

Ottoman Conceptual History: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: In this article we discuss the pitfalls and benefits of conceptual history as an approach to Ottoman studies. While Ottoman studies is blossoming and using a wider set of tools to study the Ottoman past, Ottoman intellectual history is still resigned to a life-and-works approach. This absence of synthesizing attempts has left intellectual history in the margins. In addition to the lack of new, theoretically sophisticated accounts of how Ottoman intellectual and political changes were intertwined, the old Orientalist works still hold canonical status in the field. Drawing upon recent developments in social and political history, conceptual history may be a good way of doing self-reflective *longue durée* intellectual history. Ottoman conceptual history may also offer non-specialists more sophisticated bases for comparison with non-Ottoman cases.

Keywords: Entanglement, historiography, Islamic tradition, semantic change, temporal layers, translation

Why Do Ottoman Conceptual History? Introducing a Field

In this article we argue for using conceptual history to re-evaluate Ottoman intellectual history and its relationship with social and political history. We discuss the various benefits and pitfalls of appropriating a method developed for studying national European languages, evaluate the linguistic turn work that has been done within Ottoman studies, and conclude by proposing a research program that investigates the broad changes in Ottoman political and rhetorical tradition. While the main argument concerns the benefits to the field of Ottoman history, Ottoman political language, with its complex relations with Persian, Arabic, Greek, and French,

is also an apt testing ground for some of the more advanced methods that have been proposed by conceptual historians.¹ Ideally, using conceptual historical approaches in Ottoman studies should acknowledge the multilingual situation of the Ottoman Empire and that Ottoman studies does not equal studying the Ottoman language. Further afield, conceptual history methods are increasingly used by scholars working with non-European textual traditions, and Ottoman studies should take advantage of its promises.²

Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, there have never been as many scholars as there are today working on Ottoman history, culture, and language, and using a wide range of methodological approaches. With increasing maturity, differentiation, and specialization comes an attendant risk of fragmentation.³ Ehud Toledano has argued that Ottoman studies is now so diversified that “it is impossible to do justice to what has become a huge and rapidly growing body of knowledge” by the use of a single label.⁴ This may be so, but this increased diversity needs to be accompanied by conversations between various subfields. Using conceptual history would allow greater communication between various disciplines that increasingly take up Ottoman history as a topic such as political science, international relations, sociology, and anthropology but it would also require bringing together different subfields of history that have grown substantially in the past couple of decades.

Regardless of a scholar’s purpose for reading Ottoman material, they need to make sense of it by understanding Ottoman concepts in the culturally specific context of the production of this material. Unless we understand the continuities of conceptual use in the Ottoman tradition, we understand very little of what is going on. Despite this obvious fact, very little has been done to trace the historical transformation of Ottoman as a political language. Work that is generally considered antiquated therefore still stands canonical on the topic.⁵

Concepts are at once tools that we use to move the social world, to interact with others, and the means by which we categorize and perceive the world. We, as humans, use concepts to make meaning and to structure social reality. When speaking about concepts, Kenneth Pike's distinction between emic (insider) and etic (outsider) accounts can be useful.⁶ An emic set of concepts are the concepts used by cultural and linguistic insiders and are those found in primary sources. An etic set of concepts are the analytical concepts used in scholarship. In conceptual history tradition, attention is devoted to analyzing an emic set of concepts; meaning as it is made in the sources. We here argue that a move away from using an etic set of concepts—*Westernization, modernization, secularization*—that have typically been used to structure accounts of Ottoman history, to those concepts that Ottomans themselves used to argue their positions and make sense of their world. Such an approach is inherently anti-Orientalist in its sensibility to indigenous meaning and its highlighting of non-European agency. Such a move may, in turn, lead us to revisit our analytical/etic categories and have a better framework with which to approach Ottoman history and face the challenges of de-Orientalization and provincialization.⁷

Struggling over the legitimate interpretation and use of concepts is also a struggle over the political legitimacy of various groups and positions and often over how to organize social and political relations. Focusing on concepts allows us to integrate political and intellectual history. By perceiving, moving, and structuring social relations by use of concepts, Ottomans made their society and their state. When we describe, analyze, or simply narrate this history in either modern Turkish or in a European language, we do so in a way that can never correspond exactly to the meaning made in the original context. Since meaning changes over time, this is of course never possible in any language, but with the conceptual fracture between Ottoman and

Turkish, and the semantic incompatibility between Ottoman and English, we are bound to re-interpret to a great extent.

