ottomans simply as the chronological recording of dynastic events or as an inferior branch of belles lettres that was produced by—and for—courtly figures to instruct the moral contour of past incidents. Thus the middle decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a gradual shift in the Ottomans' traditional perceptions of history as well as a notable rise in the importance attributed to it in the Ottoman realm. These two interrelated developments became more apparent with the emergence of a process of what can be called historiographical expansion in the same period, a process which took place in such forms as the introduction of history courses into school curricula, publication of scores of historical works, and taking the initial steps for the foundation of an archival institution.¹²

Despite all these, however, it was the 1908 Young Turk Revolution that pushed Ottoman historiography into the path of professionalization and institutionalization. This transformative moment came after a tumultuous period during which the first Ottoman constitutional regime had been established and suspended, the inclusivism of the multireligious Ottomanism had been replaced by an Islamist political discourse, and the liberal/constitutionalist opposition against the authoritarian policies of Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909) had intensified. Within this environment, historical writing became an intellectual battleground between the Hamidian rule and its liberal/constitutionalist opponents, who mostly belonged to the Young Ottoman and Young Turk movements. Aiming to legitimize—and also popularize—their constitutionalist opposition with reference to Ottoman history, these intellectuals engaged closely with historical writing and made a highly political and romanticized reading of the Ottoman past, which, according to them, was replete with strong proto-constitutionalist groups that restricted the power of the Sultan and ensured the existence and continuation of a just order.¹³ The Hamidian rule, on the other hand, attempted to bring this critically

¹²For the details of this process and nineteenth-century Ottoman historical writing see Erdem Sönmez, "Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1908)," *Turkish Historical Review* 13/1 (2022), forthcoming. For nineteenth-century Ottoman historical writing see also Hakan T. Karateke, "The Challenge of Periodization: New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography," in H. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı, eds., *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (Bloomington, 2013), 129–54.

¹³See Nâmk Kemâl, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1305 (1888)); Kemâl, "Ve Şâvirhum fi'l-emr," *Hürriyet* 4 (20 July 1868), 1–4; Nâmk Kemâl, "Usûl-i Meşveret Hakkında," *Hürriyet* 12 (14 September 1868), 5–8; Ahmed Rıza, *Vazîfe ve Mesûliyet: Birinci Cüz, Mukaddime, Padişah, Şehzadeler* (Mısır, 1320 (1904)); Ahmed Rıza, *Vazîfe ve Mesûliyet: İkinci Cüz, Asker* (Mısır, 1323 (1907)). See also Erdem Sönmez, "From *Kanun-ı Kadim* (Ancient Law) to *Umumun Kuvveti* (Force of People): Historical Context of the Ottoman Constitutionalism," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52/1 (2016), 116–34.

transforming field under control by meticulously monitoring the publication and circulation of historical works within the empire.¹⁴ It also shifted the historical discourse produced and disseminated by the state toward a more authoritarian and Islamic direction, which regarded the Ottoman Empire as a chapter within the history of Islam, showed little interest in examining the Ottoman past in connection with European history, and never spoke of the events that could tarnish the desired image of the Sultan, such as the internal crises, revolts, and depositions in Ottoman history.¹⁵

It was within this context that the Young Turk Constitutional Revolution of 1908 triggered a profound transformation in Ottoman historical writing that would result in its institutionalization and professionalization as a discipline. Having emerged and developed as a reaction against Hamidian absolutism, the Young Turk movement reestablished the constitutional and parliamentary regime following the revolution. The Young Turks also discarded Hamidian Islamism, which was essentially exclusionary toward non-Muslims, and reinstated Ottomanism as the dominant ideology in the political and public spheres, hoping to rejuvenate the weakening—and for some, disintegrating—empire by eroding intercommunal divisions within it and focusing the loyalty of all subjects/citizens on the so-called common Ottoman fatherland.¹⁶ In parallel with the rise of propaganda emphasizing the unity and equality of all Ottomans, Young Turk intellectuals and educators underlined the necessity of aligning the official historical discourse with their political aim of rendering the people more receptive to Ottomanist policy and constitutionalist ideas. According to them, creating a sense of a shared past among the Ottomans would be a key factor in strengthening the feelings of Ottoman nationhood and patriotism, and thus it was crucial to reshape history education, which had been severely trimmed, substantially Islamized, and strictly controlled during the Hamidian era.¹⁷

The Young Turks were not late in taking some steps in that direction. Shortly after the revolution, they abolished the Hamidian censorship, which brought

¹⁴For some examples of the banning and censoring of historical works during the Hamidian era see State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, Department of Ottoman Archives (hereafter BOA), MF.MKT. 100/106, 1305.12.24 [1 Sept. 1888]; BOA, MF.MKT. 251/21, 1312.Ş.26 [22 Feb. 1895]; BOA, MF.MKT. 95/117, 1305.Ra.20 [19 Aug. 1897]; BOA, MF.MKT. 394/8, 1315.Z.4 [26 April 1898]; BOA, MF.MKT. 628/7, 1320.2.16 [25 May 1902]; BOA, MF.MKT. 631/53, 1320.S.28 [6 June 1902].

¹⁵For some examples of Hamidian-era historical writing see Eyüp Sabri Paşa, *Mir'âtü'l-Haremeyn: Mir'ât-i Mekke* (Istanbul, 1301 (1884)); Eyüp Sabri Paşa, *Mir'âtü'l-Haremeyn: Mir'ât-i Medine* (Istanbul, 1304 (1887)); Mahmud Esad, *Tarih-i İslâm* (Istanbul, 1317 (1900)); İbrahim Hakki and Mehmed Azmi, *Muhtasar Osmanlı Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1323 (1906)).

¹⁶For a detailed analysis of this process see Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge, 2011), 33–283; Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, 2011).

¹⁷For some examples see Ahmed Refik, “Tarih ve Felsefe-i Tarihiyye,” *Haftalık Şûrâ-yı Ümmet* 218 (15 April 1326 (1910)), 7–9; Ahmed Refik, “Tedisrât-ı Tarihiyye ve Tarih Kitapları,” *Servet-i Fünûn* 39/1009 (1326 (1910)), 358–9; Sâti, “Tarih Tevrisinin Usûl-i Esâsiyyesi,” *Tedisrât-ı İbtidâiyye Mecmûası* 8 (1326 (1910)), 92–8; Hüseyin Kâzım, “Bizde Tarih,” *Donanma* 2/14 (1327 (1911)), 1298–301; Ali Reşad, “Mekteplerde Tarih Dersi,” *Tedisrât Mecmûası* 20 (1328 (1912)), 54–60. For the transformation of history education during the Hamidian era see Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden, 2001), 173–202.

along the liberalization of, among other things, historiographical production and the reprinting of many forbidden history books, including the historical works of such influential liberal/constitutionalist intellectuals as Nâmîk Kemâl and *Mizâncı* Mehmed Murâd.¹⁸ They also embarked upon the reshaping of history education in the early years of the constitutional period and increased the number of history lessons at all levels of instruction. Besides commissioning new textbooks, they reinstated the history courses that had been eliminated from the curriculum by the Hamidian rule due to these lessons' alleged potential to incite seditious views and activity among students at the time.¹⁹ Accordingly, the courses of philosophy of history, contemporary history, and world history, which were no longer regarded as detrimental but as useful and necessary for raising patriotic Ottoman citizens, began to be taught alongside Ottoman history lessons in high schools and at the university, reflecting the tendency to imagine the Ottoman past as part and parcel of European and world history.²⁰

