

How to be(come) an Ottoman at the End of the Eighteenth Century

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18. Yüzyılda Nasıl “Osmanlı” Olunurdu?

Öz ■ Bu çalışma 18. yüzyıl Bâb-ı Âlisinde sivrilen tipik “Osmanlı”yı devrin önde gelen kâtiplerinden Ebubekir Ratib Efendi’nin hayat hikayesi çerçevesinde değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Osmanlı Devleti’nin değişen yapısının ve ihtiyaçlarının bir ürünü olan Osmanlı tipinin 18. yüzyıldaki karakterine kavuşmasında Osmanlı ordusunun bilhassa ülkenin batı sınırlarında aldığı yenilgiler büyük bir etkiye sahiptir. Artan oranda deneyimli diplomatlara duyulan ihtiyaç, ideal Osmanlı tipinin “paşa”dan “efendi”ye doğru evriminin ardında yatan en temel sebeplerden birisidir. 18. yüzyıl ortasında doğan Ebubekir Ratib Efendi’nin bürokratik kariyeri bu bağlamda Kalemîye’nin devleti oluşturan dört tarik içerisinde öne çıkışını ve özel olarak ideal “Osmanlı” tipinde gözlemlenen değişimi örneklemektedir. Uluslararası ilişkilerde diplomasi, en az savaş kadar önem kazanmasına mukabil Bab-ı Âli’de iş yükü artan ve önem kazanan Amedi Kalemî’nde yetişen Ratib Efendi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nu, Habsburg İmparatorluğu nezdinde temsil etmiştir. Bu dönemde kaleme aldığı layiha ve sefaretname, Avrupa’nın önde gelen başkentlerinden birisi olan Viyana’da yaptığı gözlemler aracılığıyla Nizam-ı Cedid bürokrasisinin önünde yeni ufuklar açmıştır. Genel olarak devrin Avrupasındaki devlet ve ordu organizasyonlarını tasvir ve teşhis eden layihadaki tahlillerin geçerliliği, doğrudan Ratib Efendi özelinde tartışılan yeni Osmanlı tipinin yetişme tarzıyla alakalıdır. Bab-ı Âli’de tanıştığı İslam siyaset teorisi üzerinden devrin Avrupai kavramlarını anlamlandıran Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, Nizam-ı Cedid siyasetinin planlanmasında başrollerden birisini üstlenmiştir. III. Selim devrindeki Osmanlı ideal tipinin bir örneği olan Ratib Efendi, Nizam-ı Cedid siyasetinin teorik arka planının oluşturulmasının yanı sıra söz konusu teorinin uygulanmasında da etkilidir. III. Selim’in Vüzerâ Kanunnamesi’nin kaleme alınmasındaki etkisi, Zahirî Nazırlığı’nın kurulmasındaki rolü ve Reisülküttap olarak verdiği hizmet

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Ratib Efendi'nin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun yeniden organize edilmesine pratikteki katkısını gözler önüne sermektedir. Ancak bürokratik hizip mücadelelerinin ve politik haneler arasındaki çatışmaların süre gittiği bir dönemde yaşayan Ratib Efendi, bu türden bir çatışmanın hedefi olmaktan kendisini kurtaramayacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Katip, Elçi, Ratib Efendi, Bab-ı Ali, Nizam-ı Cedid

What makes a historical individual an Ottoman? He is a person who served the Ottoman state as a member of the ruling elite or *askeri* class, in return for which he received an income from the Sultan and was granted certain tax privileges. To be a part of this elite, ideally, one was also required to *behave* as an Ottoman in manners and etiquette and possess certain skills, the most noted of which was the mastery of the *elsine-i selase*, the three languages, namely Arabic, Persian and Turkish. However these characteristics, which contributed to the portrait of an Ottoman did not remain static, but changed with transformations in state organization, social framework and the changing nature of tradition, manners and language.¹

18th century Ottoman history witnessed the alteration of administrative elite, manifest in the substitution of men of sword (*ehl-i seyf*) with men of pen (*ehl-i kalem*). This transformation is an outcome of the changing nature of the relations between the Porte and the European states. As the Russian and Austrian Empires repeatedly defeated the Ottoman army, the Sublime Porte sought the solution in engaging the European diplomatic system, demanding bureaucrats to have knowledge on Europe and international relations.²

Patronage networks were of vital importance for a career as bureaucrat in any early modern empire that lacked a modern education system. In the case of the Ottomans, this key concept was called *intisab*.³ It basically denotes two