It should be noted, however, that semantic incompatibility does not mean incommensurability; context-specificity and emphasis on language does not mean essentialist methodology. The semantic divide between the conceptual schemes of Ottoman and English, or any other European language, does not preclude the possibility of translation.⁸ On the contrary, as recent developments in Ottoman historiography have demonstrated, the Ottoman Empire shared many problems in administration, military organization, taxation, social control, and overall state formation with other early modern Eurasian polities.⁹ While the way Ottomans conceptualized these problems were indigenous and used specifically Ottoman discourses, these concepts are still translatable.¹⁰ When we factor in the shared Greek intellectual heritage between Europeans and Ottomans, these may be much more commensurable traditions than most Orientalists have assumed. The challenge, then, is recognizing the uniqueness and particularities of Ottoman concepts while at the same time acknowledging that Ottomans and Europeans shared a common world. Conceptual history can be a very good way of tackling such challenges by paying due attention to nuances in interpretation between different languages and making the readers aware of this reinterpretation either by historical actors or modern scholars. As increased human mobility and contact between cultures have produced a higher degree of conceptual entanglements, conceptual history allows us to speak about interaction across linguistic and cultural boundaries without reverting to “import,” “transfer,” or “imitation.”¹¹ It is, in a way, an endeavor that allows us to revisit some of the intellectual projects that fell into disrepute after the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and reintroduce the agency of the non-Western actors in making their own meaning.¹²

The Challenges of Studying Ottoman Turkish

It is not only notoriously difficult to define Ottoman Turkish due to its variation in time and across genres, but attempting such definitions has long been politically motivated. Ottoman has been claimed to be intrinsically linked with “a worldly, belletristic tradition . . . embracing what the Turks ultimately came to refer to as both *edeb*, ‘good breeding,’ and *edebiyat*, ‘literature.’”¹³ German Turkologist Johann Strauss has emphasized the fact that most languages in the Ottoman Empire—Greek, Armenian, Arabic, and various Slavic languages—had a high register and a low register: one that was used in written texts (and often also used in religious rituals) and a spoken vernacular used in everyday affairs.¹⁴ In its most basic definition, Ottoman Turkish was Turkish written in a variation of Arabic script with a considerable number of Arabic and Persian words, and with regard to certain specific topics and fields, Greek and Italian words.¹⁵ Besides the fact that many texts were still produced exclusively in Arabic (legal tradition) or Persian (philosophy and poetry), depending on the genre and period, an Ottoman text could include so many Arabic and Persian words as to be unrecognizable as Turkish beyond syntax or be so simple as to be read and understood by a modern reader.

The Ottoman Empire was segmented, not only between different peripheries and different linguistic groups, but between different religious orders and people pursuing different careers. This opens the question of whether we may speak of one Ottoman tradition or several entangled Ottoman traditions. We are merely going to point out the possibility of at least three different textual traditions that can be subsumed under a broader heading of “Ottoman.” These are the bureaucratic tradition carried on by the members of the scribal service, the mystical tradition represented by the members of Sufi orders, and the legal tradition that was upheld by the jurists

and the ulema.¹⁶ These traditions were made up of different texts, used different vocabularies and different stylistic conventions. They were not always entirely distinct, but merged, reinforced, and challenged one another. They were also tied to different knowledge fields and different careers. There were prestige hierarchies within and between them that were themselves subject to change following the broad structural shifts in the Empire. Among the three, the scribal tradition was the most fluid, drawing on both legal and mystical traditions, as well as Aristotelian ethics (as it was passed down via medieval Persian classics) to legitimize policy changes and absorbing various challenges to the legitimacy of the Ottoman state by updating the vocabulary of the center.

