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# The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908

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The nineteenth century, a time when world history seemed to accelerate, was the epoch of the Risorgimento and the Unification of Germany. It was also an epoch which saw the last efforts of dynastic *ancien régime* empires (Habsburg, Romanov, Ottoman) to shore up their political systems with methods often borrowed from their adversaries, the nationalist liberals. Eric Hobsbawm's inspiring recent study has pointed out that, in the world after the French Revolution, it was no longer enough for monarchies to claim divine right; additional ideological reinforcement was required: "The need to provide a new, or at least a supplementary, 'national' foundation for this institution was felt in states as secure from revolution as George III's Britain and Nicholas I's Russia."<sup>1</sup>

This meant, first and foremost, the securing of the monarchies' grip on what was coming more and more to be considered an extremely volatile and combustible entity—the people. Police measures and naked coercion were no longer sufficient by themselves, even if the means to enforce them were available, which often they were not. The monarchies increasingly needed what Anthony Smith has referred to as the "mobilization" and "inclusion" of a broader strata:

By acculturating middle and lower urban strata at least, the aristocratic ethnic broadens its base and prolongs its social life and its mores, together with the myths, symbols, values and memories that the aristocracy have cultivated over the generations and which now are fed into the heritage of an enlarged proto-nation.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Romanov, Ottoman, or Habsburg houses could hardly be expected to create citizenry outright, they certainly prepared the ground for the growth of that very idea. As aptly put by Benedict Anderson, "because of the rapidly rising prestige all over Europe of the national idea, there was a discernible tendency among the Euro-Mediterranean monarchies to sidle to-

<sup>1</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1990), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), 106.

wards a beckoning national identification.”<sup>3</sup> This increasingly brought to the fore what can only be called “the public image of the state,” which then formed the basis for the state’s claimed legitimation.

This political and intellectual atmosphere had a profound effect on the ruling elite of the Ottoman state, which, from the Sultan down, began to look for a new basis for defining what was increasingly coming to be considered an “Ottoman citizenry.” Very disparate elements in Ottoman society, ranging from the bureaucratic elite and the Young Ottoman intelligentsia to the humble popular *‘ulama*, felt that a new social base was needed if the empire was to survive. From this new social base they hoped to confront the ideological challenges of the era. As Şerif Mardin put it in what is still the seminal work on the subject: “There occurred an ingathering of hitherto centrifugal forces. The common focus was the desire to free the Ottoman Empire of its inferior position in its relations with western powers.”<sup>4</sup> The Ottoman elite rose to these challenges largely by reaffirming what they claimed to be the basis of legitimacy of the Islamic and secular institutions of the state. Despite their policies, which appealed theoretically to “tradition,” this was done in a fashion which was, in fact, quite novel and in many ways “invented tradition” in Hobsbawm’s sense that “it would be desirable to see a study of the attempts by some authentically legitimist dynasties, such as the Habsburg and the Romanov, not merely to command the obedience of their subjects, but to rally their loyalty as potential citizens.”<sup>5</sup> This study will attempt to do just that for the late Ottomans.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this essay is to suggest answers to the following questions. What aspects of the pre-existing methods of statecraft and popular traditions were adapted to novel needs? In other words, what were the elements in the proto-nationalism of the Ottoman, Turkish, and Islamic empires which were employed in the effort to create something approaching an “Ottoman citizenry”?<sup>7</sup> Were there any equivalent pre-existing notions, such as the “Holy Russian land” or the “icons of Holy Russia” for which Cherniavsky’s and Hobsbawm’s Cossacks died?<sup>8</sup> What were the “linkages between religion and national consciousness”?<sup>9</sup> How were the messages of the new exigencies of the state communicated to the target population? How did the Ottomans set about creating the “citizen mobilizing and citizen-influencing state”?<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 82.

<sup>4</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, 1962), 60.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 266.

<sup>6</sup> This article is part of a larger project which aims at the understanding of the transformation of the Ottoman self-image in the nineteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 45–79.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

The developments in the Ottoman Empire clearly parallel similar trends in other imperial systems. Anderson accurately points to the phenomenon of “Russification” and “official nationalism,” the policies of standardization and uniformity pursued through education and attempted imposition of the imperial language on the subject peoples.<sup>11</sup> This concept of national monarchy was precisely what the Ottoman ruling elite was aiming for with its policy of Ottomanism, a concept meant to unite all peoples living in Ottoman domains, Muslim and non-Muslim, Turkish and Greek, Armenian and Jewish, Kurd and Arab. As such, it was a fine example of Anderson’s definition of official nationalism because it was “an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups who are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally imagined community.”<sup>12</sup> This policy began with the Imperial Rescript of the Rose Chamber of 1839 (*Hat-ı Şerif-i Gülhane*), which declared the equality before the law of all Ottomans, Muslim and non-Muslim. The Ottomanism of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) took on a much more Islamic character, although it did not reverse many of the administrative trends of the Tanzimat reforms. The concept of national monarchy was very much behind Abdülhamid’s Islamism. Although it is unclear how much of his decision making was informed by Turkism (he did declare on numerous occasions that the language of state was Turkish, yet he promoted Arabs to unprecedented heights in the bureaucracy), his brand of Ottomanism was definitely an integrationist policy based on Islam, but an Islam which was becoming less and less ecumenical. What was happening, however, was very much what Anderson refers to as “stretching the short tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire.”<sup>13</sup> This was to be taken to its ultimate extent by the Young Turks, but its ideological ancestry was found in the Hamidian era, although the two epochs are usually taken to be antipodal. In the Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian cases, official nationalism meant that the person of the monarch came to be directly identified with state power, but this also had its risks because now the monarch became directly responsible for the failures of the system. This is what happened to the houses of the Romanovs, Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs, and the Ottomans, which literally came tumbling down to human scale. The Ottoman Caliphate was abolished by something as banal as an act of parliament in 1924, largely because what was left of its mystique had been carried away by defeat in the Great War.

In this article I suggest that the evidence indicates that one derives the impression that Ottoman nationality was beginning to be envisioned in more and more secular terms despite the religious language in which it was couched. In other words, although the state spoke the political language of

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 82–103.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

Islam, it was in fact implementing the concrete policy of a rational secular programme. In the course of the applying this programme the Ottomans often had recourse to invented traditions. In the following pages I attempt, first, to provide a background to the increasing preoccupation of the Ottomans with their public image and, second, to focus on specific policies of the Hamidian era which illustrate the Ottoman version of official nationalism.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE OTTOMAN INVENTION OF TRADITION  
AS PUBLIC IMAGE: SYMBOLISM AND ITS USES (1808–1908)

As nineteenth-century imperialism reached its peak, the Ottoman state, the only non-Christian Great Power in Europe, began to feel constant pressure to stake its claim in the world arena. The Ottomans were aware to the point of self-consciousness that they were the “only major empire of the pre-modern Islamic world to survive with institutional continuity and a degree of sovereignty into the era of modernization.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, their very uniqueness meant that their sovereignty had to be constantly reconfirmed as being based in tradition. Although the empire had always stressed tradition, the nineteenth-century context demanded its modernization or even its invention.

The contributors to the volume, *The Invention of Tradition*, draw attention in several instances to the great increase of “neo-traditions” in the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> They point to the increased effort expended by the great powers to appear more imperial and more majestic through elaborate ceremonial and the additional pomp and circumstance of the state. Although ceremony had never been lacking in the Ottoman context from the time of Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) through the *Tanzimat* (1839–76) and afterwards, there was a clear desire to keep up with the Romanovs as the Ottoman ruling house tried to hold its own in the increasingly competitive augmentation of ceremonial throughout the world.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most notable symbols of the renewed emphasis on royal power and ceremonial in the late nineteenth century was heraldry. The Sublime State (*Devlet-i Aliyye*) was symbolized by the coat of arms of the House of Osman (*Arma-i Osmani*). The design had been commissioned from an Italian artist by Mahmud II. By the time Abdülhamid II came to sit on the Ottoman throne (r. 1876–1909), it was such a well-established part of Ottoman official tradition that when the sultan asked for a detailed description of its contents in 1905, the bureaucracy was momentarily embarrassed because no official authorized version seemed to be readily available. Finally, it was dug up, and the contents

<sup>14</sup> Carter Findley, “The Advent of Ideology in the Islamic Middle East,” *Studia Islamica*, LVI (1982), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, particularly I–14, 101–62, 263–307.