An equally important step was the revitalization of a traditional historiographical office, whose roots went back to the sixteenth century but which gradually lost its significance during the Hamidian era. Although the office of the court historian—also the state chronicler or the imperial annalist—had long been the sole institutionalized position devoted to history writing in the empire, it began to be marginalized in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the flourishing of print media and newspapers, which emerged as something like “contemporaneous chronicles” and soon took over the traditional function of the chronicler, which was to keep record of recent political events.²¹ In time, the importance and prestige of the office decreased to such an extent that Abdulhamid II did not even care to assign anyone to the post after the death of the chronicler Ahmed Lûtfî Efendi in March 1907. Thus the appointment to this position, in May 1909, of a prestigious member of the Ottoman Senate (Meclis-i Âyân), Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi, who had long taught Ottoman and world history at the university, the Imperial School (Mekteb-i Sultânî), and the School of the Civil Service (Mekteb-i Mülkiye), was intended for the restoration of this archaic historiographical office.²² The expectation of him was certainly not limited to the fulfilment of the traditional

¹⁸For some examples see Nâmîk Kemâl, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 4 vols. (Istanbul, 1326–7 (1909–10)); Mehmed Murâd, *Muhtasar Tarih-i Umûmî* (Istanbul, 1327 (1910)); Mehmed Murâd, *Tarih-i Umûmî*, 5 vols. (Istanbul, 1327–8 (1910–11)).

¹⁹For some expressions of this concern see BOA, DH.MKT. 1964/35, 1309.Za.26 [22 June 1892]; BOA, MF.MKT. 529/52, 1318.06.15 [10 Oct. 1900]; BOA, MF.MKT. 842/30, 1323.01.22 [29 March 1905].

²⁰It must be noted that the name of the university was changed from Dârülfünûn-ı Şâhâne (literally “Royal House of Sciences”) to Dârülfünûn-ı Osmanî (“Ottoman House of Sciences”) after the Young Turk Revolution. This change was another expression of the Young Turk constitutional Ottomanism that aimed to establish an institutionalized and nationalized understanding of political power and legitimacy, at the center of which stood the Ottoman state and people. For the reshaping of history education in the early years of the constitutional period see Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “II. Meşrutiyet’te Eğitim, İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Milliyetçilik, Militarizm veya ‘Militer Türk-İslam Sentezi,’” in Ferdan Ergut, ed., *II. Meşrutiyet’i Yeniden Düşünmek* (Istanbul, 2010), 57–85, at 62–76.

²¹Cemal Kafadar and Hakan T. Karateke, “Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing,” in Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maignushca, and Attila Pók, eds., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 4, 1800–1945 (Oxford, 2011), 559–77, at 563.

²²BOA, İ.HUS. 175/1327, 1327.R.27 [18 May 1909]; BOA, BEO. 3551/266307, 1327.R.28 [19 May 1909].

task of the imperial annalist, but that he would lead the historiographical campaign that aimed to create a sense of a shared past among the Ottomans.²³

Fully aware of this expectation, Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi declared, in a statement he issued immediately after his appointment, that there was an urgent need for a “detailed and extensive” Ottoman history that would narrate the “nation’s past” from its beginnings to the present. He also emphasized that, rather than by individual effort, such a comprehensive “national history” could only be written collectively by a group of competent historians proficient in, among other things, Western and Eastern languages.²⁴ Before long, the group that Abdurrahman Şeref mentioned began to take shape: first, it convened as a commission—named the Commission for Ottoman History (Tarih-i Osmanî Heyeti/Komisyonu)—with the involvement of approximately thirty historians in June 1909, and then it turned itself into a historical association at the suggestion of the grand vizier of the day, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha.²⁵ Thus the first national historical association in the empire was founded in November 1909 and it was an outcome, as Abdurrahman Şeref underlined, of the patriotic desire to look back to and learn from Ottoman history during the early years of the Second Constitutional Period.²⁶

The Ottoman Historical Society and the establishment of the institutional framework for historiography

Headed by the state chronicler, the Ottoman Historical Society (Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, hereafter OHS) was composed of the most prominent historians and history-minded intellectuals of the time, many of whom were trained in the expanding educational network of the late Ottoman Empire and occupied various teaching positions at the university and such prestigious institutions as the Imperial School, the War Academy, and the School of the Civil Service. Besides the polymath Ahmed Midhat Efendi, the archaeologist and numismatist Ahmed Tevhid (Ulusoy), the Turkologist Necip Asım (Yazıksız), and the Ottoman historians Ahmed Refik (Altınay), Mehmed Ârif, and Mehmed Efdaleddin (Tekiner), the OHS also included non-Muslim members, such as the Armenian historian Diran Kelekyan, the polyglot Albanian intellectual Iskender Hoçi, and the renowned Greek historian Pavlos Karolidis, who was also a deputy in the

²³In addition to the Young Turk press, intellectuals, and educators, this expectation was also articulated by the new Sultan Mehmed V Reşad, who, as Eyal Ginio underlines, acted as a constitutional monarch who espoused the principles of the 1908 Revolution, and, besides, had a special personal interest in history. See Âyâdan Vak’anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref, “Tarih-i Osmanî,” *Sabah*, 2 June 1909, 2; Necip Asım, “Tarih-i Osmanî,” *Tanin*, 1 June 1909, 3; Tanin [Hüseyin Cahid], [Tarih-i Osmanî’ye Dâir], *Tanin*, 1 June 1909, 3; Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 1/1 (1326 (1910)), 1–2; Eyal Ginio, “Shaping the Constitutional Sultanate: The Reign of Mehmed Reşad (1909–1918),” *Turkish Historical Review* 10/1 (2019), 50–70.

²⁴Abdurrahman Şeref, “Tarih-i Osmanî,” 2.

²⁵BOA, BEO. 3671/275266, 1327.Za.16 [29 Nov. 1909]; BOA, BEO. 3678/275786, 1327.Z.5 [18 Dec. 1909]. See also “Tarih-i Osmanî Heyeti,” *Sabah*, 22 June 1909, 2; “Tarih-i Osmanî Komisyonu,” *Sabah*, 24 June 1909, 2; Abdurrahman Şeref, “Viyana Sefir-i Sâbıkı Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa,” *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 9–13/49–62 (1335 (1919)–1337 (1921)), 63–74, at 63–4.

²⁶Abdurrahman Şeref, “Tarih-i Osmanî,” 2. See also Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” 1–3.

Ottoman parliament.²⁷ This diversity and inclusive composition of the association stemmed as much from the arduousness of its task of “writing a perfect history of the Ottoman state” as from the Ottomanist policy of the first years of the Young Turk Revolution.²⁸

From the outset, OHS members placed a specific emphasis on the impartiality of the conceived Ottoman history project. According to them, the work that would be written by the association could be a “national history” in the real sense of the word only if it managed to examine and narrate the events of the past in an impartial manner. From this perspective, Abdurrahman Şeref and his fellows also criticized traditional Ottoman chroniclers and history writers, and they asserted that their accounts could by no means be regarded as national histories since they were replete with tendentious assessments.²⁹ Although this correlation established by OHS members between impartiality and national history/historiography seems a bit paradoxical because of the tension among the concepts, in fact it was based on a twofold reasoning. In the first place, unlike for many historians today, impartiality and national history/historiography were not contradictory or mutually exclusive concepts for most late Ottoman historians and their global contemporaries. In their view, impartiality was about—and also a consequence of—technical and methodological procedures of historical writing, such as evidence-based reasoning and source criticism. National historiography and the political agenda behind it, on the other hand, were hardly considered the causes and effects of partiality but the necessary conditions for a real and complete understanding of the past by most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians.³⁰

Second, the correlation between impartiality and national history/historiography was predicated on the assumption that the former could be achieved through the representation of the whole nation, not of specific parties within it. According to this assumption, traditional chronicles and historical accounts could scarcely be

²⁷It must be noted that the membership status and personal destinies of these non-Muslim historians were directly affected by the turbulent events of the 1910s. While Pavlos Karolidis’s membership was canceled following his emigration from the Ottoman Empire at the time of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, Diran Kelekyan was arrested and murdered during the Armenian massacres of 1915. As a result of the eclipse of the Ottomanist policy in the mid-1910s, the association replaced such non-Muslim members with Muslim historians. For a full list of OHS members see “Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Azâ-yî Dâimesi,” *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 1/1 (1326 (1910)), 8; Ahmed Refik, “Türk Tarih Encümeni’nin Tarihçesi Hakkında Rapor,” *Maârif Vekâleti Mecmûası* 14 (1927), 425–30, at 426–7.