Although the sultan was formally speaking not “accountable” in a modern sense, both the sultan and his viziers needed to legitimize their actions and positions vis-à-vis an audience.¹⁷ These audiences were varied, both in time and across space. Like any empire, the Ottomans ruled by dividing their subjects and keeping them apart. This implied that they also had to legitimize their policies to different audiences in different ways. In order to do this, they relied on the polyvalence, the ambiguities, and the contested aspects of the Ottoman language. Language is never a completed whole and cannot be “downloaded” from some abstract entity. Instead, we take it to be a set of meaning-making practices and as an embodied skill that is honorable and personal, but one that only makes sense (in the literal meaning) in relation to an audience or addressee who shares in what may be broadly termed a rhetorical tradition. The point here is that within a rhetorical tradition that is so multilingually complex as the Ottoman, individuals often draw upon elements of one rhetorical tradition and use them in another. This is one way of speaking of translation.¹⁸ It is, however, very difficult to study conceptual translation, but it is of crucial importance for studying the conceptual vocabulary of the Ottoman language. One

methodological question that arises is then when does a concept become a concept autonomous and endogenous to a particular language?

Because the social fields in which the Ottoman language was used were so fragmented, we need to emphasize that since different audiences will know different aspects of a concept, they will draw upon different patterns of use, and they will interpret particular usage by reference to their own rhetorical tradition. A single text could legitimize the same events in very different ways to different audiences by drawing upon legitimizing tropes and using particular vocabulary that would be polyvalent and mean different things to the different audiences. Hasan [Kayalı](#), on the other hand, has shown how it became increasingly difficult to engage in multi-vocal signaling after the creation of the Ottoman parliament in 1908, where representatives from the various Ottoman peripheries got together to debate politics, and it became evident that they had diverging concerns.¹⁹

The rhetorical strategy of enthymeme—making an argument where one or more premises are left unstated—was ubiquitous in Ottoman writing.²⁰ This strategy relies on an audience to supply the premise from “common knowledge,” and what constituted common knowledge clearly varied with audiences.²¹ It is almost impossible to find explicit and clear definitions of concepts in Ottoman writing with the exception of the juristic tradition in which it was customary to provide canonical definitions of the terminology employed. The ubiquity of enthymeme makes it particularly difficult for modern-day scholars to take arguments “on the face of it,” but we often have to delve into the set of references that a particular group is likely to have built up through their education and engagement with contemporary social and political events.²² Moreover, because so much social prestige was associated with showing erudition, it was quite common to allude to or directly refer to Ottoman poetic tropes when making an

argument. Multiple allusion and layered meaning is a distinguishing feature of most poetry, but Ottoman classical poetry is particularly rich in this respect.²³ A consequence of this is that it falls entirely upon the historian to identify instances of conceptual shifts and redefinitions and what Quentin Skinner has called *paradiastole*—where an author takes a concept and argues that its real, original, or proper meaning is something else than the way opponents use it.²⁴

Ottoman texts present another challenge for their ubiquitous use of concepts from various Islamic textual and interpretive traditions. Şerif Mardin observes as particularly problematic the usage of explanatory and justificatory terms such as “human agency” (*irâde-i cüz’iyye*) for exactly opposite purposes by different actors.²⁵ This characteristic in which the “same theoretical schemes or concepts” could be used for different purposes in entirely different contexts can be very frustrating to modern-day scholars, and has been noted by Marinos Sariyannis as well.²⁶ Such a problem, however, is not unique to Ottoman or Islamic tradition; it is a quality observable in other broad hermeneutical traditions. By providing actors with a common vocabulary, tropes, and postulates with which they can argue their relative positions, tradition makes politics possible. The uniqueness of Islamic tradition should be sought not in this quality but in the historical lack of any scripturally endorsed final authority on interpretation, which makes orthodoxies weaker and more vulnerable to contestation by allowing a greater room for more actors to seek their own interpretive framework in political argumentation.²⁷

In fact, one could identify a set of binary concepts in Islamic tradition that seem to come up often in political rhetoric. Tension between renewal (*ihyâ, tecdîd*) and innovation (*bid’a*), tension between reason (*‘akl, re’y*) and tradition (*nakl, nass*), and tension between fate (*kader*) and human agency seems to be particularly prone to contestation in politics. Sunni doctrine (particularly Maturidi theology, which was the dominant trend among the Ottoman Sunnis)

refuses to take a final stance on these tensions, always opting for a middle ground instead. However, this vague middle ground position allows these tensions to easily spill into political discussion to be recycled over and over, never being resolved. These discussions are central to understanding the dynamism of Ottoman rhetorical tradition. Accordingly, one should never take arguments from Islamic tradition in Ottoman-Turkish politics at face value and seek to contextualize even the most basic terms and vocabulary in the specific argument within which they are proposed.