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- 1 Virginia Aksan, *Savaşta ve Barışta Bir Osmanlı Devlet Adamı Ahmed Resmi Efendi (1700-1783)*, trans. Ö. Arıkan (Istanbul, 1997), 10-30 and Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in The Ottoman Empire* (New Jersey, 1980), 79-91.
 - 2 Thomas Naff, "The Ottoman Empire and the European States System," ed. H. Bull, A. Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford, 1985), 143-169.
 - 3 Joel Shinder, "Career Line Formation in the Ottoman Bureaucracy, 1648-1750: A New Perspective," *JESHO* XVI (1973), 222 and 230; Norman Itzkowitz, "Mehmed Raghıb Pasha: The Making of an Ottoman Grand Vezir," (PhD. Diss., Princeton University, 1959), 22-23 and 159; Metin Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (cins) Solidarity in the XVII. Century Ottoman Establishment," *IJMES*, V (1974), 233-239, Carter V. Findley, "Patrimonial Household Organization and Factional Activity in the Ottoman Ruling Class," ed. O. Okyar and H. İnalçık, *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920)* (Ankara, 1980), 229-230.

things: 1) becoming attached to the household of a grandee 2) having certain qualifications, to which we just referred.⁴ Nevertheless, these two descriptors were inseparable. Displaying a talent was essential to becoming a member of the household of a grandee. That was the reason why the eligible candidates applying to the Sublime Porte with a letter of recommendation had to have certain skills not only in language but also literature, just as was the case with Ebubekir Ratib Efendi.⁵

Ebubekir Ratib Efendi's career as an Ottoman bureaucrat was typical for the period.⁶ He was born in Kastamonu in about 1750.⁷ His father was a member of *ulema* who apparently liked to travel. Probably in 1750s, he took Ebubekir with him on a visit to the Crimea. It was there that Ebubekir's father Ali Efendi, or perhaps the young Ebubekir himself, appeared to have made an impression on the ruler, Aslan Giray Khan, who wrote a letter of recommendation for Ebubekir Efendi.⁸ Furnished with this letter, Ebubekir was able to obtain an apprenticeship in the *Amedi* Office. Ebubekir's father, who most likely also was his first teacher, would have been instrumental in obtaining this apprenticeship for his son. Young Ebubekir probably took his first Arabic classes from his father, Ali Efendi. Even though children generally followed their fathers' occupations in the Ottoman Empire, Ebubekir Efendi chose a different career path. It also seems plausible that his father made the decision for Ebubekir to enter the *Amedi* Office as an apprentice. Ali Efendi might have felt that his son could reach the upper echelons of the Ottoman State more easily if he entered the *kalemiyye*, because at that time all the high posts in *ilmiyye* were occupied by the children of great *mollas*.⁹ It should be noted that *katibs* could not generally start their career in the *Amedi* Office right away, an institution that had gained great importance in the eighteenth century.

4 James W. Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon* (İstanbul, 2001), 209.

5 It must not be a coincidence, that the poets appeared in the eighteenth century *tezkires* were generally bureaucrats. For the examples see Fatin Efendi, *Tezkire-i Hatimetül'eş'ar*, İstanbul, 1324 and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der osmanischen Dichtk-
unts bis auf Unsere Zeit*, vol. IV, Pesth, 1838.

6 For the career of Ratib Efendi see Fatih Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında Bir Osmanlı Kâtibi
Ebubekir Râtib Efendi (1750-1799)* (İstanbul, 2011).

7 Vasif Efendi, *Tarih-i Vastf*, İstanbul University Library: TY, 6012, fol: 47a-49b.

8 For Ebubekir's travel with his father to Crimea see, Vasif Efendi, *Tarih-i Vastf*, fol:47b-
48a. According to a document in Topkapı Palace Archive (hereafter TSMA), he was in
İstanbul when he was seven years old TSMA (E. 11388). Thus, the journey must have
taken place between Ratib Efendi's date of birth (1750/1170) and 1757.

9 Madeline C. Zilfi, "Elite Circulation in The Ottoman Empire: Great Mollas of The
Eighteenth Century," *JESHO*, 26 (1983), 318-364.

However, possessing a letter of recommendation from the Khan of the Crimea seems to have enabled Ratib Efendi to begin his career in one of the most prominent offices in the Sublime Porte.¹⁰

The *Amedi* Office in the mid-eighteenth century came under the jurisdiction of the *Reisülküttabs* and was the office that dealt with diplomacy.¹¹ Working in this office would have brought the young Ebubekir into contact with foreigners, the translators, and perhaps even with foreign ambassadors. It was this early training in diplomacy that prepared Ebubekir for his future role not just as an envoy but ultimately as the *Reisülküttab*. From the *Amedi* Office, he moved to the *Tabvil* office whose main concern were the appointments of provincial governors and military fief-holders.¹² The reason for Ebubekir Efendi's appointment must have been related to the traditions of the Sublime Porte. To educate all apprentices in the various working fields, they were assigned to different offices. This was enabling them to learn different types of scripts used by different offices and various correspondence procedures.¹³ In his apprenticeship, Ebubekir Efendi was first taught how to prepare the rough drafts (*tesvid*), summaries (*hulasa*) and copies (*tebeyyüz*) under the examining clerk (*mümeyyiz*).