²⁸Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” 1–2; “Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Hakkında Talimat Süreti,” *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 1/1 (1326 (1910)), 4–7.

²⁹Abdurrahman Şeref, “Tarih-i Osmanî,” 2; “Tarih-i Osmanî,” *Sabah*, 9 Aug. 1909, 3; Ahmed Refik, “Tarih ve Felsefe-i Tarihiyye,” 7–9; Ahmed Selâhaddin, “Tarih Nasıl Yazılmalıdır?,” *Mülkiye* 7 (1325 (1909)), 41–50; Efdaleddin, “Tarih [I–IX],” *Mülkiye* 1–9 (1909), 61–4, 63–4, 61–4, 63–4, 61–4, 44–8, 57–61, 90–92, 59–64.

³⁰See Efdaleddin, “Tarih [I–IX],” *Mülkiye* 1–9 (1909), 61–4, 63–4, 61–4, 63–4, 61–4, 44–8, 57–61, 90–92, 59–64; Ahmed Selâhaddin, “Tarih Nasıl Yazılmalıdır?,” 41–50; Ahmed Refik, “Tarih ve Fen,” *İkdâm*, 2 Dec. 1920, 2; Ahmed Refik, “Tarih ve Millî Mevcudiyet,” *Dersaadet* 81 (4 October 1336 (1920)), 2; Ahmed Refik, “Millî Tarihimize Dâir,” *İkdâm*, 23 Jan. 1922, 3. For European and other contexts see Camille Creighton, “Impartiality, Objectivity, and Political Engagement in Nineteenth-Century French Historiography: Monod and the Dreyfus Affair,” *History of Humanities* 3/2 (2018), 279–302; Lorraine Daston, “Objectivity and Impartiality: Epistemic Virtues in the Humanities,” in Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn, eds., *The Making of the Humanities*, vol. 3, *The Modern Humanities* (Amsterdam, 2014), 27–41.

deemed impartial works due to the fact that they had not been written from a national point of view but rather from the perspectives of specific power groups in Ottoman politics. More explicitly, rather than narrating the Ottoman nation's past, these accounts reflected the practices, interests, and perspectives of the groups on which their writers were politically and economically dependent, and thus they possessed neither a national nor an impartial character, according to OHS members. For them, the Ottoman history project of the OHS, which was founded as a state institution to construct a common historical outlook among all Ottomans, could go beyond such forms of partisanship because of the association's autonomy from those groups in Ottoman history, and hence could appear as a truly national historical account.³¹

In connection with this approach, Abdurrahman Şeref and his fellows conceived their project as a comprehensive work that would examine the Ottoman past in all its aspects. The association members emphasized that, along with political and military events, the project would also deal with the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of Ottoman history to provide a complete picture of the national past.³² As this emphasis implies, OHS members did not consider their project a continuation or extension of the chronicle tradition, which was mainly focused on the daily activities of the royal and governmental personage. Quite to the contrary, they envisioned it as a well-researched, analytical, and modern scholarly work that would bring many innovations to Ottoman historical writing.³³ One expression of this perspective revealed itself in the OHS's periodization of Ottoman history. Instead of adopting the traditional dynasty-centered periodization model for its project, the association sought to periodize the "national past" with a more contemporary approach that placed it within a framework, at the core of which lay the Ottoman state and, partly, the people. As a result of this, for instance, the association decided to open its account not with the founders of the Ottoman dynasty as had been traditionally done in Ottoman historical writing, but strikingly with the "Turkish invasion [*istîlâ*] of Anatolia ... in the thirteenth century."³⁴ Needless to say, besides the innovative scholarly agenda of the OHS, this approach was also connected with the changing political culture in the empire that regarded the state—and the nation—as something distinct from, and even transcendent over, the dynasty.

As a matter of fact, the tendency to move away from the chronicle tradition goes back to the mid-nineteenth century in late Ottoman historical writing. Such historians as Hayrullah Efendi, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (who also served as the state chronicler

³¹See "Tarih-i Osmanî," 3; Hüseyin Kâzım, "Bizde Tarih," 1298–301; Ahmed Refik, "Tarih ve Felsefe-i Tarihiyye," 7–9; Ahmed Refik, "Müverrih Naîmâ Efendi," *İkdâm*, 18 Feb. 1914, 3; Ahmed Refik, "Naîmâ," *Yeni Mecmûa* 55 (1 Aug. 1918), 49–53; Ahmed Refik, "Peçevî İbrahim Efendi I," *İkdâm*, 14 April 1914, 3; Ahmed Refik, "Peçevî İbrahim Efendi II," *İkdâm*, 17 April 1914, 3; Necip Asım, "Osmanlı Tarihînuvisleri ve Müverrihleri [I]," *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 1/1 (1326 (1910)), 41–52; Necip Asım, "Osmanlı Tarihînuvisleri ve Müverrihleri [II]," *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 2/7 (1327 [1911]), 425–35; Necip Asım, "Osmanlı Tarihînuvisleri ve Müverrihleri [III]," *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 2/8 (1327 (1911)), 498–9.

³²"Tarih-i Osmanî," 3; Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, "İfâde-i Merâm," 1–3; Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, *Osmanlı Tarihi Programı* (Istanbul, 1331 (1915)).

³³Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, "İfâde-i Merâm," 1–3; Ahmed Refik, "Encümen Raporu," *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmûası* 17–18/19 (96) (1928), 161–5.

³⁴"Tarih-i Osmanî," 3; Abdurrahman Şeref, "Tarih-i Osmanî," 2.

between 1855 and 1865), and Ahmed Vefik departed significantly from conventional patterns of Ottoman historical writing by attempting to examine Ottoman history in connection with European history, placing past events into their proper context, and abandoning the traditional annalistic format which narrated incidents year by year.³⁵ The point to be made here is that these deviations from the chronicle tradition did not evolve into a struggle against it in the Ottoman context. What was in question, rather—similarly to other Middle Eastern cases, such as Egypt—was the attempts to update that tradition as well as the hybridity and coexistence of the old and new forms of historical writing.³⁶ One of the most striking manifestations of the absence of such a struggle in Ottoman historiography was Abdurrahman Şeref's chairmanship of the OHS as the state chronicler. While the association he chaired was criticizing and departing from the practices of the chronicle tradition, he was simultaneously trying to maintain this fading tradition by chronicling the events of the first years of the Young Turk Revolution.³⁷

The final issue to be addressed concerning the Ottoman history project of the OHS is its scope and content. The association envisaged the project, which was expected to be completed in ten years, as a national historical master narrative that would cover Ottoman history from its beginnings in the thirteenth century to the 1908 Revolution.³⁸ More comprehensively, having divided the “national past” into four main periods, the OHS announced that the first part of the project would deal with the era between the Turkish invasion of Anatolia and the 1402 Battle of Ankara. Then, the project would focus on the period known as the Interregnum and subsequent decades until the reign of Mehmed II (1444–46 and 1451–81). While the third part would examine what later generations of Turkish historians called the Ottoman “golden” or “classical” age, which extended, according to the association, from the mid-fifteenth century to the late sixteenth, the last part would deal with the “decline period” of the empire that lasted until the Young Turk Revolution.³⁹

As this outline reveals, the scope of the project was confined exclusively to Ottoman history. That is to say, the OHS decided not to include pre-Ottoman Islamic history within the scope of the “national past,” although it had been one of the constant themes of traditional Ottoman historiography that situated the empire firmly within the framework of Islamic civilization. Similarly, the project gave little coverage to pre-Ottoman Turkish history, which became a highly popular subject in late Ottoman historical writing from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.⁴⁰

³⁵Karateke, “New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography,” 135–47; Christoph K. Neumann, “Bad Times and Better Self: Definitions of Identity and Strategies for Development in Late Ottoman Historiography (1850–1900),” in Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, eds., *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, 2002), 57–78.