What Makes Ottoman Conceptual History Different?

Doing conceptual history based on Ottoman texts means to take a set of methods and tools that were developed to study one very different rhetorical tradition to another. In the near-proverbial words of the British novelist L. P. Hartley “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” The extent to which the past—one’s own or one’s society’s past—is a foreign country, is a question of the degree to which there is a continuity of rhetorical tradition. A key argument by Reinhart Koselleck is that different parts of a vocabulary change at different speeds and at different times. However, some languages have changed at a quicker rate and have been changed more deliberately than others. The Ottoman language is clearly a special case in this regard. It no longer exists. Apart from a few works dealing with (mostly lexical) ruptures, the extent to which there is semantic continuity between Ottoman and Turkish political language is largely unexplored and taken for granted.²⁸ Turkish language is obviously not unique in having gone through a rupture in the processes of modernization and nation-building; we see similar ruptures in other traditions globally. However, as **Şerif** Mardin has argued, there would be very few languages that have gone through as many historical ruptures as has Turkish.²⁹ Whether

some of these transformations indeed deserve to be called ruptures or have simply been labeled so in broad historical narratives remains one of the questions that needs to be examined empirically.

According to Mardin, the first rupture in Ottoman language occurred with the Tanzimat (1839–1876), as the Ottoman state and society became increasingly integrated with the circulation of European goods and tastes, and Ottoman domestic politics was increasingly integrated into European foreign policy through repeated military interventions. Ottoman bureaucracy and diplomacy strove to synchronize institutionally with European states, and particularly during and following the Crimean War of 1853–1856 there was an unprecedented degree of cultural and social interaction taking place, the locus of such interaction being major urban centers such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica. In the process of what was pervasively called Westernization, Ottomans translated dozens of key concepts (*civilization, freedom, equality, democracy, public, progress, etc*) from European political texts and gradually made these central to Ottoman politics and thought. Some of these novel concepts were introduced as neologisms (for example, *medeniyet*) whereas others have been translated into already existing vocabulary in the Ottoman Turkish (for example, *hürriyet*), thus creating vague semantic fields in which past usages and translated content would coexist. These concepts were widely used between 1860 and 1878 until the suspension of all liberal politics by **Abdülhamid II** and following three decades of strict censorship of all press and publishing activity in the Empire. Another corollary of the same transformation was the gradual amalgamation of classical genres of Ottoman prose and poetry with Western ones, eventually to be replaced by the latter. The introduction of journalistic prose aimed at public audiences rather than the bureaucracy and the dissolution of the classical and highly elaborate Ottoman poetry are particularly noteworthy in that regard.

The proliferation of all kinds of literary activity and public debate after the fall of Hamidian absolutism and the initiation of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908 is again arguably a second instance of rupture. Within the following decade the Empire went through several major crises (most notably the Balkan Wars and World War I) during the course of which major ideological currents such as liberalism, Islamism, and Turkism began to take shape. These roughly defined ideological positions would later be inherited by modern Turkish politics.

The decision to change from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet in 1928, the coinciding mass literacy campaign in Turkey, and the ensuing state-led campaign to purge the Arabic and Persian words in Turkish constitute the most complete rupture. While the elite would obviously not forget how to read and write Ottoman—and some did indeed use it in their everyday business—it became illegal to publish texts in the old script. The rupture that this brought about in the rhetorical tradition has been well covered by Geoffrey Lewis in his *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*.³⁰ While the written language is obviously not the whole rhetorical tradition, the social and political importance of the fact that those who learned to read and write after 1928 cannot read old Ottoman texts can hardly be overstated. Ottoman is indeed a foreign language to present-day Turks. The immediate response of common Turks upon seeing anyone reading Ottoman—say, on public transport—is that the person reads the Quran.

