

Proposed subject:

The origins and diachronic development of historical writing in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, compared with contemporaneous European historiographical accounts of the Empire.

Context:

Pre-modern Islamic historiography has seldom been a subject of study in its own right. Warrantable reasons for this relatively consequential lack of scholarly attention abound. However, as questions dealing with the genesis of Ottoman sociological and political thought, and the continuity of late Medieval Islamic thought into the Ottoman intellectual world are re-visited in light of their implications on our understanding of the Empire as whole and the nature of its formative period, a parallel line of inquiry should be pursued to shed light on the interplay between historiography and the philosophy of history in the 16th and 17th centuries. Unlike in the early period, when historical writing mainly existed in the form of *Menāqibnāmes* and *Ghazātnāmes* to account for the rise of the new Ottoman polity and justify its dynastic legitimacy, the 17th century had witnessed a burst of historical literature composed in a variety of forms, be it chronicles, prose, poetry or even cartography. In other words, by the 17th century the religio-heroic literature emblematic of the historiography in early period had evolved into a more complex form due to the institutionalization of learning in the Sultanic court and the pervasiveness of historical-cum-literary models in the public consciousness. On the other hand, the renaissance-inspired European historiography of the Ottomans and their origins posited a different set of questions whose logic fashioned an imagination in line with the intellectual and philological revolution in the continent.

Hypothesis:

As the 17th century was underway, intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire had to engage in self-reflection on the history and contemporary state of the empire and the causal solutions that can redress what they believed were the forces of its self-destruction. Historiography was one such means. To their mind, reinterpretation and re-writing of the state's history was one of the ways to instigate practical reforms.

Objective of the research:

- Identify source of Ottoman historiography in the classical period
- Tackle the less-studied subject of textual representation of the past as a modality of navigating through times of uncertainty and climacteric changes during the 16th and 17th centuries in the Ottoman world
- Understand how the Ottomans perceived themselves in relation to earlier Islamic Empires and the contemporaneous non-Ottoman powers

- Read the 17th polemics in the Ottoman world in light of their historiographical style and implicit references to eschatological paradigms.

Methodology:

- Apply discourse analysis to the new genres of political/historical writings
- Compare European historiographical studies of the Ottomans with the local ones as a means of detecting the similarities and differences.

Points of relevance:

- A textually-oriented research towards the conceptual and philosophical ideas of history that existed based on an array of eschatological, scriptural and political assumptions about the past-present-future nexus that had originated in the Ottoman World and Europe
- A microscopic comparison of these two types of historiography will contribute to the cross-imperial intellectual history in Eurasia.

Preliminary bibliography:

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