³⁶For the Egyptian context see Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past*, 19–65.

³⁷For Abdurrahman Şeref's work as the state chronicler see Bayram Kodaman and Mehmet Ali Ünal, eds., *Son Vakâniyis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi: II. Meşrutiyet Olayları (1908–1909)* (Ankara, 1996).

³⁸“Tarih-i Osmani,” 3; Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” 1–2.

³⁹“Tarih-i Osmani,” 3; Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” 1–3; Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni, *Osmanlı Tarihi Programı*.

⁴⁰Erdem Sönmez, “Mehmed Fuad Köprülü and the Rise of Modern Historiography in Turkey” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2018), 65–74.

As might be expected, the reason for this attitude was the Ottomanist historical perspective of the OHS, which aimed to establish an additional bond among the multi-ethnic and multireligious members of the “imagined” Ottoman nation through the construction of a common past. Nonetheless, this Ottomanist vision of history also contained certain Turkist leanings, providing a clearer insight into the character and limits of the imperial state ideology. To name a few examples, the association made explicit references to the “Turco-Turanian” origins of Ottoman institutions in the first issue of its journal.⁴¹ Likewise, when it published a detailed program for the Ottoman history project in 1913, it once again became apparent that the OHS considered the Turks the constitutive and fundamental element of the empire since the program determined the Oghuz—one of the major Turkic-speaking groups that came from Central Asia to Anatolia—as the “origins of the Ottomans.”⁴² Despite these Turkist leanings, however, the OHS and its 1913 *Program for Ottoman History* were harshly criticized by Turkish nationalist intellectuals and historians for paying little attention to what they called “Turkish national history” and for not treating the Ottoman past as part and parcel of it.⁴³ In connection with this dissatisfaction, these intellectuals and historians soon established their own learned societies and historical journals, which led to the expansion—and diversification—of the historiographical space and further deepened the institutionalization and professionalization process of Ottoman historiography.

Besides writing an extensive history of the Ottoman Empire, the other task of the OHS was defined as the publication of source materials, archival documents, and scholarly articles on the national past.⁴⁴ For this purpose, the association decided to issue a historical journal, as most of its European, North American, and Asian counterparts did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁵ After a short period of preparation, the bimonthly *Journal of the Ottoman Historical Society* (*Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası*, hereafter *JOHS*) appeared in April 1910 as the first scholarly historical periodical in the empire. Published for more than twenty years, the *JOHS* featured numerous articles, editions of documents, and reviews of books, and played a crucial role in the introduction and consolidation of contemporary standards of the historical profession in the Ottoman realm.⁴⁶

⁴¹Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, “İfâde-i Merâm,” 2.

⁴²Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, *Osmanlı Tarihi Programı*, 2.

⁴³For some examples see T.Y. [Yusuf Akçura], “Küçük Muhtıra,” *Türk Yurdu* 2/23 (1329 (1913)), 807–9; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Bizde Tarih ve Müverrihler Hakkında,” *Bilgi Mecmûası* 1/2 (1329 (1913)), 185–96.

⁴⁴Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Hakkında Talimât Süreti,” 5.

⁴⁵To name a few examples, the American Historical Association issued the *American Historical Review* in 1895, the Historical Society of Japan (Shigakukai) began to publish the *Journal of the Historical Society of Japan* (*Shigakukai-Zasshi*) in 1889, and the Danish Historical Association (Den danske historiske Forening) issued the *Historical Journal* (*Historisk Tidsskrift*) in 1840. For more examples and further detail see Claus Møller Jørgensen, “Scholarly Communication with a Political Impetus: National Historical Journals,” in Ilaria Porciani and Jo Tollebeek, eds., *Setting the Standards: Institutions, Networks and Communities of National Historiography* (Basingstoke, 2012), 70–88.

⁴⁶The title of the *JOHS* was changed to the *Journal of the Turkish Historical Society* (*Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmûası*) after the renaming of the OHS as the Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Encümeni*) in February 1924. The journal continued to be published under its new title until 1931.

It is safe to say that the content of the *JOHS* was in complete conformity with the Ottomanist historical perspective of the OHS and thus was devoted almost entirely to the Ottoman past. The journal clearly stated that manuscripts focusing on pre-Ottoman history would be considered for publication as long as they were related to the history of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁷ This attitude soon triggered the publication of new historical and history-related journals by the recently founded Turkish scholarly associations. While the Turkish Knowledge Society (Türk Bilgi Derneği) issued the *Journal of Knowledge (Bilgi Mecmûası)* in 1913, for instance, another nationalist association named the Research Society for Islamic and National Works (Âsâr-ı İslâmiyye ve Millîyye Tedkik Encümeni, hereafter RSIN) began to publish the *Journal of National Studies (Millî Tettebbular Mecmûası)* in 1915. Receiving increasingly more official encouragement and state support in parallel with the eclipse of the Ottomanist policy in the mid-1910s, these journals aimed to explore pre-Ottoman and pre-Islamic Turkish history, whose origins, according to nationalist historians, dated back to Central Asian antiquity.⁴⁸ Moreover, as most of their authors were nourished by European and Russian Turkology, these periodicals were also meticulous about contemporary norms and methodological standards of historical scholarship. The *Journal of National Studies*, for instance, which was directed by the young and promising nationalist historian Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, openly declared that it would only publish historical works that were based on original research and thorough use of primary sources.⁴⁹

Another important initiative of the OHS was the editing and printing of the sources of Ottoman history. The association, in this regard, published the critical editions of such chronicles and historical accounts as *Âşıkpaşazâde's History*, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror* of Tursun Beg, the homonymous work of the fifteenth-century Byzantine historian Michael Kritovoulos, and the law codes of Mehmed II and Suleiman I.⁵⁰ As one may notice, the OHS focused primarily on the editing of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century historical texts. This orientation stemmed partly from the OHS's desire to chronologically publish the sources of Ottoman history, the earliest examples of which had appeared at the turn of the fifteenth century. But the association's preference was also connected with the Ottomanist efforts to raise a romantic interest in the "brightest" period of the Ottoman past.⁵¹ That is to say, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was experiencing a dramatic transformation and becoming an object of romanticism itself, the OHS's concentration on the Ottoman "golden age" was intended not only to

⁴⁷Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni, "İfâde-i Merâm," 2–3.

⁴⁸See Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Hoca Ahmed Yesevî: Çağatay ve Osmanlı Edebiyatları Üzerindeki Tesiri," *Bilgi Mecmûası* 1/6 (1330 (1914)), 611–45; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Türk Edebiyatının Menşei," *Millî Tettebbular Mecmûası* 2/4, 5–78; Y[usuf] A[kçura], "Türk Tarihinin Devirlere Taksimi," *Türk Yurdu* 5/82 (1331 (1915)), 2561–3.