Furthermore, there was from 1932 a deliberate state-directed effort to “purify” the Turkish language. This meant purging the Turkish language of loanwords and to replace them with “ur-Turkish” words in provincial dialects or Central Asian Turkic languages. This process has been ongoing, though ebbing and flowing, since the 1930s. The result is twofold: present-day Turks do not necessarily expect texts written more than fifty years ago to be readily accessible to them, and linguistic change happens fast. An attendant practice is that of intra-lingual translation

or “linguistic updating” known as *sadeleşirme* (simplification), which is done by editors without acknowledging it when books are republished.³¹ The consequence is that the Turkish vocabulary of today is distinctly different from Ottoman vocabulary. The fact that Persian and Arabic were dropped as mandatory high school subjects at the same time as the Alphabet Reform of 1928, and did not maintain high prestige or open doors to careers outside religious learning, meant that few non-specialist Turks have any significant grasp of these languages. Hence, the Persian and Arabic vocabulary that Ottoman was so entangled with are largely inaccessible and unknown in today’s Turkish rhetorical tradition.

For these reasons, doing Ottoman conceptual history particularly with regard to *longue durée* research involves a very different research situation than the one in which conceptual history was originally developed. The various projects to study and catalogue German, French, or Dutch concepts largely came about in response to questions of “how did we get here?”³² The German *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* cannot be understood except also in relation to the emergence of what Victor Klemperer called *Lingua Tertii Imperii*—the political language of the Third Reich.³³ Moreover, an important aspect of these projects is their emphasis on “national” languages and the emergence of integrated public spheres associated with specific nation-states. As Ottoman Turkish went out of use around a century ago, is inaccessible to contemporary users of any nation, and was largely associated not with a public sphere but with an imperial project that is now defunct, and a poetic tradition that went defunct in the nineteenth century, a program mapping and investigating key concepts of Ottoman history would be very different from these. The study of a “dead language” that disappeared a mere century ago means that the relationship between the scholar and his or her sources is different.

As such, Ottoman conceptual history is more of an archaeological than a genealogical project. It is more about “uncovering” a hidden past that may or may not be related to the present, than it is about questions of how contemporary Turkish conceptual vocabulary came into being. Again, we need to stress that assumptions regarding continuity and change remain to be systematically examined through rigorous empirical research.

One final problem that needs to be addressed when speaking about ruptures and continuities is, of course, the question of whether a research program for Ottoman-Turkish conceptual history has any use for an “Ottoman *Sattelzeit*.” Koselleck proposed the term *Sattelzeit* as a heuristic tool for particular period of conceptual rupture in European history, arguing that the pace of semantic transformation had dramatically increased during this time, eventually leading to the formation of modern political concepts and ideologies. The utility of *Sattelzeit* as a heuristic device for European intellectual history has been questioned before,³⁴ and it is our contention that, in the case of Ottoman conceptual history, proposing a *Sattelzeit* creates more problems than it solves. Above all, it carries with it the danger of reinforcing the Orientalist narratives we set out to challenge. Whether one chooses the Tanzimat (1839–1876), the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918), or 1839–1918 period as a whole, there is an inherent danger that postulating a *Sattelzeit* simply ends up reintroducing the concept of modernity as a structuring device for our historical analysis, casting the Ottomans as somehow temporally behind Europeans. One easily overemphasizes the impact of European ideas at the cost of indigenous dynamics and ends up ignoring the serious semantic shifts that occurred in the century leading up to the Tanzimat. As Margrit Pernau has called for, there is also a need to “provincialize concepts.” The way to do so is not looking for *Sattelzeits* elsewhere, but to study concepts used in other traditions and see how the emic level may inform our analytical apparatus

used to narrate (global) history. The literature on medieval and early modern historiography has demonstrated that there are clear signs of serious semantic shifts during the formation of the Empire and its consequent crises in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries.³⁵ Instead of proposing a *Sattelzeit*, we take our cue from Şerif Mardin, who proposes taking different points of rupture as instances of fractures that create sediments of meaning.³⁶ In doing so, we tie this to another key heuristic metaphor used by Koselleck, namely temporal layers (*Zeitschichten*).³⁷ Each period of fast-paced transformation created new semantic layers—expanding, transforming, or bifurcating semantic capacity, or pushing them underground to be recovered later by political actors or historians.