Edeb was also crucial part of the training in the Sublime Porte. As a synonym of *sunna* or custom, *edeb* means civility and comity. Following the age-old tradition, the young apprentices were introduced to the eastern political literature by studying key sources such as *Humâyunnâme*, the Turkish translation of *Kalila and Dimna*, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, *Ethics of Nasireddin Tusî* and *Ahlak-ı*

10 Recep Ahıskalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında Reisülküttablık (XVIII. Yüzyıl)* (Istanbul, 2001), 142.

11 For the *Amedi* Office and its functions in the Sublime Porte see, Tayyib Gökbilgin, 'Amedci', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. I (Istanbul, 1997), 396-397; idem, 'Ameddji', *EP²*, vol. I, (Leiden, 1954), 433; Ahıskalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında*, 136-152; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*, (Ankara, 1988), 55-58; Halil İnalçık, 'Reisülküttab', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. IX (Istanbul, 1997), 675; Carter V. Findley, "The Legacy of Tradition to Reform: Origins of The Ottoman Foreign Ministry," *IJMES*, 1 (1970), 338 and idem, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 78-79.

12 Ahıskalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında*, 118-136; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Merkez ve Bahriye*, 43-45; Findley, 'The Legacy of Tradition', 337; H. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and The West*, vol. I, Part I (London, 1967), 121-122; Joseph von Hammer, *Des osmanischen Reichs Staatsverfassung und Staatsverwaltung*, vol. II (Vienna, 1815), 113-114.

13 For this tradition see James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancient and Modern* (London, 1797), 39.

Alai of Kınalızade Ali.¹⁴ It was also thought that the apprentices working in the *Amedi* Office were reading the travelogues and the reports of the Ottoman ambassadors. But more importantly, *edeb*, just as observed in the description of Norbert Elias's *Höflichkeit* (courtesy), which was employed in training the reliable and loyal bureaucrats in enlightening Europe, had not only religious connotation.¹⁵ On the contrary, *edib* was a person who had the knowledge about how he must behave and how he must speak in a certain condition. The secularist and state-oriented character of the tradition, on the one hand, provided a reliable ground for educating obedient and distinguished bureaucrats, on the other it furnished the young apprentices with literary and political knowledge. In the right time and right place, apprentices used this knowledge for drawing the attention of their superiors.

After his return to the *Amedi* Office, eminent bureaucrats considered Ebubekir to have mastered the scribal arts and thus he was promoted to a vacant post. Assignment of a new name (*mablas*), a seat of his own among the cushions on which the clerks sat in the office and letting him grow beard were the ritual part of this promotion. The personal specialties and *katib*'s place of birth were the main sources of inspiration for his *mablas*. We do not know how Ebubekir's new name was chosen. However it might have reflected the time when a new order was being established, as *Râtib* meant "organizer".¹⁶ However, Ratib Efendi must have known that displaying his skills in the office was not enough for reaching higher posts. Apart from the time he spent at the Sublime Porte, he tried to improve his Persian in the *Naqshbandi* lodges and participated in the poetry meetings in the mansions of the high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats.¹⁷ In these meetings, Ratib

14 F. Gabriel, F. "Adab," *EI²*, vol.I, 1954, 175-176. Goldziher, I. "Edeb," *IA*, vol. IV, 1997, 105-106; Aksan, *Ahmed Resmî*, 13.

15 Norbert Elias, *Uygurluk Süreci*, vol. I, trans. E. Ateşman-E. Özbek (İstanbul 2000), 81.

16 Hammer, *Geschichte der Osmanischen Dichtkunst*, 418.

17 Fatin Efendi, *Tezkire-i Hatimetül'eş'ar*, 103 and Vâsif Efendi, *Tarih-i Vâsif*, fol: 48a. Ratib Efendi was an accomplished master in *talik* script, which no doubt, was the reflection of his interest in poetry. *Talik*, the most important Persian influence on Ottoman calligraphy, was reserved for writing verse in the Ottoman Empire. Even though he did not leave a *divan*, the collection of poems by one author, we know that he was easily able to write poems in three languages. For poems of Ratib Efendi see, Fatin Efendi, *Tezkire-i Hatimetül'eş'ar*, 100-101; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Tosyalı Ebubekir Ratib Efendi," *Belleten*, XXXIX (1975), 71; Hüner Tuncer, 'Osmanlı Elçisi Ebubekir Ratib Efendi'nin Ozan Yönü', *Belleten*, 47 (1983), 584-585 and Abdullah Uçman, *Ebubekir Ratib Efendi'nin Nemçe Sefaretnamesi*, (İstanbul, 1999), 34, 49, 50, 72, 74, 80, 81, 93. For *talik* script also see Christine Woodhead, 'From Scribe to Litterateur: A Career

Efendi had ample opportunity to show his literary skills to the higher-ranking bureaucrats and statesmen.