⁴⁹See Maârif-i Umûmiyye Nezâreti, "Âsâr-ı İslâmiyye ve Millîyye Tedkik Encümeni Talimâtnamei," *Millî Tettebbular Mecmûası* 1/2 (1331 (1915)), 381–4, at 381.

⁵⁰These critical editions first appeared as supplements to the *JOHS*, and were then published as separate volumes in the first half of the 1910s. For a full list of the sources published by the OHS see Ahmed Refik, "Encümen Raporu," 162.

⁵¹Official celebrations organized in the 1910s for the commemoration of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 could be considered one of the most striking examples of these efforts. See Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks," 408–9.

provide the necessary raw material for the scholarly study of Ottoman history but also to document the historical grandeur of the Ottoman state and nation.

While the OHS was engaged in the publication of the sources of the Ottoman past, Turkist scholarly associations embarked upon the editing of source materials concerning Turkish history in the mid-1910s. The Turkology section of the Turkish Knowledge Society, for instance, decided to transliterate a twelfth-century literary text written in Uyghur script, Edib Ahmed Yükneci's *The Threshold of Truths*.⁵² The *Journal of National Studies*, similarly, published many sources pertaining to pre-Ottoman Turkish culture and literature beginning from its first issues.⁵³ Such significant historical texts as *The Book of Dede Korkut*, which was the oldest surviving epic of the Oghuz Turks, and the eleventh-century Turkic lexicon *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* of Mahmud al-Kashgari were also edited in these years with the encouragement of leading Unionists like Ziya Gökalp and Talât Pasha.⁵⁴ Presented as the objective proofs of the antiquity and authenticity of Turkish culture, these sources furnished late Ottoman historical writing with what Daniela Saxer calls "a material substrate of 'national' documents" and ensured the flourishing of Turkish nationalist historiography in a scholarly and methodical manner.⁵⁵

The OHS's efforts to edit the sources of Ottoman history went hand in hand with the arrangement of archival records and documents. Shortly after its establishment, the association founded a working group to examine and classify historical documents stored in both the Topkapı Palace and the Treasury of Documents Building (Hazine-i Evrâk Binası), which had been constructed for the collection and preservation of old records of state affairs in the 1840s.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the association decided to bring together in Istanbul all historical documents that were located in the various cities of the empire. In this regard, it sent a circular to local governors and directors of educational services in the provinces and demanded the inventories of historical records that were kept in the libraries of their cities.⁵⁷ Simultaneously, the OHS got in touch with European archival institutions and libraries in order to request their catalogues. The association also trusted some of its members to visit and observe these institutions in place and to bring the

⁵²The transliteration was made by the head of the Turkology section, Necip Asım, who was also a member of the OHS. See Ahmed b. Mahmud Yükneci, *Hibetü'l-Hakâyık [Atebetü'l-Hakâyık]*, ed. Necip Asım (Istanbul, 1334 (1918)).

⁵³For a few examples among many see [Babur Şah], "Risâle-i Vâlidîyye Tercümesi," ed. Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, *Millî Tettebbular Mecmûası* 1/1 (1331 (1915)), 113–24; [Muhammed b. Muhammed el-Hüseynî el-Yezdî], "el-Urâza fî'l-Hikâyeti's-Selçûkiyye [I]," ed. Karl Süsseim, trans. Şerafeddin, *Millî Tettebbular Mecmûası* 1/2 (1331 (1915)), 257–304.

⁵⁴*Kitab-ı Dede Korkut: Aliyyü'l-Lisan-ı Tâife-i Oğuzân*, ed. Kılıslı Rıfat (Istanbul, 1332 (1914)). The *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* was published in three volumes between 1915 and 1917. For the first volume see Mahmud b. el-Hüseynî b. Muhammed el-Kaşgari, *Kitâb-ı Divân-ı Lugâti't-Türk*, vol. 1, ed. Kılıslı Rıfat (Istanbul, 1333 (1915)).

⁵⁵Daniela Saxer, "Monumental Undertakings: Source Publications for the Nation," in Porciani and Tollebeek, *Setting the Standards*, 47–69, at 47.

⁵⁶Topkapı Sarayı'nda Kütüphane," *Tanin*, 19 July 1909, 2; "Tarih Komisyonu," *Tanin*, 24 June 1909, 2; Abdurrahman Şeref, "Evrâk-ı Atika ve Vesâik-i Tarihiyyemiz," *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 1/1 (1326 (1910)), 9–19.

⁵⁷"Tarih-i Osmanî Komisyonu," 2; See also Ergut, "Institutionalization of History," 231; Mustafa Oral, *Türkiye'de Romantik Tarihcilik (1910–1940)* (Ankara, 2006), 94.

copies of the documents that were related to Ottoman history.⁵⁸ Last but not least, some OHS members—such as Ahmed Refik, Ahmed Tevhid, and Mehmed Efdaleddin—took part in the foundation of a separate archival association in 1917, named the Society for the Classification of Historical Documents (Tasnif-i Vesâik-i Tarihiyye Encümeni, later Vesâik-i Tarihiyye Tasnif Encümeni). Within a few years of its establishment under the chairmanship of a former OHS member, Ali Emîri Efendi, this association organized and catalogued approximately 180,000 documents, which are still in use today in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul.⁵⁹

The “Seignobos dynasty” in Ottoman historical writing

In parallel with the construction of this historiographical infrastructure that consisted of historical associations, scholarly journals, and archival organizations, there emerged a significant shift in the Ottomans’ understanding of history and historiography. While operating within these institutions, Ottoman historians were primarily concerned with the issue of how to write their national histories—whether Ottoman or Turkish—in a comprehensive and coherent manner. Also examining the ways in which European historians researched and narrated their own national pasts, they soon realized that the study and exhaustive use of historical sources was the most crucial factor in this effort.⁶⁰ That was why the OHS and Turkist learned societies strove to edit the sources of Ottoman and Turkish histories from the early 1910s. Besides these institutional endeavors, including archival arrangements, Ottoman historians repeatedly emphasized the necessity of the careful scrutiny of old records for history writing throughout the decade. In this respect, they described archival materials as the “speaking witnesses of the past,” “essential elements of modern historical science,” and often concluded their articles with the motto of the Rankean historiography of the time: “no documents, no history.”⁶¹

The emphasis placed by Ottoman historians on historical sources and archival records points to a change of understanding regarding the production of historical knowledge in late Ottoman historiography. Indeed, in these years Ottoman historians thought thoroughly about the questions of what constituted proper historical knowledge and how it should be produced, eventually acknowledging the systematic study of primary sources as the only legitimate way of scholarly historical writing.⁶²

⁵⁸BOA, MF.MKT. 1207/43, 20.05.1333 [5 April 1915]; BOA, MV. 208/18, 1335.B.21 [13 May 1917]; BOA, BEO. 4470/335193, 1335.B.25 [17 May 1917]; Abdurrahman Şeref, “Berlin Hazine-i Evrakında Vesâik-i Kadîme-i Osmanîyye,” *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmûası* 8/44 (1333 (1917)), 65–92.

⁵⁹Oral, *Türkiye’de Romantik Tarihçilik*, 158–9; Uğurhan Demirbaş et al., eds., *Belgelerle Arşivcilik Tarihimiz I: Osmanlı Dönemi* (Ankara, 1999), 29–30, 75–6.

⁶⁰Ahmed Şuayb, “Yirminci Asırda Tarih,” *Ulâm-ı İktisâdiyye ve İctimâiyye Mecmûası* 1/1 (1324 (1909)), 11–24; Ahmed Sâib, “Mükemmel ve Muntazam Tarih-i Osmanî Nasıl Yazılır? [I],” *Edebiyat-ı Umûmiyye Mecmûası* 5/92 (1918), 1110–12; Ahmed Sâib, “Mükemmel ve Muntazam Tarih-i Osmanî Nasıl Yazılır? [II],” *Edebiyat-ı Umûmiyye Mecmûası* 5/93 (1918), 1117–23.