<sup>16</sup> David Cannadine, “The British Monarchy c.1820–1977,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 126.

described.<sup>17</sup> In a detailed memorandum the sultan was informed that the Ottoman coat of arms consisted of both old and new, Turkish and Islamic motifs, such as armaments and other symbolic objects. The central motif in the shield was “the exalted crown of the Sultans,” topped by the seal or *tuğra* of the regnant ruler. This was flanked by two heavy tomes, one symbolizing the Islamic law, *Şeriat*, and the other modern law codes (*ahkam-ı Şer’iyye ve Nizamiye’yi cami kitab*). Under these appeared a set of scales representing justice. The central motif was surrounded and flanked by symbolic armaments, the old balancing the new: an arrow and quiver and an infantry rifle and bayonet, an old-style muzzleloading cannon and a modern field artillery piece, a traditional scimitar and a modern cavalry saber, and so forth. The coat of arms also included traditional Islamic-Ottoman symbols, such as a vase full of blossoming roses and incense, which represented the magnanimity of the state. The total design was flanked on the right side by a cluster of red banners and on the left by a cluster of green banners symbolizing the Sultanic-Ottoman and the universal Islamic nature of the Caliphate. Set under the entire design were the whole array of Ottoman decorations. The central themes of the Ottoman coat of arms revolved around the continuity of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern; yet, it was an invented tradition stemming from the need the Ottomans felt to emphasize that they were a great power like all the others. The fact that the Imperial coat of arms bristled with weaponry is of course indicative of the actual weakness of the state relative to its peers.<sup>18</sup> The symbol of the Ottoman Empire can therefore be seen to represent “the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes.”<sup>19</sup> It was also a very succinct expression of the Ottoman state’s “myth-symbol complex.”<sup>20</sup>

Just as the Ottomans tried to emphasize pre-existing traditions by including them in the symbol of the state, they also attempted to curtail the circulation of what were considered “rival symbols.” Correspondence between the Chancery of the Grand Vizier and the Palace dated 8 June 1892 dealt with the issue of the importation of goods whose packaging bore the coat of arms of rival powers. The sultan wanted to forbid the entry of such packages, but the Grand Vizier had to point out that there was no legal way for the Ottoman customs to keep them out.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi Yıldız Resmi Maruzat 135/22. Prime Ministerial Archives (Istanbul) [hereafter, BBA]. Official correspondence between Yıldız Palace and the Ministries [hereafter, Y.ARES Y.AHUS].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* See also David Cannadine, “The British Monarchy,” 121: “As the real power of the Monarchy waned, the way was open for it to become the centre of grand ceremonial once more.” Similarly, as real power declined in the Ottoman Empire, the emphasis shifted to claiming legitimacy through pomp and ceremonial.

<sup>19</sup> Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 1–5.

<sup>21</sup> BBA Y.A HUS 261/91 Imperial Chancery to Yıldız Palace. 11 Zilkade 1309/ 8 June 1892.

The visual confirmation of sovereignty was also extended to non-Muslim places of worship. On 24 October 1885, the Grand Vizier Kâmil Paşa reported that the Armenian Catholic church in Büyükdere, a village on the Bosphorus on the outskirts of Istanbul, had erected a commemorative plaque stating that the church had been constructed “during the just and glorious reign of Abdülhamid II.” The initiative seems to have come from the Armenian Archbishop, who declared that “this was being done for the first time in a Christian temple.” In fact the sultan was rather unsure about how appropriate this whole business was and ordered that “it be secretly investigated as to what the exact wording on the plaque consisted of,” too prominent a display “might be offensive to Muslim opinion.” Kâmil Paşa reported back that it was a harmless display of loyalty and in any case the plaque was displayed in an inner courtyard, where few Muslim eyes would see it.<sup>22</sup>

Abdülhamid apparently soon overcame his shyness, and the erection of official iconography on non-Muslim official buildings became commonplace. An order dated 16 March 1894 declared that the request of the Catholic Archbishop of Üsküb (Scopje) to display a plaque bearing the Imperial monogram, the *tuğra*, on the Archbishop’s residence was to be granted. The decision was based on the precedent that “various Archbishoprics of other confessions have in the past been thus honoured with the August Symbol.”<sup>23</sup>

Official coats of arms and decorations were ubiquitous in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman state was as preoccupied with them as the rest of the world. On 20 June 1892, the Vilayet of Konya reported that certain Greek notables in the town of Isparta had been wearing their official decorations and uniforms to church during the Easter service. The Governor proudly reported that he had put a stop to “this inappropriate practice.” He was (no doubt much to his surprise) promptly reprimanded and told that “these people are wearing their decorations as a gesture of pride and loyalty and should not be interfered with.”<sup>24</sup>

Another clear example of invented tradition in an Ottoman context is the “traditionally oriental” headgear, the *fes*, seen by Westerners as the ultimate symbol of Turkishness. Apparently of Moroccan origin, the *fes* was declared in 1832 to be the official head covering of all the subjects of the empire by Sultan Mahmud II. It was to be worn by Muslim and non-Muslim alike to

The matter developed over a crate of mirrors being sent from Greece to Crete. It must be remembered that these were turbulent years leading up to the autonomy of Crete and the Ottoman-Greek War of 1897.

<sup>22</sup> BBA Y.A HUS 184/65 Grand Vizier Kâmil Paşa to Yıldız Palace. 14 Muharrem 1303/ 24 October 1885.

<sup>23</sup> BBA Y.A HUS 306/46. Grand Vizier Cevad Paşa. Sublime Porte Receivers Office no: 589 12 Safer 1312/ 16 March 1894. To this day, non-Muslim places of worship display the Turkish flag (very prominently), yet one never sees a mosque displaying the national colours.

<sup>24</sup> BBA Y.A HUS 261/141 Grand Vizier Cevad Paşa to Vilayet of Konya. 23 Zilkade 1309/ 20 June 1892.

abolish external distinctions between communities. Mahmud had abolished the Janissary Corps in 1826, and a new form of headgear was thus needed for the new army he was attempting to build up. Thus, the ubiquitous symbol of the Turk in the nineteenth century was only a relatively recent creation and an imported one at that.<sup>25</sup>

A sphere of invented tradition in the Ottoman Empire which paralleled European developments is that of official music represented by the national anthem, being very much part of the iconography of neo-traditions.<sup>26</sup> The Ottoman Empire took its first steps in that direction when Mahmud II and his successor, Abdülmecid I, employed Guiseppe Donizetti as the court musician from 1828 until he died in 1856. Donizetti composed the *Mahmudiye* march, which established a pattern. Donizetti then composed the *Mecidiye* march and trained a band of palace musicians selected from among the children of leading notables, a venture enthusiastically supported by the sultan.<sup>27</sup> No less a personage than Franz Liszt then composed a paraphrase to Donizetti's *Mahmudiye* march in 1847.<sup>28</sup> He was followed by Johann Strauss, who dedicated a composition to Abdülmecid in 1849 and was rewarded with a gift of a ring.<sup>29</sup> After Donizetti's death, Calisto Guatelli became court musician in 1856 and composed the *Aziziye* march for Sultan Abdülaziz. Guatelli served well into the reign of Abdülhamid and was known for his "Oriental Overture" and "Ottoman March." It is likely, though unclear, that he was also responsible for the *Hamidiye* march. Both Donizetti and Guatelli held the highest of Ottoman ranks, that of *Paşa*.<sup>30</sup> By the time of Abdülhamid the second generation of official musicians had been trained. Gazimihal points out that the Sultan felt a "need for a much tighter discipline in order to be able to compete

<sup>25</sup> For concise information on the *fes*, see E. J. Brill, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1987), 96; see also Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Highland Tradition of Scotland," in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 15–41. The *fes* and the kilt seem to share certain characteristics. Both were the result of an imported idea. The kilt was the product of the pragmatic imagination of an English Quaker entrepreneur, and the *fes*, the headgear of North Africa. Both became symbols of their respective societies to the point of total assimilation into the local culture. Just as the foreign tourists today buy kilts when they visit Scotland, they are often seen in the tourist traps of Istanbul sporting the *fes* as a "traditional" aspect of the city. Both the kilt and the *fes* therefore retain largely fancy dress value. Indeed, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk set out to ban the latter as a symbol of Ottoman decadence, he condemned it as "the headcovering of Greeks," hoping thus to direct the popular odium of the recent war against the Greek invasion of Anatolia against it and replace it with the modern cloth cap or hat. See Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem* (Istanbul, 1991), 52.

<sup>26</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 7, 11, 270, 277.

<sup>27</sup> Etem Üngör, *Türk Marşları* (Turkish Marches) Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü. seri IV sayı A.3 (Ankara, 1965), 87. This is a very interesting book which gives the complete scores of all the major examples of official music. See also Mahmut R. Gazimihal, *Türk Askeri Müzikaları Tarihi* (The History of Turkish Military Bands) (Istanbul, 1955), 84. I thank Dr. Cem Behar for both these references.