Equipped with literary and political knowledge, Ratib Efendi was ready to find a powerful patron, a task at which he apparently did not have any difficulty. In 1769, we see Ratib Efendi in the Amedi Office under the patronage of influential Halil Hamid Efendi.¹⁸ In parallel with the rise of his patron, ten years later he was assigned to the post of *Amedi Efendi* and became a member of *Hacegan-ı Divan-ı Humayun*, the highest level in the Ottoman bureaucracy. This promotion denoted that he was eligible for posts at the same rank in different institutions.¹⁹ Ratib Efendi was to remain *Amedi Efendi* for the next ten years. It was during this period that his patron Halil Hamid Efendi became Grand Vizier and it was probable on the recommendation of Halil Hamid Pasha and historian Mehmed Emin Edib Efendi, who was close to young Prince Selim, that Râtib Efendi was appointed to the position of tutor to young prince and started teaching him, among other things, to write in *talik* script. In this web of relations, Ratib Efendi's acquaintance with Halil Hamid Pasha who had been *Reisülküttab* is very understandable. But his relation with Mehmed Emin Edib Efendi seems to have started with Ratib Efendi's promotion as *Amedci*. Beside his other duties, the *Amedi Efendis* were also required to help court historians (*vakanüvis*), providing them documents from the Sublime Porte as they compiled their official histories.²⁰

Being the tutor of the crown prince reshaped Ratib Efendi's future career. He was also instrumental in drawing up a series of letters from prince Selim to Louis XVI of France.²¹ But being close to the center of power contains its own danger throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire. Ratib's involvement in prince

of a XVI century Ottoman Katib', *Bulletin of The British Society for Middle East Studies*, 9 (1982), 60.

- 18 For the connection between Halil Hamid Pasha and Ratib Efendi see, Christoph Neumann, "Themen und Verfahrensweisen in der osmanischen Aussenpolitik gegen Ende des 18 Jahrhundert" (MA. Diss., Ludwig Maximillians Universität, 1986), 131-136.
- 19 For *Hacegan-ı Divan-ı Hümayun* and its meaning in the context of the Ottoman promotion system see Cengiz Orhonlu, 'Khadjegane-ı Diwan-ı Humayun', *EP*², vol.IV, Leiden, 1954, 908-909; Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau General de l'Empire Othoman*, vol.I (Paris, 1788-1824), 350-352; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Merkez ve Bahriye*, 68-69; Findley, "The Legacy of Tradition to Reform," 346 and idem, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 100.
- 20 For Ratib Efendi's connection with Mehmed Emin Edib Efendi who was assigned as *vakanüvis* (official historiographer) on 13 October 1787 see, Süleyman Faik, *Sefinetü'r-Rüesa* (Istanbul, 1269), 139 and Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. IV (Istanbul, 1309), 195.
- 21 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, 'Selim III'ün Veliâht İken Fransa Kralı Lui XVI ile Muhabereleleri', *Belleteri*, 2, 1938, 191-246 and Aysel Yıldız, "Şehzade (III.) Selim'in XVI.

Selim's unauthorized correspondence might have been the reason for his exile from Istanbul. Early during the war with Russia and Austria in 1788, we see Ratib Efendi assigned to the Ottoman army as *Silahdar Katibi* in the Balkans.²² This new post would however give him an opportunity to observe the weaknesses of the Ottoman army first hand. When Sultan Abdulhamid I died in the following year, prince Selim ascended the throne as Selim III and immediately recalled Ratib Efendi to Istanbul. Indeed, Selim III made dramatic changes in the upper echelons of the Ottoman bureaucracy to better implement his political agenda.²³ All of the newly promoted personnel, including the Grand Vizier, had in some way been close to the Sultan. In this assignment, Ratib Efendi was promoted to the post of *Tezkire-i Evvel* which was likely to lead to the post of *Reisülküttab*.²⁴ *Katibs* who held the post of *Tezkire-i Evvel* were not only personal secretary to the Grand Vizier; they also had to receive the petitions to the Sublime Porte, arrange them and read them in the *Divan-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Council). If the post of *Tezkire-i Evvel* was vacant, it was the *Reisülküttabs* who were responsible for these duties.²⁵ It can be argued that Selim III wanted to groom Ratib Efendi for the pivotal post of *Reisülküttab*.