⁶¹For some examples see Abdurrahman Şeref, “Evrâk-ı Atıka ve Vesâik-i Tarihiyyemiz,” 9; Emin Ali, “Tarih Usûlüne Dâir,” *Yeni Mecmûa* 52 (13 July 1918), 515; Ahmed Refik, *Büyük Tarih-i Umûmî: Beşerîyyetin Tekemmülât-ı Medeniyye, İctimâiyye, Siyâsiyye ve Fikriyyesi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1328 (1912)), 11.

⁶²See Ahmed Selâhaddin, “Tarih Nasıl Yazılmalıdır?,” 41–50; Ahmed Şuayb, “Yirminci Asırda Tarih,” 11–24; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usûl,” *Bilgi Mecmûası* 1/1 (1329 (1913)), 3–51.

That is to say, they adopted an empirically grounded and evidence-based historiographical approach, unlike their earlier practices that had frequently consulted myths, religious lore, oral traditions, and astrological explanations.⁶³ This new orientation, which made a special point of examining the authenticity and reliability of historical sources as well as their classification and critical evaluation, gradually became a norm in Ottoman historiography as the 1910s wore on.⁶⁴ By the end of the decade, history, being detached from its long-standing moral and didactic functions, was considered by almost all Ottoman historians a scholarly activity whose task was to reach factual knowledge about the past and describe the latter “as it really was.”⁶⁵

It must be noted that this Rankean approach was an outcome of Ottoman historians’ engagement with European historiography. As the offspring of the late Ottoman intelligentsia, which took an avid interest in European intellectual thought from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Ottoman historians were already familiar with recent scholarly trends in Europe by the early 1910s. This familiarity turned into a conscious engagement in the ensuing years and they began to follow European historiography more closely, especially through the historical literature in French, the second language of most late Ottoman intellectuals and scholars. In this way, Ottoman historians became acquainted with the tenets of modern historical practice mainly through the works of their French colleagues, Charles Seignobos particularly, rather than that of Leopold von Ranke or his German disciples, although there was an awareness that he was the founding figure of modern historiography.⁶⁶ Thus French historical writing exerted substantial influence over Ottoman historians in the 1910s, so much so that some witnesses

⁶³For the earlier historiographical practices of the Ottomans see Baki Tezcan, “Ottoman Historical Writing,” in José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo, and Daniel Woolf, eds., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3, 1400–1800 (Oxford, 2012), 192–211.

⁶⁴See Emin Âli, “Tarih Usûlüne Dâir,” 514–17; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usûl,” 3–51; Ahmed Sâib, “Mükemmel ve Muntazam Tarih-i Osmanî Nasıl Yazılır? [II],” 1117–23.

⁶⁵For some examples of this consideration see Ahmed Refik, “Tarih ve Fen,” 2; Ahmed Refik, “Müverrihler İlim,” *İkdâm*, 21 Oct. 1920, 2; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usûl,” 3–51.

⁶⁶It must be noted that most of those French historians who were followed by their Ottoman colleagues, such as Seignobos, Charles V. Langlois, Ernest Lavisse, and Gabriel Monod, were trained in Germany, studied with Ranke or his disciples, and became exponents of the historical methods and techniques developed by him. Despite that, however, the French mediation in the learning and adoption of these methods would bring some peculiarities to Ottoman and Turkish historiography, which I discuss below. For Ranke’s influence on Seignobos and other French historians see Philip Daileader and Philip Whalen, “Introduction: The Professionalization of the French Historical Profession,” in Daileader and Whalen, eds., *French Historians 1900–2000: New Historical Writing in Twentieth-Century France* (Chichester, 2010), xvi–xxx, at xviii–xix; Geneviève Warland, “Towards Professional History in Belgium and France: ‘l’école de la méthode’ and ‘l’école de la citoyenneté,’” *Hum-Leidschrift* 25/1 (2010), 33–53, at 35–7, 53. For an expression of the awareness among Ottoman historians regarding the significance of Ranke as the founder of modern historiography see Ahmed Refik’s articles on Ranke’s life and work, which were mostly based on sources in French. See Ahmed Refik, “Alman Müverrihleri: Ranke [I],” *Yeni Mecmûa* 20 (22 November 1917), 392–5; Ahmed Refik, “Alman Müverrihleri: Ranke [II],” *Yeni Mecmûa* 21 (29 November 1917), 403–6. Ahmed Refik also wrote several articles on the works of such German and French historians as Heinrich von Treitschke, Jules Michelet, Ernest Lavisse, and Albert Vandal. See Ahmed Refik, “Alman Müverrihleri: Treitschke [I],” *Yeni Mecmûa* 7 (23 Aug. 1917), 124–7; Ahmed Refik, “Alman Müverrihleri: Treitschke [II],” *Yeni Mecmûa* 8 (30 Aug. 1917), 153–5; Ahmed Refik, “Fransız Müverrihleri: Michelet,” *Yeni Mecmûa* 12 (27 Sept. 1917), 229–33; Ahmed Refik, “Ernest Lavisse ve Tarih,” *İkdâm*, 2 March 1920, 3; Ahmed Refik, “Fransız Müverrihleri: Albert Vandal: Gençliği,” *İkdâm*, 5 June 1922, 4; Ahmed Refik, “Fransız Müverrihleri: Albert Vandal: İlni

of the era, like Yusuf Akçura, would later describe this situation in a satirical manner by speaking of a “Seignobos dynasty” in late Ottoman historiography.⁶⁷

Several reasons can be cited for the emergence of this “dynasty”: first, French intellectual influence on late Ottoman scholarly circles; second, the heightened interest in French history and historiography among Ottoman literati that identified the Young Turk Revolution with the French Revolution; and third, the great appeal of Seignobos’s work for Ottoman historians as it on the one hand concentrated on contemporary French history and on the other hand answered their need for a methodology for historical research by codifying the methodological principles of modern historiography. Consequently, Seignobos became the most popular, widely read, and influential Western historian in the late Ottoman Empire. His works *Histoire de la civilization* (History of Civilization) and *Histoire politique de l’Europe contemporaine* (A Political History of Contemporary Europe) were translated into Turkish by such leading Ottoman historians as Ali Reşad and Ahmed Refik, the latter of whom openly expressed that he had been heavily inspired by Seignobos in his decision to become a historian.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Ministry of Education decided to translate Seignobos’s most renowned work, which he wrote with Charles V. Langlois, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Introduction to the Study of History).⁶⁹ Although the translation could not be completed during the Second Constitutional Period, Ottoman historians widely benefited from this book throughout the 1910s. It should be mentioned here that another methodological source they often consulted in these years was the writings of Gabriel Monod, partially translated into Turkish by the Sorbonne graduate Kâzım Şinâsi and published under the title “Method in History” in the *Journal of the Faculty of Literature of Dârülfünûn* in 1916.⁷⁰

The attention that the *Introduction aux études historiques* and Monod’s methodological writings received from Ottoman historians in the 1910s was not accidental. In their quest for writing their national histories better and more reliably, such methodological works appeared to Ottoman historians as essential guides that would help them in their difficult tasks. Hence they sought to understand and learn the methods they encountered in these accounts, which inspired in them a growing interest in methodological issues. This interest soon led Ottoman historians to reflect on contemporary methods and procedures of historiography, as well as on their application to the study of Ottoman and Turkish history. Accordingly, they wrote a vast number of articles that discussed and described in detail the stages of historical research, the distinction between primary and

Meşgüliyeti,” *İkdâm*, 9 June 1922, 3; Ahmed Refik, Fransız Müverrihleri: Albert Vandal: Eserleri,” *İkdâm*, 12 June 1922, 3.