<sup>28</sup> Üngör, *Türk Marşları*, 90–115.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> *Tanzimat' dan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (The Encyclopedia of Turkey from the Tanzimat to the Republic) (Istanbul, 1985), 1216, 1220.

with Europe.”<sup>31</sup> By the time of Abdülhamid’s reign it became quite commonplace to compose marches as a means of seeking favour. In 1893 a Mademoiselle Laurette Rosette composed the “Chant Turc: Vive Le Sultan.” This was followed by Dicran Thohadjian’s “Grande Marche,” which was dedicated to the Sultan in 1895.<sup>32</sup>

As in music, a feature of nineteenth-century commemorative iconography was the commemorative medallion. Perhaps the most interesting among the Ottoman examples of this genre, as a bid for modernity combined with time-honoured historical legitimation, is the medallion struck in 1850 during the reign of Abdülmecid I (r. 1839–61). An admirable document of the late Ottoman state of mind, it is emblazoned with the slogan, “Cet Etat subsistera parce que Dieu le veut.” On one side it features a fortress in a smoky cloud over which flies the Ottoman banner. On the rim are found such slogans as “Justice égale pour tous,” “Protection des faibles,” “L’Etat relevé.” On the reverse, the motifs include the Central Asian Turkish cap, and, engraved in various places, “Mahomet II” (Mehmed II, the Conqueror of Istanbul in 1453), “Solyman I” (Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent r. 1520–1566), “Reshid” (Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Grand Vizier at the time and the major figure behind the Tanzimat reforms), “Aali” (Mehmed Emin Âli Paşa, together with Reşid, a major figure in the reform movement), and “Coprulu” (Mehmed Köprülü and his son Ahmet Köprülü, the architects of revived Ottoman power in the second half of the sixteenth century).<sup>33</sup>

Another case of modern usage of an ancient form was the inclusion of the Ottoman genealogical lineage in the state almanacs (*salname*). The almanac for 1885 traces the roots of the Ottoman family back to Adam and Eve via Noah. The official dynastic myth of how the Selçuk Sultan Aladdin Keykubad protected Osman, the founder of the dynasty, is duly recounted. It claims that the House of Osman is “according to the research of experts one of the oldest in the world, and will last forever.”<sup>34</sup> It is interesting that such manifest official fiction, an ancient tradition in Islamic court literature, would be featured in a state almanac created by bureaucratic modernization and featuring such mundane data as the names of the various ministers.

The same adaptation of old motifs for new usages was observable in the very document that symbolized the *Tanzimat*, the Imperial Rescript of the

<sup>31</sup> Gazimihal, *Türk Askeri Müzikaları Tarihi*, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Supplement du journal *Malumat* 1311. Marche composé par Mlle. Laurette Rosette; Dicran Thohadjian, “Grande Marche très humblement dédié a Sa Majeste Imperiale le Sultan Abdul Hamid Han. Empereur des Ottomans. Composée specialement pour le journal *Malumat* a l’occasion de l’Année 1313 de l’Hegire.” Both marches and their scores are part of the Cem Behar collection.

<sup>33</sup> Personal collection of Dr. Edhem Eldem. I owe thanks to Dr. Eldem for bringing this medallion to my attention. The medallion is in bronze and was struck in Brussels.

<sup>34</sup> *Salname-i Vilayet-i Hüdevendigâr* (Almanac for the Vilayet of Bursa), year 1303/1885, pp. 110–33.

Rose Chamber, (*Hat-i Şerif-i Gülhane*). Even while setting out the reasons for the new laws, the declaration based itself quite deliberately on religious dogma, stating that “it is evident that countries not governed by the laws of the *Şeriat* cannot prevail.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, what it decreed was very much against the *Şeriat*, that is, the legal equality of Muslim and non-Muslim. In the same vein, the document declared that tax assessment and collection would be carried out according to rational methods, on an equitable basis. This appeal to modernity was, however, couched in the language of the classic Islamic image of the “Circle of Equity”: Just laws make for prosperous subjects, prosperous subjects pay their taxes, taxes pay for soldiers, soldiers protect the taxpayers, and so on.<sup>36</sup> Thus, although it heralded nothing less than the beginnings of a modern secular state, the language used was that of Islam—and with good reason. The measure of legal equality was clearly unpopular among Muslim subjects, who felt that their assured place of superiority in the empire was lost.<sup>37</sup>

In some ways what Abdülhamid II felt was this very pulse of “despondency” among his Muslim subjects:

The old Sultan had certainly a difficult problem to face in the earlier years of his reign. In 1880 to 1882 a hopeless despondency about the future of the country reigned everywhere in Turkish society . . . Abd-ul-Hamid had to create a feeling of hope among his Moslem subjects . . . Abd-ul-Hamid introduced the new religious idea: he revived the idea of the khalifate . . . [as a scheme for] strengthening Mohammedan feeling and making Turkey the center of Mohammedan revival.<sup>38</sup>

In furthering this aim, the person of the sultan was made to acquire a certain “aura of sacrality.” This stretched to the extent that the hair and fingernails of the august person were saved, washed in silver containers by specifically appointed servants, and sent to the Hicaz every year, as part of the ceremonial caravan, the *sürre alayı*, which bore the annual gifts to the Holy Places.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, as in the cases above, this accompanied the effort to be like other modern rulers. Friday prayer had always been an important ceremonial occa-

<sup>35</sup> *Düstur* (Register of Ottoman Laws) I.Tertip Istanbul Matbaa-i Amire 1289. (Istanbul Imperial Press 1289/1872), p. 4.

See also J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and Africa in World Politics* (New Haven, 1975), 269–71. My version differs slightly from that of Hurewitz, in that I have preferred to use “prevail” where Hurewitz uses “survive (*payidar*)”. For a good overall description of the Ottoman reform process known as the *Tanzimat*, or re-ordering, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, 1971).

<sup>36</sup> *Düstur*, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Moshe Ma’oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine* (Oxford, 1968), 23. Ma’oz states that differing versions were circulated in the Arab provinces. These were not quite as explicit in their declarations of equality. On the disturbances in the provinces, see Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, 1962).

<sup>38</sup> William Ramsay Mitchell, “The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1915–16, pp. 359–422. I owe thanks to Professor Şerif Mardin for this reference.

<sup>39</sup> Sina Akşin, *Türkiye Tarihi* II (Istanbul, 1988), 8.

sion in Islamic and Ottoman practice, for it was when the ruler participated in public worship and showed himself to the people. In the nineteenth century, Friday prayer acquired ceremonial trappings inspired from European examples. Despite his mortal fear of assassination (well founded as it turned out, because of the attempt in 1905), Abdülhamid made the effort to show himself to the population once a week. The royal procession would leave the Yıldız Palace with great pomp, the Imperial landau flanked by mounted Albanian House Guards in livery, and make its way to the Yıldız mosque (admittedly not very far away). After the service special officials would circulate among the throng and collect petitions which would then be forwarded to a branch of the bureaucracy which dealt specifically with petitions received on these occasions.<sup>40</sup>

A physical manifestation of this change towards a modern public persona of the monarch was seen in mosque architecture in the nineteenth century. The classical Ottoman mosque was altered to suit the ceremonial protocol of European usage, so an additional two-story structure was added to the main building to serve as “ceremonial public space,” giving a more “worldly” character to the buildings.<sup>41</sup>

#### THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE STATE IN THE HAMIDIAN PERIOD; IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES (1876–1908)

After the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–78 and the consequent loss of most of the Balkan Christian provinces, the official nationalism of the Porte became more Islamic in flavour and style. Abdülhamid II, a convinced autocrat and a ruler who had no time for experimentation with democracy, recast the myth-symbol complex of his state in a different mold. Where the *Tanzimat* had stressed the equality of all subjects, Abdülhamid realigned the basis of the state on a more Islamic foundation.<sup>42</sup> However, here one has to be careful. The Islamism of Abdülhamid was in many ways a new creation. Although the motifs and the style of state ideology were Islamic, much of his policy stemmed from secular considerations aimed at the secular ends of retrenchment and last-ditch defence. Nor did the sultan attempt to turn the clock back.

<sup>40</sup> Mehmet İpşirli, “Osmanlılarda Cuma Selamlığı. Halk Hükümdar Münasebetleri Açısından Önemi” (The Institution of Friday Prayer in the Ottoman State. Its Importance for the Relationship of the Ruler and the People), in *Prof. Bekir Kütükoğlu’na Armağan* (Istanbul, 1991), 459–71. The official department in question was called the *Maruzat-ı Rikabive Dairesi* (The Bureau of Petitions of the Stirrup). Dr. İpşirli, has done a detailed analysis of the content of these petitions and points out that in most cases they were acted upon.

<sup>41</sup> Afife Batur, “Batılılaşma Döneminde Osmanlı Mimarlığı” (Ottoman Architecture during the Period of Westernization), *Tanzimat’ dan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, pp. 1060–1.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Duguid, “The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 9 (1973), 139–55.

He continued many of the dominant trends of the *Tanzimat* period, most noticeably the emphasis on centralization and the spread of education.

The underlying motive force behind all these considerations was that the Ottoman Empire felt threatened both morally and physically. The Sublime State saw that it was constantly losing manoeuvring space in a ever-shrinking world. Just as it was attempting to improve its public image both towards its own subjects and towards the outside world, the challenges mounted. Perhaps the most dangerous of these challenges was missionary activity. The Ottomans realized very early that there was an organic link between nineteenth-century imperialism and missionary zeal. Everywhere the missionary appeared as the representative of a superior civilization and culture, the primary vehicle for the realization of the White Man's Burden. Not only did the missionaries undermine the efforts the Ottomans were making to legitimize the basis of their rule at home, but they also proved influential in creating adverse conditions for the Ottomans abroad by feeding the Western press with anti-Ottoman sentiment: "Many missionaries and western journalists proceeded upon the confident assumption that the Terrible Turk belonged to a retrograde race of Devil worshippers."<sup>43</sup>

Particularly in the reign of Abdülhamid II, missionary activity picked up momentum during the 1880s and 1890s, with British, French, Russian, and American missionaries parcelling out spheres of activity within the empire. This led to a situation where, as Jeremy Salt argues, "the relationship that developed between the missionaries and the Ottoman government was one of mutual suspicion and mutual dislike."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, by the 1880s the Sultan came to regard the missionaries as "the most dangerous enemies to the social order" among all the foreigners living in his domains.<sup>45</sup> Diplomats, merchants, soldiers, all had to do with the here and now; the missionaries, through their schools, had to do with the future. In this respect the missionary issue, far too complicated to be dealt with exhaustively in this study, forms one of the key issues for understanding what was becoming increasingly an Ottoman obsession with their public image.