A further and now rapid promotion was offered to him. He was to become *Rikab Reisülküttabı*, which was the deputy to the *Reisülküttab*. But Ratib Efendi, who had a keen interest in astrology,²⁶ noted that the moon was to be in the sign of Scorpio on the day of his promotion and he pleaded to postpone it to a more auspicious day.²⁷ The sultan became so furious that he exiled Ratib Efendi to

Louis ile Yazışmaları ve Doğu Sorunu,” ed: S. Kenan-H. Reindl Kiel, *Deutsch-türkische Begegnungen, Festschrift für Kemal Beydilli* (Berlin, 2013), 417-438.

22 Fatih Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında*, 43.

23 Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol.IV, 265.

24 According to archival sources, Ratib Efendi was promoted *Tezkire-i Evvel* on 30 April 1789 (4 Şaban 1203). However the document in the Turkish Historical Society Library gives 29 April 1789 as the date of assignment of his appointment. Erhan Afyoncu, “Osmanlı Müelliflerine Dair Tevcihat Kayıtları,” *Belgeler*, XX (1999), 127 compare with *I. Abdülhamid’in Saltanat Devrinde 9 Zilkade 1187, 18 Rebi’ülahir 1205 Seneleri Arasında Vukû Bulan Azil Nasb ve Diğer Hadiseler*, no:Y/1001, fol: 23.

25 Midhat Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı Tarih Lügatı* (Istanbul, 1986), 337; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol.III (Istanbul, 1993), 491 and Hammer, *Des osmanischen Reichs Staatsverfassung*, 128-129.

26 Ottoman people were very interested in astronomy and astrology and considered them as ‘sciences’. James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancient and Modern*, 390-391 and Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. VI, 195-196.

27 Vasif Efendi, *Tarih-i Vasif*, fol: 48b and d’Ohsson, *Tableau General*, vol.VII, 11-13.

the island of Tenedos where he remained for more than a year. However, Ratib Efendi's interest in astrology might well have been a mere pretext. Ratib Efendi's predecessor, Raşid Efendi had connections with the palace and also had a vested interest in having him out of the way.²⁸ So this was the beginning of a factional rivalry, to which Ratib Efendi fell victim at the end.

In 1791, when the Ottoman army desperately needed able and experienced bureaucrats, Selim III decided to pardon Ratib Efendi. Once more, he was immediately sent to the battlefield as the secretary of the Janissary Corps (*yeniçeri katibi*).²⁹ This time his main duty was more important especially for the Ottoman budget that calculating the salaries of the Janissaries. On the cessation of hostilities and signing of the peace treaty at Zıstovi/Sistova, Ratib Efendi was appointed as Ottoman envoy (*Orta elçi*) to Vienna. His ostensible task was to present Selim III's letter to Leopold II but actually he was to make observations in Vienna and report the events unfolding in Europe.³⁰ With his professional background, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi was a perfect candidate for such an appointment.

On his return from Vienna, where he had spent nearly one year, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi started to draw the map of the European state structures for the "*Nizam-ı Cedid*" (New Order) project. Even though continuous relations existed between the Ottoman and European worlds since earlier times, Ottomans' curiosity had concentrated mainly on the power of the European states, disposition of their armies, their trade connections and their diplomatic relations, especially with the Ottoman Empire. However, the disastrous defeats suffered by the Ottomans, especially at the hands of the Russian armies in the late 18th century, represented a watershed in Ottoman attitudes toward the outside world. Now the Ottoman bureaucrats, as Ahmed Resmî Efendi, tried to explain the reasons of the European military supremacy over the Ottomans.³¹ Ebubekir Râtib Efendi was one of these Ottomans who comprehended and described the modern state-building process, which he saw as the main source of Europeans' superiority. We do not know whether Ratib Efendi was explicitly instructed to describe the Habsburg military and state organizations, and their impact on the socio-economic and socio-politic spheres in minute detail. However, it is apparent that he was one of the first Ot-

28 Süleyman Faik, *Sefinetü'r-Rüesa*, 139, Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. VI, 196-197 and Vasif Efendi, *Tarih-i Vasıf*, fol:49a.

29 Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında*, 49.

30 For Ratib Efendi's appointment as *Orta Elçi* to Vienna see BOA *Hatt-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Decrees) Collection 9553 and 9733.

31 Aksan, *Ahmed Resmî* and Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman Political Writing," 1768-1808," *IJMES*, 25 (1993), 53-69.

tomans who felt themselves in need to fully comprehend their enemies' power structure.