While our discussion here emphasizes discursive shifts that occur in the late Ottoman Empire, it should be noted that historians working on earlier periods would have different concerns. In particular, a major question for historians working on the medieval period³⁸ or early Ottoman language³⁹ is the semantic transformation that took place following the conversion of Turkic tribes to Islam and especially in the post-Mongol period of the Islamic world (from the early fourteenth century CE). The interaction between the political vocabulary and practice of the Turkic tribes and the language of Islam is a matter that has drastic consequences with regard to Ottoman conceptual history and hence, it would benefit from the perspective of conceptual history.⁴⁰

What Can Be Gained by Ottoman Conceptual History?

The historiography of the later centuries of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic has for a long time been dominated by linear and teleological narratives structured by such concepts as Westernization, secularization, modernization, and nation-state formation, all of which presumed

these ruptures to be self-evident, and failed to account for contingencies and continuities. Both the nationalist historiography of the early republic and the international scholarship of the twentieth century that rested on the modernization paradigm have reproduced these narratives emphasizing ruptures as new beginnings and caricaturing the past. These narratives were also reinforced with underlying Orientalist assumptions; primarily of a stagnant East being awakened from a deep slumber through its encounter with Western enlightenment. It would, however, be a mistake to put the whole blame on Orientalist scholarship; some of these meta-narratives, such as imperial decline, gained part of its thrust from existing early modern narratives in the Ottoman Empire deeply interwoven into the modernization narratives of the new nation.⁴¹ Moreover, even before the highly influential works by Orientalists like Bernard Lewis, Turkish intellectuals had already engaged in creating linear and binary models of transformation. For instance, the driving motive of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's impressive account of the emergence of modern Ottoman literature (ca. 1940s) was the failure of Ottoman authors in embracing the idea of progress, which he explained with the egalitarianism of Islam and the lack of the concept of tragedy.⁴² Similarly, Niyazi Berkes's monumental work on Turkish modernization took pains to demonstrate the secularization of the Empire's politics and society through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴³

Although these narratives have been brought down with the wave of revisionist historiography that has taken place within social and political history over the past three decades, intellectual history has proved surprisingly resilient to such criticism. It therefore remains largely under the spell of older assumptions. As Maurus Reinkowski observed, in the works of famed Orientalist scholars both Ottoman and Arabic, political vocabulary appeared as "a language that has to pass from a stagnant Islamic past to the European-inspired Elysian fields of modernity."⁴⁴

One reason why Ottoman Turkish intellectual historiography has remained wedded to dated meta-narratives is again the difficulty of working with Ottoman texts. Due to the amount of time needed to recover and decipher manuscripts that are accessible only to experts, scholars had no alternative save a “life-and-works” approach that generally focused on either the textual production of one historical figure or in many cases to a single text. This is not to say that these studies were not useful; on the contrary, some of the best scholarship in Ottoman historiography belongs exactly to this genre.⁴⁵ However, due to their limited focus the findings of these fine scholarly works remain restricted to an audience extending little beyond historians of the early modern Ottoman Empire. This limitation is further perpetuated by the tendency for period-specialization dominant in Ottoman studies, the modern/premodern (or “early modern” and “late” Ottoman Empire) divide being the most decisive. Although recently some exemplary scholarship has been published on Ottoman intellectual history before 1800,⁴⁶ their findings have not been made to bear on the scholarship on the nineteenth century, which is still being narrated in terms of Westernization and secularization, both defined in very crude terms without attention to nuance. A quite recent example of this is Banu Turnaoğlu’s *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism*, which simply reproduces the established Orientalist narrative of Ottoman vocabulary being completely overhauled by European republican thought.⁴⁷ The author sets out to demonstrate the existence of a republican tradition of political thought in Turkey before the republic, and in this effort she ends up reproducing an image of nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectual production ignoring its social and political context and discussing only in so far as it can be related to European republican debates.