There is ample evidence, in the Ottoman archival sources, that the Ottoman ruling elite feared infiltration, not only of its Christian minorities but also of its Muslim population, as well as other marginal groups, such as the Nusayris and the Yezidi Kurds. Moreover, it was precisely these marginal elements which were coming to the fore as the state felt that it had to squeeze the last sources for untapped manpower.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Haythorne Braden, *The Eagle and the Crescent: American Interests in the Ottoman Empire, 1861–1870* (Ph.D. Diss., Ohio State University, 1973), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Jeremy Salt, "A Precarious Symbiosis: Ottoman Christians and the Foreign Missionaries in the Nineteenth Century," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 3:3 (1985–86), 56.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

The Ottoman response was a desperate attempt at social engineering which found its main expression in an effort to shore up the Sunni Hanefi *mezheb* as the basis of official religiosity, as the official belief (*mezheb-i resmîye*). This policy furnished a good example of what Smith calls “the process of turning a largely aristocratic and lateral *ethnie* and former polity into a full political nation . . . [through] a conscious programme of mass education and propaganda.”<sup>46</sup> Although the Hanefi school of jurisprudence had always enjoyed official endorsement in the Ottoman Empire, strict imposition of orthodoxy was not stressed in the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of earlier periods.<sup>47</sup> This new emphasis on orthodoxy, one sphere in which the Ottomans had recourse to invented traditions, was a good example of “adaptation [taking] place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes.”<sup>48</sup> In furthering this aim, the Sublime State embarked on a hitherto unprecedented programme of what can only be called counter-propaganda. This effort involved the active encouragement of conversion to the Hanefi sect, and for the first time, the Ottomans envisioned using missionary zeal to fight missionary zeal.

The focus of most missionary activity was Eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces (*Vilayet*). Particularly Syria and the notoriously heterodox Iraqi *vilayets* of Basra, Mosul, and Bagdad saw increased activity in the 1890s. The increase in British influence in Iran in the last quarter of the nineteenth century paralleled the increase of Protestant (American and British) activity in the frontier zone between the Ottoman heartlands and Iran. One example among others, an Imperial Decree (*Irade*) dated 26 January 1892, stated that “English priests” had been seen in the vicinity of Kevar, on the Ottoman-Iranian border. These priests, it was reported, were distributing books and pamphlets among the local Nestorian population. One had been apprehended, and an investigation had been launched. The sultan decreed that they be “chased away in the firmest manner” (*suret-i hakimane oralardan def'leri*).<sup>49</sup>

These Imperial decrees are particularly interesting because they highlight the fact that the sultan had a fairly clear notion of the ambivalent relationship

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism*, 142. Smith talks about how this programme was tried in both Habsburg Austria and Romanov Russia but yielded the opposite result to the desired result. The parallels with the Ottoman case are striking here.

<sup>47</sup> On the Hanefi *Mezheb*, see *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden and London, 1965), 162–4, s.v. “The Hanafiyya.”

<sup>48</sup> Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye (Imperial Edict) 99013 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat 24 Cemaziyelahir 1309/26 January 1892. The Imperial Edicts cover all spheres of state activity. They are separate collections, such as *Dahiliye* (Internal Affairs), *Hariciye* (Foreign Affairs), and *Maarif* (Education).

between the Bible Societies and the Western governments. This is illustrated in the lines that he dictated to his private secretary:

In England, Russia and France there exist Bible Societies which become exceedingly rich through the donations of wealthy and fanatical Christians who bequeath all their wealth to them in their wills . . . although the English, Russian, and French governments seem not to be directly involved in their activities, they secretly aid and abet them in sending missionaries even into darkest Africa. In this way they spread their beliefs among the local population. By increasing the numbers of their followers this religious influence is then transformed into political leverage. . . . Recently they have been reported in Mosul, and their books and pamphlets have even appeared in Istanbul. Although it is obviously desirable to take firm measures against them, if open opposition is brought to bear, the Sublime Porte will suffer the vexing intervention of the three powers' ambassadors. Thus, the only way to fight against them is to increase the Islamic population and spread the belief in the Holiest of Faiths.<sup>50</sup>

Given that such concern was evinced at the highest level, it is not surprising to find numerous instances in the Ottoman records of local officials in the field reacting to missionary subversion. One method of dealing with the problem was a systematic programme of conversion to Sunni Hanefi orthodoxy, which was applied particularly among the marginal elements, such as the Shi'ites, the Nusayri, and the Yezidi Kurds.

In one such instance, Muhammed Hassa, the *Mutasarrif* of Lazkiye (Latakia) in Syria, wrote to Istanbul on 26 June 1890, to report that the Nusayri of Sahyun district had expressed a collective desire to be converted to the Hanefi mezheb. This event had been preceded by the conversion of the Nusayris of Markab and Cebele in the same region. The Nusayri leaders of Sahyun, the official reported, had signed a petition requesting that the state provide them with schools and mosques (*mescids*) and teachers to instruct them in the Hanefi belief. Fifteen schools and ten mescid were needed for the district of Sahyun. The matter was one of utmost urgency because missionaries were active among the Nusayri population:

If the Sublime State finds itself unable to make the necessary sacrifices in terms of resources to grant the requests of these people, and abandons them to their forlorn state of ignorance, this can only have grievous consequences. This will only butter the bread of the foreigners who have already gone so far as to pay regular salaries to the Nusayri leaders. [If their request is not granted] the foreigners will be able to tell them, 'see, your government is unable to take care of you' and this will lead to an increase of their already present influence.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 100258 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat No.6975 27 Şevval 1309/26 May 1892.

<sup>51</sup> BBA Irade Meclis-i Mahsus 4687 Mutasarrif Muhammed Hassa to the Sublime Porte. Telegram 13 Haziran 1306/26 June 1891. The Ottoman administrative units of the time were broken down into provinces (*Vilayet*), administered by a Governor or *Vali*, districts (*Sancak*) administered by a *Mutasarrif*, and the communes (*Kaza*) administered by a *Kaimakam*. The

The *Vali* of Beirut added to this report on 27 June 1890 that the schools and mosques had to be complemented by barracks for Imperial regulars which would be stationed in Sahyun. The official confidently stated that “if this is done the intrigues of the Christian priests will be countered.” The classic triangle for inculcating and maintaining orthodoxy—the school, mosque, and barracks—was thus established.<sup>52</sup> The *Vilayet* of Syria continued to report intense missionary activity. The *Vali* of the province, Osman Nuri Paşa, wrote to Istanbul on 21 January 1892 that in keeping with the orders emanating from the capital, he had compiled a list of unlicensed, newly constituted churches and schools. He estimated that there were 159 of these schools, which “had been constructed in an underhand manner” by converting dwellings into schoolhouses. The Jesuits and Protestants had been very active to the point of subsidizing the families of the students:

According to my investigations, the Jesuits and Protestants not only admit non-Muslim children into their schools free of charge and pay for their food and clothing, but also pay subsidies to their parents. This has a very detrimental effect on the simple folk who cannot tell good from evil. The continuation of this state of affairs can only have very serious consequences in the future.<sup>53</sup>

The implication was, however, that the activity of the missionaries was also having its effect on the Muslim population. Osman Nuri Paşa suggested that in order for these latter to be preserved from the “intrigues and subversion” of the “priests,” and as the holy month of Ramadan was approaching, specially appointed *ʿulama* should be sent to the areas in question. These teachers were to “secretly impart to the Muslim population the ills that will accrue to them if they sent their children to Christian schools.” The appropriate *Irade* was in fact issued on 1 March 1892 determining that seven local *ʿulama* should be assigned to the districts in question.<sup>54</sup> The interesting aspect of this communication was its emphasis on secrecy. It is fairly clear that any opposition to the missionaries which was too blatant would draw the wrath of the Powers’ consuls.

The Ottomans were clearly aware that the extreme constraints on their resources were creating a vacuum in the educational services being filled by the missionary schools. An Imperial decree dated 26 June 1892 ordered that Muslim children should be removed from all non-Muslim schools and edu-

model was the Code Napoléon, and the major reorganization of the provincial administration took shape under the Law of Provincial Administration (*Vilayet Kannunamesi*) of 1869. See İber Ortaylı, *Tanzimattan Sonra Mahalli Idareler 1840–1878* (Provincial Administration in the Ottoman Empire) (Ankara, 1974).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Telegram from Governor of Beirut, Aziz Paşa, to Sublime Porte. 14 Haziran 1306/27 June 1891.