The urgency of this sense was a part of changing nature of the "Ottoman". The apprentices, who were trained at the Sublime Porte and had to acquire the necessary language skills and general knowledge on the international relations, became increasingly knowledgeable about foreign affairs. Furthermore, *edeb* literature was extremely useful in their endeavor. The masterpieces of this literature should be considered closely relevant to contemporary European political literature.³² Râtib Efendi's visit of *Orientalische Academie* illustrates this perspective.³³ In the library of the academy, the books on *Polizeiwissenschaft*³⁴ drew the attention of the Ottoman envoy and he immediately inquired of his guide about their contents. When his guide told him that "there are no books or publication on this science [fen] in Islam", Râtib Efendi sarcastically pointed to the *Hümayunname* in front of the student sitting next to him and asked rhetorically if that book was not on politics. In the following days, Râtib Efendi sent Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, *Ethics of Nasireddin Tusî* and *Ahlak-ı Alai* of Kınalızade Ali to the academy.³⁵ After recounting this anecdote and describing *Polizeiwissenschaft* (*politika fenni*) accurately in his treatises,³⁶ Râtib Efendi strongly advised that the many books of *edeb* literature "are on this science and they must be restudied very carefully".³⁷

32 The Ancient Greek political thought had a great impact on the formation of Islamic political theories. This historical connection can also be observed at the times of the Ottoman Empire. For the relations of Islamic and European political thoughts see Anthony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought, from the Prophet to the Present* (Edinburgh, 2001).

33 Sema Arıkan, "Nizâm-ı Cedîd'in Kaynaklarından Ebubekir Râtib Efendi'nin Büyük Lâyihası," (PhD. Diss. İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1996), 380.

34 *Polizeiwissenschaft* (Police Science) was the application of absolutist social discipline by means of secularized natural law to the state and society which derived from one of the Aristotelian forms of government, namely rule by the many/bureaucrats. The main emphasis of the theory was on the welfare and prosperity of the state and its subjects. For further information see Franz-Ludwig, Knemeyer, "Polizei," trans. K. Tribe, *Economy and Society*, IX (1980), 165-196 and Reiner Schulze, *Policey und Gesetzgebungslehre im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1982).

35 For the books that Râtib Efendi gave to *Orientalische Academie* as present see Albert Krafft, *Die arabischen, persischen und türkischen Handschriften der K.K. orientalischen Akademie zu Wien* (Vienna, 1842). These books are now kept in the manuscripts section of Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.

36 Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında*, 220-231.

37 Arıkan, "Nizâm-ı Cedîd'in Kaynaklarından," 381.

In his writings, Ratib Efendi opened new horizons for the Ottomans of the New Order era, however, one cannot find even a passage or paragraph in his treatises and travelogue that can be read as giving direct advice to the higher-ranking Ottoman decision-makers. But nearly every page that described or implicitly praised the European way of organizing things (*nizâm*), in some way, could have been considered as subtle recommendations. With this style of writing, he also legitimated the European New Order.³⁸

Râtib Efendi was not only an author of a political treatise, but acted as states as well. By their writings, on the one hand, Ottomans like him legitimated the European New Order, on the other, they were the political actors of the age who

38 At certain places in his treatise, Ratib Efendi voiced the view that the New Order of Europe actually derived from the “Classical Ottoman Order”. For instance, when he described the Habsburg conscription practices in the second half of the 18th century, Ratib Efendi suggested that the Austrians in fact had copied Ottoman recruitment system for conscripting the Janissaries in the Suleiman the Magnificent’s reign. Should this be accepted as a historical fact, it must be proved, which, needless to say, is extremely difficult to do. If we interpret it as Ratib Efendi’s actual conclusion, I believe that it would be an insult to his intelligence and insight as an Ottoman bureaucrat. In my opinion, as I explicitly described in my book, this was Ratib Efendi’s rhetoric to persuade not only the opponents of the New Order but also the people who did not have any idea on the new policies. Through this rhetoric, he tried to make the New Order more relatable and thus acceptable in the eyes of the literate Ottoman elite. We should not forget the fact underlined by Findley that the eloquent propaganda for the New Order is one of the most noticeable aspects of his treatise. In fact, Ratib Efendi chose the ancient Islamic-Ottoman political, bureaucratic and military concepts meticulously and he *could* apply them in the context of late 18th century Vienna and Habsburg state during his visit. It may also be thought that the main body of the opposition to the New Order, who were probably illiterate ordinary artisans and poor Janissaries, did not have any opportunity to read the treatise. But we know that, there were literate people behind the opposition as they had the power for directing or at least supporting the rebels. In her worthy research on the correspondences between Ratib Efendi and Selim III, Aysel Danacı Yıldız rightly claims that Ratib Efendi desired the transformation of the old regulations according to the necessities of the age. But as I had *tried* to explain in my book, it is clearly apparent that what Ratib wrote was merely rhetorical. Ratib’s main aim, as he wrote in a letter to Prince Selim also published by Dr. Yıldız, to save the Prince from the accusations of acting with “European manners” (*Frenk-meşrep*). Carter V. Findley, “Ebu Bekir Ratib’s Vienna Embassy Narrative: Discovering Austria or Propagandizing for Reform in Istanbul?” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 85, 1995, 41-80 and Aysel Yıldız, “Şehzadeye Öğütler: Ebûbekir Ratib Efendi’nin Şehzade Selim’e (III) Bir Mektubu,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları /The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, guest editor: Seyfi Kenan, 42 (2013), 255-256.