⁶⁷Akçuraoğlu Yusuf, “Tarih Yazmak ve Tarih Okutmak Usûllerine Dâir,” in *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları* (Ankara, 2010), 577–607, at 595.

⁶⁸For the translations see Charles Seignobos, *Tarih-i Siyâsi: 1814’ten 1896’ya kadar Asr-ı Hâzırda Avrupa*, 3 vols., trans. Ali Reşad (Istanbul, 1324–5 (1908–9)); Seignobos, *Tarih-i Medeniyet*, 3 vols., trans. Ahmed Refik (Istanbul, 1328 (1912)). For Ahmed Refik’s remarks on Seignobos’s impact on him and his generation see Muzaffer Gökman, *Tarihi Sevdiren Adam: Ahmed Refik Altınay (Hayatı ve Eserleri)* (Istanbul, 1978), 33.

⁶⁹Akçuraoğlu, “Tarih Yazmak ve Tarih Okutmak,” 581.

⁷⁰Gabriel Monod, “Tarihte Usûl [I],” trans. Kâzım Şinâsi, *Dârülfünûn Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmûası* 1/3 (1332 (1916)), 341–56; Monod, “Tarihte Usûl [II],” trans. Kâzım Şinâsi, *Dârülfünûn Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmûası* 1/4 (1332 (1916)), 439–55.

secondary sources, the auxiliary disciplines of history, and the relationship between the latter and other branches of the humanities.⁷¹ Additionally, Ottoman historians engaged for the first time in methodological debates among themselves in these years and began to review recent publications in terms of their methodology, internal coherence, and originality. In these debates and reviews, they pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of each other's works, corrected the errors of critical editions, and underlined the necessity of the proper application of historical research techniques, all of which served the consolidation of methodological principles of modern historical scholarship in Ottoman historiography.⁷² Finally, for the teaching of these principles and techniques to future historians, the Ottomans decided to establish a historical methodology course at the university, which began to be taught, in 1915, with the assistance of Kâzım Şinâsi, by the eminent orientalist Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann, who was then serving as the German consul general in Istanbul.⁷³ All these, it is safe to say, reinforced among Ottoman historians the emerging sense of professional self-consciousness and identity, through which they drew boundaries between their discipline and others, and between themselves and amateur history writers.

The learning and adoption of modern methods of historical scholarship affected not only the ways in which Ottoman historians conducted research and wrote history, but also the activities and priorities of the Ottoman Historical Society. The association members decided in late 1916 to review and revise the mission of the institution that was founded to write an extensive history of the Ottoman Empire. The reason for such a major revision was their realization that a "perfect" history of the empire could not be written at a time when the documents and old records related to the Ottoman past were mostly unclassified and unavailable to historians.⁷⁴ As a result of this concern, which was directly connected with the increasing methodological rigor in Ottoman historiography, the association redefined its primary mission as collecting and editing the sources of Ottoman history and producing monographs on various aspects of the Ottoman past.⁷⁵ That is to

⁷¹For a few examples among many see Ahmed Selâhaddin, "Tarih Nasıl Yazılmalıdır?", 41–50; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usûl," 3–51; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Bizde Tarih ve Müverrihler Hakkında," 185–96; Ahmed Sâib, "Mükemmel ve Muntazam Tarih-i Osmanî Nasıl Yazılır? [I–II]," 1110–12, 1117–23 Celâl Nuri, "Tarih Usûllerine Dâir," *Edebiyat-ı Umûmiyye Mecmûası* 2/34 (1917), 133–5; Celâl Nuri, "Millî Tarih, Tenkidî Tarih," *Edebiyat-ı Umûmiyye Mecmûası* 2/36 (1917), 171–3.

⁷²For a few examples among many see A. [Mehmed Ârif], "Âşıkpaşazâde Tarihi," 171–90; Ahmed Refik, "Âsâr-ı Tarihiyye: Medeniyet-i İslâmiyye Tarihi, Türkiye ve Tanzimat: Devlet-i Osmaniyye'nin Tarih-i İslahatı, Kırım Muharebesinin Tarih-i Siyâsisi," *Servet-i Fünûn* 40/1028 (1326 (1911)), 324–6; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Kitâbiyyat Tenkitleri: Acâibü'l-Letâif," *Millî Tettebular Mecmûası* 2/5 (1331 (1915)), 351–68.

⁷³BOA, İ.MMS. 200/1333, 1333.Z.18 [27 Oct. 1915]. The lecture notes were soon published as a book; see Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann, *İlm-i Usûl-i Tarih: 1331–1332 Sene-i Tedsîsiyyesinde Dârülfünûn'da Takrîr Olunan Derslerden Mütteşekkildir* (lithograph) (Istanbul, 1332 (1916)). See also Mustafa Selçuk, *Istanbul Dârülfünûnu Edebiyat Fakültesi (1900–1933)* (Ankara, 2012), 143–6.

⁷⁴Ahmed Refik, "Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Meselesi," *İkdâm*, 12 Oct. 1920, 3; Ahmed Refik, "Türk Tarih Encümeni'nin Tarihçesi," 425–6.

⁷⁵Ahmed Refik, "Encümeni Raporu," 161–2; Ahmed Refik, "Türk Tarih Encümeni'nin Tarihçesi," 425–6. See also Hasan Akbayrak, *Millî Tarihinden Ulusun Tarihine: İkinci Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Ulus-Devlet İnşa Sürecinde Kurumsal Tarih Çalışmaları* (Istanbul, 2009), 85–9.

say, although it continued to be carried out by the association, the Ottoman history project, which initiated the institutionalization and professionalization of Ottoman historiography, was pushed into the background in favor of a relatively modest, but methodologically more secure and rigorous, task with the deepening of that institutionalization and professionalization.

Following the redefinition of its mission, the OHS mostly concentrated on its activities editing and publishing sources. The association also decided to issue a monograph series titled the *Corpus of the Ottoman Historical Society (Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Külliyyâtı)*.⁷⁶ The series published nine books within a few years, including such notable works of Ahmed Refik as *Istanbul Life in the Sixteenth Century (Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı)*, *Francis II Rákóczi and His Entourage in the Ottoman Empire (Memâlik-i Osmaniyye'de Kral Rakoçi ve Tevâbi)*, and *Charles XII of Sweden in the Ottoman Empire (Memâlik-i Osmaniyye'de Demirbaş Şarl)*, which were translated respectively into German, Hungarian, and Swedish, and the last one also earned its author the Royal Order of Vasa from the king of Sweden in 1921.⁷⁷

As Georg G. Iggers once noted, “what defined history as a science and as a professional discipline was not only its methods ... but the place it occupied in institutions of higher learning.”⁷⁸ In the Ottoman context, history featured prominently in university curricula from the foundation of the institution in 1900, and became a separate department in the mid-1910s. The initial steps towards its establishment as an independent branch were taken during the reorganization of *Dârülfünûn* in 1912–13, which brought, among other things, the classification of courses taught in faculties into specific groups. Upon this decision, the Faculty of Literature sorted the courses it offered into five groups named “sociology,” “literature,” “philosophy,” “foreign languages,” and “history and geography”; the latter included the courses of Ottoman history, world history, political history, and geography.⁷⁹ This arrangement was followed by another one in 1915 that founded three departments—literature, philosophy, and history and geography—and a chair system within the faculty.⁸⁰ Finally, the department of history and geography, which was composed of the chairs of ancient history, national history, European history, and geography, was restructured as two separate departments in the academic year of 1918–19. Thus a dedicated history department was formally created, sealing the establishment of history as an independent academic discipline in the late Ottoman Empire.⁸¹ Providing historians with an institutionalized academic space for

⁷⁶Ahmed Refik, “Türk Tarih Encümeni'nin Tarihçesi,” 428.