<sup>53</sup> BBA *Irade* Dahiliye 99649 Governor of Syria to Sublime Porte, No.32 19 Cemaziyelahir 1309/21 January 1892.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

cated by village *imams*. Yet the same document openly stated that Istanbul could not send any more money to Syria, even though only a fairly modest sum was needed to print reading primers for primary schools.<sup>55</sup>

As can be seen from the above, education was perceived as a defensive weapon against what was emerging as an insidious threat to the integrity of the empire. Forced to squeeze his empire for its last reserves of manpower, Abdülhamid II cast about for untapped resources. One such possible source were the Yezidi Kurds, a war-like mountain people who inhabited the Şeyhan area in the vastness of northern Iraq.<sup>56</sup> A “heretical sect,” as far as Sunni orthodoxy was concerned, the Yezidi Kurds could be turned to account through “Hanefization.” As put by John Guest, “the Yezidis-Kurds but not Muslims . . . represented an anomaly in the mind of the pious Sultan.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, from 1885 onwards, they were put on conscription lists and required to perform military service. A memorandum prepared by Grand Vizier Cevad Paşa, dated 25 October 1891 and summarizing the deliberations of the Ottoman Council of Ministers on the matter, dwelled at length on this issue.

In order to “correct the ignorance and heresy of these people,” the Porte had ordered an advisory commission to Mosul to bring the Yezidis into line, so that they would be useful for military service. The mission had only further alienated the Yezidis by inordinately violent measures, “thus further increasing their fanaticism and bigotry.” Cevad Paşa suggested that the mission be recalled and replaced by competent persons who would be informed about the “peculiarities of the sect” and use persuasion and education rather than force.<sup>58</sup> The *Irade* endorsing the Minister’s suggestions, issued some ten days previously, stated that 13,000 *kuruş* had already been spent on a mosque and an endowment for those Yezidis who had “already converted to the True Faith.”<sup>59</sup> This pressure from the central government caused the Yezidis to turn to the American missionaries active among them after the late 1880s, particularly the American Board mission in Mardin, which had made expeditionary approaches to the Yezidis after receiving support from an “unnamed English Lady [who] sent a small sum for a tentative effort among them.”<sup>60</sup>

In the summer of 1892, the Ottoman government mounted its most concentrated campaign of conversion among the Yezidis. A strong-willed general,

<sup>55</sup> BBA *Irade* Dahiliye 100687 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat No.8185 29 Zilkade 1309/26 June 1892.

<sup>56</sup> John Guest, *The Yezidis. A Study in Survival* (London and New York, 1987).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 126. For information on the Yezidi faith see Isya Joseph, *Devil Worship. The Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidiz* (London, 1919; reprint, the Health Research Institute of California, 1972).

<sup>58</sup> BBA *Irade* Dahiliye 97741 Sublime Porte to Yıldız Palace 20 Rebiyulevvel 1309/25 October 1891.

<sup>59</sup> BBA *Irade* Dahiliye 97741 Sublime Porte to Yıldız Palace 20 Rebiyulevvel 1309/25 October 1891.

<sup>60</sup> Guest, *The Yezidis*, 128.

Ömer Vehbi Paşa, was given the title, Commander of the Forces of Reform (*Firka-i Islahiye Kumandanı*), and was sent to Mosul to deal with the problem.<sup>61</sup> Using quite brutal methods and systematic repression, he succeeded in forcing the conversion of some Yezidis to Hanefi Islam.<sup>62</sup>

On 20 August 1892, Ömer Vehbi Paşa sent Istanbul a detailed telegram giving a colourful account of his success:

After repeated unsuccessful attempts through the centuries to bring them back to the true path, eighty villages of the Yezidis and thirty villages of the Shi'a have acceded to the honour of the True Faith. Yesterday their leaders, with total freedom of conscience, accepted my invitation to come to Mosul and become Muslim. This morning, as the military band played the Hamidiye march, and ranks upon ranks of the ulema intoned the holiest of prayers proclaiming the One True God, a great crowd of notables and military personnel gathered around the municipality offices. As a guard of honour stood to military salute, the Müftü asked each one if he accepted Islam of his own free will. Upon each confirmation the crowd shouted, 'Long Live the Sultan!' (*Padişahim Çok Yaşa*).<sup>63</sup>

Of course, the degree of consensus involved here has to be treated very skeptically, but the point is that the general was saying what he thought his superiors would like to hear. The aspect of invented tradition is striking in the elaborate ceremonial, the guard of honour, the *Hamidiye* march played by the military band, and the acclamation wishing long life to the Sultan.

Another reference to mass conversion occurred in the northern Iraqi village of Alkuş. The *Vilayet* of Mosul reported on 5 February 1903 that an instance of forcible conversion occurred in the village when a certain sheikh, Muhammad Nur, forcibly drove some of the Christians into Mosul and there effected their forcible conversion. When the story got out, it led to an uprising by the local population, which protested that "the proper procedure had not been carried out" by the *Vali* and the religious officials. The proper procedure required that a priest attend the proceedings to strike the Christians off his lists. Because no such priest was present, the population felt that the conversions were not valid. The affair provoked a major riot, and the *Vali* reported he feared for his life.<sup>64</sup>

A third reference to conversion in a slightly more sensational vein occurred in the town of Savuçbulak on the Iranian border. This incident appears in the Ottoman records on 2 October 1891, when an English girl, a "Miss Kranfel" was "abducted" by a Kurd and was reported to have converted to Islam. The matter was made no simpler by the girl's assertion that she had voluntarily

<sup>61</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 53 7 Agustus 1308/ 20 August 1892. This material is located in the Irade Dahiliye catalogue for the year H.1310 (1893).

<sup>62</sup> Guest, *The Yezidis*, 129–30.

<sup>63</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 53, Telegram from Ömer Vehbi Pasa to Sublime Porte 7 Agustus 1307/ 20 August 1892.

<sup>64</sup> BBA Bab-i Ali Evrak Odası (Chancellery of the Sublime Porte BEO) 149343 6 Zilkade 1320/ 8 February 1903; BEO 149900 16 Zilkade 1320/15 February 1903.

espoused Islam and that she had no regrets about having done so. The couple had taken refuge with the Ottoman Consul in Savuçbulak, an Armenian named Toma Efendi. The matter caused no end of complications after the girl's family, the British government, the Iranian government, as well as the local population became involved. Although the documentary evidence is incomplete and fragmented, the matter was clearly much more of an embarrassment rather than a religious triumph for the Porte.<sup>65</sup>

In all the cases mentioned above, the emphasis is on conversion according to "proper channels" and a positive discouragement of conversion through arbitrary, irregular, or accidental occurrences. The new emphasis on Hanefi orthodoxy also ran counter to the official line of the Tanzimat Edict, which declared that all religions in the empire were equal. A document dated 4 November 1891 refers to a petition sent by ten signatories from Antakya (Antioch), who complained bitterly that although they wanted to become Muslim, the officials in Antioch had "denied them this blessing." The decree issuing on this information ordered that "because there is freedom of religion" (*edyan serbest olduğundan*), an inquiry should be launched to discover what confession the petitioners belonged to and all procedures relating to them should conform to long-prevailing practices (*usul*) and regulation (*nizam*).<sup>66</sup> When the Western powers criticized the efforts to prevent proselytizing, the Ottoman officials answered that all religions were equal and everyone had the right to believe what they wanted, but this also meant that they had the right to protect *their* religion.<sup>67</sup>

The other remarkable feature of this period is the growing awareness among the ruling circles that new methods were needed to suit this new orthodoxy. A striking example of this new mentality can be observed in a memorandum of 8 April 1892 written by Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, a leading figure in the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz in 1876. In this extremely long and detailed piece, Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, exiled as Governor to Bagdad, wrote the sultan, to propose measures for countering both Islamic heresy and Christian missionary activity. The report stressed that those adhering to the "official religion of the state" were actually a minority in the provinces of Bagdad, Mosul, and Basra. Shi'ism was singled out as the greatest danger, but his report also dealt with other rival "heretical sects" (*frak-ı dalle*), in which he included Nestorians, Chaldeans, Armenian Catholics and Protestants, and Jews. The surest method of dealing with the problem, said Süleyman Paşa, was for the state to sponsor the writing of a "Book of Beliefs" (*Kitab-ul Akaid*). This learned work would

<sup>65</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 97552 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat, No.458, 26 Safer 1309/12 October 1891; Irade Hariciye 20918 17 Rebiyulahir 1309/22 October 1891.

<sup>66</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 97963 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat No.1492 30 Rebiyulevvel 1309/4 November 1891.