attempted to create a similar order that would serve their own personal political interests. It is a well-noted fact that political developments in Early Modern Europe and the formation of nation states was closely connected with bureaucratization of government.³⁹ To reach the main governmental goal, which Thomas Hobbes described as the protection of the state and its people,⁴⁰ early modern states strived to create regular armies that were only loyal to the center, which required efficient bureaucratic machineries for governing the provinces and extracting taxes. The bureaucrats took the place of the hereditary aristocracy in administration, who were assigned to prominent offices, such as commissaries not only in the center of the state but also in the provinces, which directly depended and represented the central government.⁴¹ Their presence in the advisory councils (*Staatsrath*, *Conseil d'Etat*) fortified their newly acquired positions. In sum, this transition in governmentality revolutionized the European state apparatus.⁴²

We can observe a similar process in the Ottoman Empire in the late 18th century. The foundation of the New Order Army according to the advices of the New Order cabinet consisting mostly of experienced bureaucrats⁴³ meant the beginning of a new era in Ottoman history. This cabinet further played an important role in the writing and the revision of the regulations, which re-formed the Ottoman state apparatus. In this comprehensive codification movement, Râtib Efendi was assigned to help Abdullah Efendi making revisions in the laws concerning the viziers.⁴⁴ The goal of the laws was very simple: The prevention or at least reduction of what the new bureaucracy saw as disorganization and misadministration

39 For a good summary of the developments taking place in different European state structure between 1500-1800 see Martin van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge, 1999), 127-128.

40 Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural & Politic*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (London, 1984), 72-73; 98-99.

41 Otto Hintze, "The Commissary and His Significance in General Administrative History: A Comparative Study," ed. and trans. F. Gilbert, *Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (Oxford, 1975).

42 Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," *The Foucault Effect, Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, P. Miller (London, 1991), 87-104.

43 For the New Order cabinet or the kitchen cabinet of Selim III see Stratford Canning, *Account of the three last insurrections at Constantinople and of the present state of the Turkish Empire*, The National Archive, FO 78/63 (The report dated 25 March 1809), fol: 183a and Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New, The Ottoman Empire under Selim III*, Cambridge Mass., 1971, 87.

44 Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi* (İstanbul, 1986), 66-70 and 344.

in the provinces. Ottoman bureaucrats of the Selim III era were not only taking active part in codification but they personally governed the new institutions, all of which aimed to create a more centralized system of government. The “Grain Administration” (*Zahire Nezareti*) was one of these new institutions which enabled the revenues from the grain trade to be funneled into a single, central treasury.⁴⁵ It was not a coincidence that the founder and first administrator of the *Zahire Nezareti* was Ebubekir Râtib Efendi, who, in his treatises, had established the connections among “security”, “trade”, “taxes”, and “military reforms” and described the same institutions in Europe in detail.⁴⁶ With his experiences and observations in Vienna, Râtib Efendi shaped his career and his career shaped the state as a political actor of a turbulent era.

In the middle of 1795, Ebubekir Râtib Efendi reached the pinnacle of his career by becoming the *Reisülküttab*.⁴⁷ As *Reisülküttab*, he was in a pivotal position in administering Ottoman diplomacy. Râtib Efendi’s foreign policy was based on the concept of “balance of power”⁴⁸ which he had learned from the enemies of the Ottoman Empire. As a man of the *Grand Siècle*, he was an admirer of French Enlightenment and sympathetic to France. He was persuaded by Raimond Verninac’s assurances, the French ambassador to Istanbul, that an alliance would be signed between France and the Ottoman Empire. But just a few days after the cessation of the negotiations, Napoléon’s unexpected invasion of Egypt provided Râtib Efendi’s opponents with the perfect reason for his dismissal. His former rivals who previously had Râtib Efendi banished from Istanbul, Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa in collusion with Grand Vizier İzzet Mehmet Paşa, determined the fate of Râtib Efendi. When the news about the French invasion reached the Sublime Porte, Râtib Efendi was immediately labeled as responsible for the disaster and sent into exile, this time to the Island of Rhodes where he was executed on November 22, 1799.⁴⁹

45 Yavuz Cezar, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin Mali Kurumlarından Zahire Hazinesi ve 1795 (1210) Tarihli Nizamnamesi,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, 6-7 (1978); Tevfik Güran, “The State Role in the Grain Supply of Istanbul: The Grain Administration,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, III (1984-1985); Lynne M. Şaşmaz, “Policing Bread Price and Production in Ottoman İstanbul, 1793-1807,” *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, XXIV (2000) and Fatih Yeşil, “İstanbul’un İlaşesinde *Nizâm-ı Cedid*: Zahire Nezâreti’nin Kuruluşu ve İşleyişi (1793-1839),” *Türklük Araştırmaları*, 15 (2004).