⁷⁷BOA, İ.DUİT. 72/112, 1339.Ca.07 [17 Jan. 1921]; BOA, BEO. 4671/350305, 1339.Ca.09 [19 Jan. 1921]. For a list of the historical works published within this series see Ahmed Refik, “Encümen Raporu,” 162–3; Ahmed Refik, “Türk Tarih Encümeni'nin Tarihçesi,” 428.

⁷⁸Georg G. Iggers, “The Professionalization of Historical Studies and the Guiding Assumptions of Modern Historical Thought,” in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford, 2002), 225–42, at 227.

⁷⁹*Istanbul Dârülfünûnu: Talimât* (Istanbul, 1329 (1913)), 13–14.

⁸⁰Selçuk, *Istanbul Dârülfünûnu Edebiyat Fakültesi*, 127–36.

⁸¹Some courses offered by the history department in 1919 were as follows: Ottoman history, history of Islam, Turkish history, medieval history, early modern history, and modern history. See *Dârülfünûn Edebiyat Fakültesi Talebe Rehberi: 1334–1335 Sene-i Tedrîsiyyesi İkinci Şuhûr-ı Dersiyyesi (16 February–16 June 1335 [1919])* (Istanbul, 1335 (1919)), 23–6.

historical research, training, and specialization until today, this department played a highly decisive role in the shaping and development of historiography in modern Turkey.

Epilogue: the collapse and beyond

Ottoman historiography followed a path from national to scholarly historical writing in the 1910s. The postrevolutionary efforts to forge an Ottoman national history for intensifying the Ottomanist sentiment soon led to the construction of a historiographical infrastructure within which Ottoman historians developed concerns about how to research and write history “scientifically” and turned history into a profession and a discipline. Although this process of institutionalization and professionalization was largely completed in the second half of the 1910s, it was drastically disrupted by the Ottoman loss of World War I in 1918. Having brought disastrous consequences to the Ottomans, the defeat and the turbulent political circumstances of the postwar years not only forced many historians to leave aside their scholarly activities and almost halted the historiographical production in the country, but also severely affected the institutional framework of historical inquiry. While the Ottoman Historical Society could hardly carry on its activities after the cancelation of its state subsidy in 1919, Turkist historical associations like RSIN entered into a process of dissolution following the fall of the Committee of Union and Progress government in late 1918.⁸² Finally, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire spelt the end of all these historical associations, institutions, and journals, to be resuscitated after the establishment of the new Turkish republic.

Although the Ottoman case of the professionalization of history shared much with its global contemporaries, it also had certain peculiarities that would come to affect the reinstitutionalization and evolution of historical scholarship in post-Ottoman Turkey. First of all, contrary to many European and other examples, this process was led not by a university or a history department—both appeared relatively late in the Ottoman context—but by a national historical association that was founded as part of the efforts to build an Ottoman nation. Nonetheless, as the sole surviving historiographical institution in the final years of the empire and the early years of the new nation-state, the history department at Dârülfünûn functioned as the mainstay and center of historical practice during this transitional period and contributed greatly to the reestablishment of historiographical infrastructure in republican Turkey. The Ottoman Historical Society, on the other hand, continued to operate—though not very effectively—under the name Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Encümeni*) and published its journal until the early 1930s. The institution helplessly dissolved itself when republican nation builders turned their attention to history and decided to establish a new official historical association—named the Turkish Historical Association (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*)—to forge a historical master narrative, this time for the Turkish nation.

Second, in learning and adopting the modern methods of historical scholarship, Ottoman historians were more influenced by French historiography than by the

⁸²Oral, *Türkiye’de Romantik Tarihçilik*, 150; Sönmez, “Mehmed Fuad Köprülü and the Rise of Modern Historiography in Turkey,” 238–9.

German variant that had given birth to those methods in the nineteenth century. Thus, unlike many of its contemporaries from Japan to the United States, the Ottoman case experienced what Michael Facius calls the “Rankean moment,” which represented the rise of methodological interest and rigor in historiography, not under the direct influence of Ranke and his German disciples, but through the mediation of French historical writing.⁸³ Accordingly, it would not be wrong to say that most late Ottoman and early republican Turkish historians owed their methodological—and also intellectual—formation to French historiography and scholarship. It was largely due to this situation that Ottoman/Turkish historians attended closely to such concepts and themes as geographical context, social organization, and religious life and traditions from the early 1910s onwards.⁸⁴ It was also for the same reason that French-born historiographical trends and schools like the *Annales* found a swift and notable echo in Turkish historiography during the republican period.⁸⁵

Lastly, the disciplinization of history was accompanied in the Ottoman context by a competition between the Ottomanist and Turkist historical perspectives as a result of the tumultuous political atmosphere of the empire in the 1910s. Forged within the framework of the Ottomanist and Turkist—or, more precisely, Turkish nationalist—political projects, these historical visions ascribed different meanings to the notions of “nation” and “national history,” interpreted the past divergently from each other, and were engaged in a sharp struggle to make their interpretation the dominant reading of history. While the Ottomanist historical perspective enjoyed a hegemonic position during the early years of the 1908 Revolution, it began to lose its influence especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, which turned Ottomanism into a dead letter and caused a Turkist shift in Young Turk politics. In connection with the rise of Turkish nationalism in all walks of cultural and intellectual life, the Turkist vision of history took root among Ottoman/Turkish historians within a few years. It ultimately overshadowed the Ottomanist historical outlook and became the mainstream of Ottoman historiography. This was why the Ottoman history project of the OHS, whose first volume was published in 1917 but largely failed to meet the expectations that the project had initially created, covered a wide array of fields and periods of “Turkish history,” the Central Asian past included, contrary to the former decisions of the association that had confined the scope of the work exclusively to Ottoman history.⁸⁶ It means

⁸³See Facius, “A Rankean Moment in Japan,” 217–40. For Ranke’s influence on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and American historiography see also Georg G. Iggers, “The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought,” *History and Theory* 2/1 (1962), 17–40; Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (New York, 1990).

⁸⁴For some examples see Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Türk Edebiyatının Menşei,” 5–78; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “Türk Edebiyatında Âşık Tarzının Menşe ve Tekâmülü Hakkında Bir Tecrübe,” *Millî Tettebular Mecmûası* 1/1 (1331 (1915)), 5–46; Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar* (Istanbul, 1918–19); Ziya Gökalp, “Eski Türklerde İctimâî Teşkilât ile Mantıkî Tasnifler Arasında Tenâzur,” *Millî Tettebular Mecmûası* 1/3 (1331 (1915)), 385–456.

⁸⁵See Erdem Sönmez, *Annales Okulu ve Türkiye’de Tarih yazımı: Annales Okulu’nun Türkiye’deki Tarih yazımına Etkisi (Başlangıçtan 1980’e)* (Ankara, 2010).

⁸⁶See Necip Asım and Mehmed Ârif, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Tarafından Neşr Olunmuşdur* (Istanbul, 1335 (1917)). Other volumes of the project did not appear. For further information

that even the official historical association of the empire abandoned its Ottomanist vision, which was in many respects the guiding principle of the institution from the very moment of its establishment, and adopted the Turkist historical perspective in the second half of the 1910s. Needless to say, this nationalist historical outlook would make its mark on Turkish historiography during the republican period and determine the course and content of the latter until the end of the twentieth century.

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about the first volume of the project and the competition between the Ottomanist and Turkist historical perspectives see Erdem Sönmez, "A Past to Be Forgotten? Writing Ottoman History in Early Republican Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48/4 (2021), 753–69, at 765–7.

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