<sup>67</sup> An Eastern statesman, *Contemporary Review*, "Contemporary Life and Thought in Turkey," vol. 37 [1880], 334–43.

be a compilation of the writings of famous Islamic scholars and would consist of fifteen chapters, each refuting one or another of the fractious beliefs. He gave specific references to scholars of good repute, “such as the work of the Indian *alim*, Rahmetullah Efendi called *Izhar ul Hak* which is a very convincing rebuttal of the Christian and Jewish faiths.” The most remarkable element in the Paşa’s report was the suggestion that the book be used to train specially selected ’ulama who after two or three years training would be given the title, *Daî-ul-Hak-Misyoner*. Thus would be created a Missionary Society (*Daîler Cemiyeti*), which would fight missionary zeal with missionary zeal. Therefore, although orthodox Islam does not involve active proselytizing in the Christian sense of “saving souls,” what Süleyman Hüsni Paşa was proposing here was the institution of a neo-tradition in combatting what he saw as subversive activity.<sup>68</sup> Active proselytizing did become a regular feature, particularly in the heavily Shi’ite provinces of Iraq. The Ottoman archives abound with reports, salary payment orders to specially appointed ’ulama sent there to fight heresy, and other official correspondence dealing with this aspect of Ottoman counter-propaganda.<sup>69</sup>

Although the Ottoman state faced what it regarded as subversive insurgency at home, it also took care to reaffirm that it was a great power among others, a state of affairs which the other great powers were obliged to recognize, if only by courtesy. A case in point was the effort made to formalize relations with the Papacy. On 30 March 1898 the Ottoman State decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican for the first time.<sup>70</sup> An Imperial decree which followed some three weeks later determined that Asım Bey, former Ambassador to Athens, would be appointed as the first ambassador to the Holy See “because other states have sent ambassadors to the Papacy and the request from His Holiness the Pope that His Imperial Majesty should follow suit.”<sup>71</sup> The decree further stated that establishing such a post was necessary “in order to deal directly in matters pertaining to the affairs of Catholics who are

<sup>68</sup> BBA Yıldız Esas Evrakı (YEE) Original collection of all Sultan Abdülhamid II’s archives. 14/1188/126/9 Bagdad 9 Ramazan 1309/ 8 April 1892. Süleyman Hüsni Paşa had a distinguished career in the Ottoman army and was typical of the Ottoman officer who was something of an intellectual. He is known as the author of the *His-i Inkilab* (Will to Revolution), a tract outlining the necessary reforms to save the empire from ruin, which he presented to Sultan Abdülaziz. He remained anathema in the eyes of the suspicious Abdülhamid. The sultan used the defeat in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–78 to magnify his share in the failure and exile him to Bagdad, where he died soon after he wrote the above report. On him, see *Türk Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Famous Turks) (Istanbul, 1943), 360.

<sup>69</sup> Selim Deringil, “Ottoman Counter-Propaganda against Shi’ism in Hamidian Iraq 1880–1900,” *Die Welt Des Islams*, vol. 30 (1990), 45–62.

<sup>70</sup> BBA Irade Hususi 16 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat no: 13509 6 Zilkade 1315/ 30 March 1898. Signed by the Private Secretary to the sultan, Tahsin Paşa. This indicates that the sultan took a personal interest in the matter.

<sup>71</sup> BBA Irade Hususi 111 23 Zilkade 1315/ 22 April 1898 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat no: 14212.

Ottoman subjects.”<sup>72</sup> Clearly, it was hoped that by dealing with the papacy directly, some measure of control would be established over the activities of the Catholic missionaries. One might also surmise that the sultan, as the Caliph of all Muslims, wanted to reaffirm his position by recognizing his opposite number.

OTTOMAN ISLAM VERSUS WORLD ISLAM: THE SIGNIFICANCE  
OF THE HICAZ: THE OTTOMAN ATTEMPT TO MONOPOLIZE  
THE SACRED

The position of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam was central to the whole network of Ottoman invented traditions. Indeed, in the heyday of Ottoman power, the title of Caliph, the spiritual head of all believers, received much less emphasis. The continuous, almost monotonous, underlining of the spiritual aspect of the sultan’s title can be traced directly to the period of decline, gaining momentum at the end of the eighteenth century. There is, moreover, something specific in the Hamidian version of this emphasis. Sultan Abdülhamid II promoted his Arab subjects to posts of hitherto unprecedented seniority in an effort to forge Islamic solidarity around the office of the Caliphate. Yet, here too, in this most traditional of institutions, a novel element becomes discernible from the 1880s onwards. In order to extend the charisma of the Caliphate to the grass roots of society, Abdülhamid, the upholder of orthodoxy, used the influential Sufi Sheikhs as propagandists. Sheikh Ebulhuda Al-Sayyadi, a leading member of the Kadiri order, became very influential through hundreds of tracts published at official expense which expounded the legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphate. Similarly, Sheikh Zafir, a prominent Shadiliyya from North Africa, was instrumental in Abdülhamid’s effort to secure the loyalty of the Senusi dervish lodges throughout Saharan Africa.<sup>73</sup>

A very important part of Abdülhamid’s policy was ensuring the visibility of the Ottoman Caliphate. In this context, the Hicaz naturally occupied a central position in the Ottoman elite’s redefinition of its place in the world. By the

<sup>72</sup> BBA Irade Hususi 96 6 Şevval 1315/ 29 February 1898 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat no: 12249; also Irade Hususi 16 6 Şevval 1315.

<sup>73</sup> Butrus Abu Manneh, “Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 15 (1979), 131–53; Michel L. Le Gall, *Pashas Bedouins and Notables* (Ph.D. disser., Princeton University, 1986), 226–7; Muhammad Zafir B. Hamza al-Madani (1829–1903) met Abdulhamid in 1871 while the latter was still an insignificant prince unlikely ever to rule. He gradually became a close confidante of the sultan. In 1888 Abdulhamid established a Madani lodge (*zaviye*) near the Yıldız Palace. Although Le Gall states that Zafir’s relations with the Senusis were not brilliant, he was always regarded as the liaison man between the Palace and North African Muslims. See also *Tanzimat’dan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, p. 1087. After his death in 1903, the sultan had an elaborate shrine/mausoleum constructed for Sheikh Zafir in ornate *art nouveau* by his court architect, Raimondo d’Aronco. It still stands as a relic of late Ottoman folly architecture.

time of Abdülhamid II's rule, the empire consisted mainly of areas peopled by Muslims because the Ottomans had lost most of their Balkan provinces. Thus, the sultan based his state ideology on his position as "Protector of the Faithful" (*Emir el-Müminin*) and "Protector of the Holy Places" (*Hadim-ül Haremeyn-i Şerifeyn*). This role, along with Hanefite orthodoxy, was becoming redefined on an increasingly more narrow basis and represents a fundamental shift in the Ottoman self-view.<sup>74</sup>

One way by which Ottoman ideology was adjusted focused on a policy of exclusivism regarding property owning in the Hicaz. On 7 April 1882, the Ottoman Council of State (*Şuravî Devlet*) prepared a memorandum concerning the ban on the acquisition of property in the Hicaz by all non-Ottoman Muslims. The document, which has an extremely strict tone, refers repeatedly to the explicit exemption of the Hicaz from the new land law of the Tanzimat (1867) allowing foreigners to own land in the Ottoman Empire: "That the Hicaz is formally and explicitly exempted from this law is very clear. The law also applies to the Muslim subjects of foreign powers. . . . If such elements conceal their nationality and thus illegally acquire property, as soon as their subterfuge is discovered their property shall be forfeit."<sup>75</sup> The document used unusually explicit and direct language to state unequivocally:

If we remain indifferent to the accumulation of property by devious means in the hands of foreign Muslims, with the passage of time we may find that much of the Holy Lands have been acquired by subjects of foreign powers. Then, the foreigners, as is their wont, after lying in waiting for some time, will suddenly be upon us at the slightest opportunity and excuse, and will proceed to make the most preposterous claims.<sup>76</sup>

What is striking here is clearly the reference to "foreign Muslims."<sup>77</sup> The officials who prepared the memorandum clearly stated that one could not emphasize enough the degree of vigilance required because the Hicaz was "The Jewel in the Crown of the Caliphate" (*Cevher-i ikil-i Hilafet-i Seniyye*),<sup>78</sup> which is exactly the same formulation used by the British Raj for India, which was called "The Jewel in the Crown" of the Victorian Empire.

<sup>74</sup> Duguid, "The Politics of Unity," 139.

<sup>75</sup> BBA Y.A RES. 15/38 Memorandum of the Council of State 17 Cemaziyelevvel 1299/ 7 April 1882 no: 72. The actual wording of the law is significant because it carries a certain "worried" tone not usually found in a dry legal document. The preamble to the "Law permitting foreigners to buy property in Ottoman dominions" reads as follows: "In order to prevent malpractices and dispel doubts about the purchase of property in Ottoman domains by foreigners . . . and in order to secure the orderly execution of regulations pertaining to this exceptionally important matter it has been decreed that. . . ." Article One then reads: "Apart from the territory of the Hicaz . . . [foreigners are permitted to purchase property] in all the territories of the state." See, *Düstur* (Register of Ottoman Laws) 1. Tertip (1289). The law is dated Gurre-i Cemaziyelevvel 1284/ (31 August 1867).

<sup>76</sup> BBA Y.ARES 15/38.