46 Fatih Yeşil, “Looking at the French Revolution through Ottoman Eyes: Ebubekir Râtib Efendi’s Observations,” *Bulletin of SOAS*, 70 (2007), 300 – 301.

47 Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında*, 371.

48 Ernst Haas, “The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda?,” *World Politics*, 5 (1953), 442-477.

49 Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında*, 435.

The ideas and policies of the New Order were prevalent in the higher-ranking Ottoman decision-makers and Râtib Efendi was one of the prominent actors in policy-making during the “New Order” era. However, at the top of his career he made a miscalculation by thinking that he had the control of everything. As a matter of fact, relations between bureaucrats still depended heavily on the factional rivalries and patronage networks,⁵⁰ and in his last conflict, he was once more on the losing side. Another harsh fact of the Ottoman bureaucratic life was no doubt the practice of confiscation (*müsadere*).⁵¹ In Ottoman political thought, any material asset in the realm ultimately belonged to the almighty sultan. Therefore, whatever the bureaucrats possessed must have been somehow acquired by the grace of the Ottoman monarch. This perspective legitimized the confiscations in the eyes of the Ottomans. Confiscations did not have to be in terms of monetary cash; any kind of wealth could be the subject to it. In Râtib Efendi’s case, the Ottoman state considered his books on the European military and fiscal order and forms of government brought from Vienna and Paris as the most precious part of his estate. Ratib Efendi’s books were confiscated for the library of the Ottoman Military Engineering School (*Mühendishane-i Berrî-i Hümayun*),⁵² which ironically turned his death into a contribution to the “New Order” that he had passionately worked for.

How to be(come) an Ottoman at the End of the Eighteenth Century

Abstract ■ Using the biography of Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, this article aims to scrutinize the typical 18th century “Ottoman” in the service of the Sublime Porte. The military defeats taken in the Balkans and Black Sea had a great impact in the formation of a new Ottoman bureaucrat in the late 18th century. The new “Ottoman” was indeed a product of changing needs and structure of the Ottoman state. Increasing need for experienced diplomats is one of the basic reasons brought the evolution of an ideal “Ottoman”, from military-administrator “pasha” to scribal “efendi”. The bureaucratic career of Ebubekir Ratib Efendi exemplifies the said evolution and the very domination of the Sublime Porte over the other Ottoman state institutions. Ratib Efendi, who was educated in *Amedi* Office, which became a busier place with the

50 Carter V. Findley, “Factional Rivalry in Ottoman Istanbul: The Fall of Pertev Paşa, 1837,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 10 (1986), 127-134.

51 R. Levy and C. Baysun, “Musâdere,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8, (Eskişehir, 1997), 669-673.

52 Kemal Beydill, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Mühendishane (1776-1826)*, İstanbul, 1995, 284-285 ve 297-298 and Mesut Uyar-Hayrullah Gök, “Mühendishane-i Berrî-i Hümayun Kütüphanesinin Akibeti I,” 4. *Kat, Yapı Kredi Sermet Çifter Araştırma Kütüphanesi Bülteni*, 2003, 34-39.

increasing prominence of diplomacy in international relations. Therefore it was no surprise that he was chosen represent the Ottoman Empire as an envoy in the court of the Habsburgs. His observations in Vienna, which were described in detail in his treatise and travelogue, opened new horizons for the Ottoman bureaucracy of the New Order. The accuracy of Ratib Efendi's descriptions of the European state and army organizations in his treatise prove that new type of "Ottoman" was emerging as well as his talents as a statesman. Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, who had a solid background on the political theories of Islam, well understood the contemporary European concepts. Ratib Efendi was instrumental not only in designing the theoretical background of the New Order policies but also the application of this theory. His impact on the codification of the regulation for viziers, his role in the foundation of the Grain Administration (*Zahire Nezareti*) and his service as a reisülkütab clearly underline his practical contributions to the reorganization of the Ottoman Empire. However, Ratib Efendi, who was living in an age when factional rivalries and conflicts between political households, could not save himself from being the target of factional frictions and intrigues, which were also typical of his age.

Keywords: Katip, Envoy, Ratib Efendi, The Sublime Porte, The New Order

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