<sup>77</sup> An interesting parallel in this context might be drawn with the Dutch colonialists' concept of "foreign orientals" as opposed to "Dutch orientals," that is, subjects of the Dutch East Indian colonies. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 112.

<sup>78</sup> BBA Y.A RES 15/38.

The title in the British case was borrowed from Mughal India.<sup>79</sup> It might be interesting to speculate on the origins of the terminology in an Ottoman context. Possibly the term had pre-Islamic, Central Asian antecedents. It might also be instructive to determine when the Ottomans started using this imagery in relation to the Hicaz because this is a case in which there are definite resemblances to “the Holy Land Tyrol” or the “Holy Russian Land” in Hobsbawm’s example.<sup>80</sup> As with the Hicaz, there are frequent references in the Ottoman documents to the “Holy name of the Sublime State” (*Ism-i kaddes-i Devlet-i Aliyye*). When one considers that according to classical Islamic jurisprudence, any believer had the right to acquire property in the Holy Lands of Islam, this exclusionist approach is all the more striking.

The same exclusionism and the attempt to monopolize sacrality is seen in the issue of the printing of the Holy Qu’ran. On 16 September 1897, the Minister for education, Zühdü Paşa, sent a memorandum to the office of the Şeyhülislam, reporting that Muslim subjects of Iran and Russia had made official applications for the printing and sale of the holy book.<sup>81</sup> The Minister reiterated that the law of 1276 (1859–60) expressly forbade the importation and sale of Qu’rans coming from Iran: “It is well known that the Iranians have been bringing in copies of the Holy Qu’ran into Ottoman dominions, particularly the Seat of the Caliphate, Istanbul (*Dar ul-Hilafet-i Aliyye*). Here they secretly print them and circulate them. It is quite unnecessary to remind you that this practice is strictly forbidden.” Although it might be understandable that the Sunni Ottoman state should be wary of Qu’rans produced by Shi’ite hands, the same interdict applied to Qu’rans emanating from Sunni Kazan, and even the land of the Al Azhar, Egypt: “The importation of Qu’rans . . . coming from Egypt is likewise forbidden according to state regulations (*ka-vaid*), and practices (*usûl*) stemming from olden times . . .” (*min el-kadim*).<sup>82</sup> Of course, by the “practice stemming from olden times,” Zühdü Paşa was thinking back no further than 1859. The historically specific character of the Ottoman practice comes out very clearly further on in the memo:

Although it seems inauspicious to forbid the printing of Qu’rans to one who is of the *Sunna*, if we open this door it will mean that we will be opening it to any Muslim from Kazan or India or Algeria. . . . This will mean unforeseeable dangers for the Holy Word which has survived untarnished for some thirten hundred years. Particularly since these are troubled times in which the foreigners’ calumnious views regarding the Holy Word multiply. . . . The matter may go well beyond the printing of Qu’rans and, God forbid, create untold complications for the Sublime State.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invented Traditions*, 174.

<sup>80</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 49.

<sup>81</sup> BBA Y.A RES 93/38 Memorandum by Minister of Education. Zühdü Paşa to the office of the Şeyhülislam. 20 Receb 1315/ 16 December 1897.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

In referring to “non-Ottoman Muslims,” the Minister was clearly stating a feeling which runs through this period—that the Caliphate of the House of Osman was in danger—and to a considerable extent the threat emanated from Muslims living under Christian rule who could be manipulated to challenge Ottoman legitimacy. It would be appropriate to recall at this juncture that this document was prepared at approximately the same time that talk of the Arab Caliphate was gaining currency in Western orientalist thought. The reference to “troubled times” and loose talk about Islam are almost certainly reflective of anxiety caused by these stirrings of ominous portent with which the Ottomans were only too familiar.

This led the Porte to try to control the printing and sale of the Quʾran and other religious texts. The answer was found in making the printing of Quʾrans a state monopoly, maintaining that “politically and religiously it is necessary to keep this affair in the monopoly of the state.” The procedure was set up whereby any person wishing to publish an edition of the Quʾran would first present his manuscript to a Commission for the Inspection of Quʾrans (*Tedkiki Müshaf-ı Şerif Komisyonu*) staffed by ʿulama chosen by the Şeyhülislam’s office. The candidate was expected to specify whose hand it had been written in, how many copies he proposed to print, and why he wanted to do this in the first place. This was designed to ensure that there would be no falsification in the sacred text and to catch possible accretions which might be injurious to state interests. If his application was approved, he would then be granted permission to have his manuscript published at the press approved by the state. The reason provided to the press for the state monopoly was that this was necessary in order to “ensure that the Holy Book is handled with due care and respect and not defiled by Christian hands.”<sup>84</sup>

Just as the Ottoman state was becoming more meticulous about the printed word of the holy text, it also became much more fastidious as to whom it regarded as “properly Ottoman.” Thus the conception of the Caliphate accordingly became much more political than religious. It was no longer enough to be Muslim or even a Sunni. Nothing illustrates this better than the case of the Algerians seeking asylum in Ottoman dominions after the invasion of Algeria by the French in 1830. The issue which caused the Ottomans considerable headache was the status of the Algerians who had immigrated to the

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, and memorandum by Council of State 16 Şaban 1314/ 21 January 1897 no: 3119. Also see enclosure, Minutes of the Council of Ministers of the Sublime Porte, no: 294. The intention of the measure is being discussed here. Clearly, unauthorized copies of the Quʾran and other religious publications must have continued to come into Ottoman lands because police measures to stop them were extremely limited. Yet there was discussion of what to do with copies of unauthorized Quʾrans which had been seized, because destroying even faulty copies was objectionable. The Commission for the Inspection of Quʾrans became the Superintendency for the Printing of Quʾrans and Legal Works after 1909 and was subsumed by the Young Turk administration under the *Bab-ı Fetva*, the Ministry of Religious Affairs. See “Shaikh al-Islam” in E. J. Brill, *First Encyclopedia of Islam*, 276, 277, 278.

province of Syria, ostensibly to escape from the *Dar ul-Harb*. Some of them wanted to live in Ottoman dominions while conserving their French passports, thus benefiting from the special privileges of French subjects. On 22 November 1889, the Porte issued a decree stating that such refugees would be required to choose, within two years of their arrival, whether to remain French citizens and leave or to be automatically considered as Ottoman subjects and stay. The Algerians of French allegiance would be forbidden to marry Ottoman women, and any Algerian contravening this regulation “would be treated according to regulations pertaining to Iranians” and would be forced to leave Ottoman soil.<sup>85</sup>

In order to heighten his profile in the Hicaz, the sultan also made use of modern propaganda that were becoming available to the state. In an Imperial Edict of 2 January 1894, the sultan ordered that the newspapers give extensive coverage to the pious endowments he was supporting in the Hicaz. Hostels and hospitals, for example, were to be clearly stressed as they demonstrated the royal munificence by the Protector of the Holy Places. On one occasion the office of the state censor was severely rebuked for not making sure that the press had given adequate publicity to the *sürre alayı*, the yearly ceremonial departure of the caravan bearing the sultan’s gifts for Mecca and Medina. Evidently the Sultan-Caliph did not feel that he had been given enough headline space.<sup>86</sup>

The project which was perhaps the most spectacular effort to combine practical benefits with propaganda value was, of course, the Hicaz Railway, which was a Herculean effort to link Aleppo and the Syrian coast with the Holy Cities. Abdülhamid II made full use of its spiritual aspect. Donations were welcomed from non-Ottoman Muslims (their money was evidently welcome as long as they did not come to stay), and the opening of each successive stage of the railroad was ceremonially publicized: “The opening dates were made to coincide with the sultan’s accession anniversary. By this means they gained a symbolic importance and were linked to the ruler personally. . . . This news was relayed to the Muslims of the world by Ottoman, Indian and Egyptian newspapers.”<sup>87</sup>

The Ottoman sensitivity to public relations ranged from huge projects, such as the Hicaz Railway, to the smallest details of symbolism. On 4 August

<sup>85</sup> BBA Irade Meclis-i Mahsus 4625 26 Rebiyulevvel 1307/ 22 November 1889. This exclusivist tone is apparent in the very “Law on Ottoman Nationality” (*Tabiyet-i Osmaniye Kanunu* 19 January 1869), which states in Article Eight: “The Children of one who has died or abandoned Ottoman nationality, even if they are minors, are not considered to be the same as their father and continue to be regarded as Ottoman subjects. (However) the children of a foreigner who has taken Ottoman nationality, even if they are minors, will not be considered the same nationality as their father and will be considered as foreigners.” See *Düstur* 1. Tertip, p. 16–18.

<sup>86</sup> BBA Irade Hususi 102 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat 23 Cemaziyelahir 1311/ 2 January 1894 no: 4642.

<sup>87</sup> William Ochsenwald, *The Hicaz Railroad* (Charlottesville, NC 1980), 76–77.

1893, the Palace decreed that 5,000 gold pieces were to be paid to a certain François Pirinyan, evidently an Armenian French subject, who was offering for sale what he claimed was a specimen of calligraphy in the hand of the Caliph Ali. The order stated in somewhat euphemistic language that “although its originality cannot be discerned to any degree of certainty, because it has achieved renown as the calligraphy of the exalted Caliph, its place is in the Imperial Treasury, where all such sacred relics belong.”<sup>88</sup> What was being said here was, in plain language, that it is probably a fake but buy it all the same because it is thought to be real.

The preoccupation of the Ottoman state with what can only be called its public image meant that a prestigious item such as the handwriting of one of the early Islamic leaders, even of dubious authenticity, was deemed desirable as part of an effort to bolster the claim to world Islamic leadership. The importance of “making a good showing,” specifically in the Hicaz, the seat of Ottoman legitimacy, received constant emphasis. Particularly embarrassing were complaints from Christian consulates and embassies relating to mistreatment or cheating of their subjects undertaking the Islamic pilgrimage, the *haj*. A public declaration dated 30 January 1896, sent to the officials in the Hicaz in order that they publicize it among the pilgrims, declared that “the pilgrims both from within and without the Imperial Domains are our honoured guests.” In addition to this public statement, the local officials were ordered to ensure that the pilgrims were not cheated over such matters as hiring camels and guides.<sup>89</sup> Of course, this was a rather vain hope, given the rapacity of the locals for revenue, which they primarily obtained by fleecing pilgrims.<sup>90</sup> The same preoccupation with public image is discernible in a discussion dated 27 April 1890 on whether or not the Sublime State should decorate the French President, Sadi Carnot. He had gained the sultan’s favour by agreeing to ban a play in Paris deemed injurious to the honour of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>91</sup>

In all of these examples, from the property rights in the Hicaz to the question of the decoration of the French President, there is a common thread, the desire to bolster the basis of the state’s legitimacy. This was done by the creation or invention of traditions, sometimes enforced by law, in an effort to consolidate a new basis for state solidarity within Ottoman society, while maintaining the public presence of the Ottoman state as a Great Power.

<sup>88</sup> BBA Irade Hususi 62 Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat 20 Muharrem 1311/ 4 August 1893 no: 450.

<sup>89</sup> BBA Irade Dahiliye 27 13 Şaban 1313/ 30 January 1896. This particular complaint was instigated by the Dutch Consul in Cidde.

<sup>90</sup> On the issue of mistreatment of pilgrims, see W. Ochsenswald, *Religion and the State in Arabia. The Hicaz under Ottoman Control 1840–1908* (Columbus, Ohio, 1984), particularly 20, 113–4, 122.

<sup>91</sup> BBA YEE Kamil Paşa Evrakına Ek (Additional Collections of the Private Papers Belonging to Grand Vizier Kamil Paşa), 86–3/264. 6 Ramazan 1307/ 27 April 1890.

## CONCLUSION

As the nineteenth century drew to its close, the Ottomans found that they were facing not only external threats to their existence but also numerous potential fifth columns. Indeed, in many instances these two overlapped. The sultan stated as much when he referred to interference by the great powers whenever he acted too directly with the missionaries. Thus the Ottoman elite retrenched behind an increasingly self-conscious attempt to stake a claim to existence in a world becoming smaller and ever more hostile. This dilemma finds expression in the cynical words of Said Paşa, who served nine times as the Grand Vizier of Abdülhamid II: "As the Sublime State finds itself *stuck* among Christian powers, even the most accomplished diplomacy will not suffice for our defence. . . . All relations among states are based on animosity and self-interest." The Paşa then referred to the Risorgimento and the unification of Germany as examples which could be emulated by the Ottoman state but "the time and conditions are not yet ripe."<sup>92</sup>

The pressure on the Ottoman Empire, the only non-western European Great Power, was not only military and strategic but also moral. This moral pressure is discernible in the words of the Protestant missionary and traveller, Sir William Muir:

In virtue of Mutawakkil's cession of his title, the Osmanly Sultans make pretensions not only to the sovereignty of the Moslem world, but also to the Caliphate itself—that is the spiritual as well as political power held by the successors of the Prophet. Were there no other bar, the Tatar blood which flows in their veins would make the claim untenable. Even if their pedigree by some flattering fiction could be traced up to Coreishite stock, the claim would be a fond anachronism. The Caliphate ended with the fall of Bagdad. The illusory resuscitation by the Mamelukes was a lifeless show; the Osmanly Caliphate a dream.<sup>93</sup>

The Ottomans attempted to counter this moral pressure by ideological retrenchment through the inculcation of obedience to a narrowly defined official faith. This faith, a new interpretation of the Hanefi mezheb, was supposed to instill normative obedience in a population which was to be educated along the path to becoming an Ottoman citizenry. All this involved the invention of new traditions which would make a rear-guard action possible while a new basis for solidarity was first construed then constructed. From the documentary evidence one derives the impression that Ottoman nationality was beginning to be envisioned in increasingly secular terms despite the religious language. In the case of the Algerians mentioned above, the decisive

<sup>92</sup> BBA YEE 31/1950 Mükerrer/4583 22 Zilkade 1299/ 6 October 1882 (emphasis mine).

<sup>93</sup> Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise Decline and Fall. (From Original Sources)* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1891), 590.

criterion for allowing them to remain or forcing them to leave was whether they accepted Ottoman nationality or not, even though they were Sunni Maliki Muslims. Similarly, over the issue of property ownership in the Hicaz, the specific exclusion of non-Ottoman Muslims from this privilege, which was in fact a right from the standpoint of Islamic jurisprudence, points in the same direction. The fact that the attempt was made to create and reinforce an Ottoman state monopoly for the printing and sale of the Quʾran, which specifically forbade this activity for the subjects of rival powers, is a variation on the same theme. The Commission for the Inspection of Quʾrans was a combination of European *étatisme* with Islamic motifs. It is also indicative of the new mentality that even Quʾrans coming from Egypt, the seat of the Al Azhar, one of the most prestigious schools of Sunni learning in the world, were forbidden entry and sale, as Egypt was now (since 1882) under British control.

The new attitude to conversion was also indicative of the same mentality. Conversion to the Hanefi mezheb was specifically encouraged to the point of forcibly converting marginal elements, such as the Yezidis. Here, too, we observe invented tradition at work in the “ceremony of conversion,” complete with military band playing the *Hamidiye* march, the religious official representing the state performing the ceremony, and the assembled population shouting, “Long Live the Sultan”!

In the other examples mentioned above, the emphasis was clearly on conversion through the “deliberate method and procedure” usually backed by the educational apparatus of the state. Education, particularly primary education, received a great deal of attention in the Hamidian reign. Smith’s reference to the nineteenth-century “educator states” would also apply to the Ottoman case.<sup>94</sup> The distribution of primary schools across the empire was greatly improved when the importance of primary schooling as a major factor in making “mass producing traditions” through the “captive audiences available for indoctrination in the educational system” became central to schemes of Ottoman social engineering.<sup>95</sup>

In the context of the material cited above, I contend that the late-nineteenth-century Ottoman polity was very much a part of world trends. It clearly walked down a very similar path to, say, imperial Russia, when Abdülhamid II’s contemporary, Alexander III, followed a very similar policy of using pre-

<sup>94</sup> See Smith, *Ethnic Roots of Nationalism*, 134: “In fact, the state only came into its educator role in the latter half of the 19th century, when mass compulsory primary education became the norm in Western countries.” Although it would be inaccurate to speak of mass or compulsory education in the Ottoman context, throughout the Tanzimat and the Hamidian periods there was a concerted effort to spread schooling even into the remoter parts of the empire. In this sense the Ottomans were not behind Europe in appreciating the importance of education in forging a citizenry. On the educational reforms in the Hamidian era see, Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhamit Dönemi Eğitim Sistemi* (Istanbul, 1983).

<sup>95</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass Producing Traditions: Europe 1870–1914,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 264, 277, 282.

existing elements of sacrality to buttress Tsardom.<sup>96</sup> In a similar vein, the Japanese Emperor cult, which took shape in approximately the same period, focused on “elements drawn from the recent or the ageless past (which) were cast into molds which were newly formed in the Meiji years to suit the needs of the time.”<sup>97</sup>

Much closer to home, the Austrian Habsburgs made something of a family business out of the glorification of the dynasty as a reaction to encroaching nationalism.<sup>98</sup> It was no longer a question of mere obedience. What was being sought was, in Weberian terms, “the transition from the merely unreflexive formation of a habit to the conscious acceptance of the maxim that action should be in accordance with a norm.”<sup>99</sup> What the Ottoman elite, like their counterparts in other imperial systems, were trying to foster from the mid-century onwards was just this transition from passive obedience to active and conscious subscription to a new normative order.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Wortman, “Moscow and Peterburg: The Problem of Political Center in Tsarist Russia 1881–1914,” in Sean Wilentz, ed., *Rites of Power* (Philadelphia, 1985), 244–75.

<sup>97</sup> Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths* (Princeton, 1985), 39.

<sup>98</sup> Istvan Deak, “The Habsburg Monarchy: The Strengths and Weaknesses of a Complex Patrimony.” (Monarchies Symposium, Columbia University, October 26–27, 1990).

<sup>99</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York, 1968), 327.