There are several reasons why Ottoman language is particularly fit and Ottoman studies currently ripe for the introduction of systematic conceptual historical analysis. First, Ottoman

intellectual production follows strict genre conventions and demonstrates little evidence of idiosyncrasy, at least prior to the Tanzimat period. As Victoria Holbrook pointed out, the norms for what constituted a “good text” in Ottoman circles were very different from the qualities that European posterity sought in them and judged them by.⁴⁸ From Goethe onward, Europeans have been looking for originality, since it is primarily as contributions to world literature that works are evaluated. If they lack originality, they have little value. This was not the primary norm by which Ottomans judged works. Works were supposed to adhere to very specific genre conventions. Furthermore, an author should show his mastery of tradition and learnedness through the application of elements from great masters. Imitation was the sincerest form of flattery. That was not to say that there was no novelty in genre conventions; rather such changes occurred quite slowly such that they would be perceptible only in the *longue durée* as a consequence of gradual accumulation.⁴⁹ Such a context makes a discussion of *Gipfelwanderung*⁵⁰ mostly superfluous; not that the Ottomans did not have their classics, but these classics were revered exactly because of their mastery of genre conventions. For instance, the late sixteenth-century work on ethics, the *Ahlâk-ı ‘Alâî* of **Kınalızade** Ali Efendi, became an instant classic with more than a hundred manuscripts surviving because it was an excellent commentary on and compilation of the Aristotelian ethics as it was passed on through the works of Persian authors such as Nasreddin Tusi and Celaleddin Devvani.⁵¹

The particular way that Ottoman authors used imitation of classic works and resorted also to enthymeme forces the scholar to pay even more attention to social and political context in order to be able to make sense of how each key concept is made use of, which, in turn, becomes possible through a simultaneous analysis of a large number of texts to identify deviations and make sure deviation is not accidental. While this may sound like a gargantuan task, the number

of Ottoman manuscripts produced prior to the introduction of mass printing is relatively small compared to the number of printed texts available from the same periods in European contexts. This brings us to the second reason why the Ottoman language is now particularly ripe for systematic conceptual historical analysis. Although, as noted above, the technical difficulties forced earlier scholars to focus on a quite limited number of texts, the gradual build up of critical editions have made a significant number of texts readily available for study. This is evident again in the recent scholarship which make use of an exceptional number of texts, which would be unworkable two decades ago.⁵² One should also note the obvious advantages of the digital revolution, which has made the analysis of these documents relatively easier and much more rewarding. Once critical editions are digitized by way of scanning and using OCR software, it becomes a matter of identifying what words to look for in a particular line of research. Although there is currently no OCR software that works on Ottoman and no comprehensive project cataloguing texts similar to Google Books, the proportion of texts that are available in romanized critical editions are exceptionally high compared to the extant manuscripts. Even with the advent of printing in the Ottoman Empire, the number of printed texts rose only in relation to the pre-print numbers, which was still virtually infinitesimal in relation to European numbers. An estimate puts the number of Ottoman printed works from the popularization of print to the transition to Latin alphabet to around thirty thousand titles.⁵³

Besides these factors that lend Ottoman intellectual history to *longue durée* diachronic approaches, there are also particular benefits to be gotten from employing synchronic analysis of contemporaneous texts à la Cambridge School. While political and intellectual history are obviously entangled, Ottoman intellectual history follows a different pattern than Ottoman political history. Its junctures do not follow neatly from political periods and reigns. Nor do we

believe we should follow intellectual currents. And this is where we get to the history of concepts, which is particularly useful to focus on exactly because concepts are often the tools with which authors, scholars, and statesmen alike use to legitimize their positions and decisions. This makes them liable to struggles, and these struggles change the meaning of concepts in use over time. The straightjacket of the conceptual binaries imposed by authors such as Niyazi Berkes, namely *reformist* or *Westernist* versus *conservatives* or *reactionaries*, tells us very little about the conceptual struggles that are played out in the texts, and most of the time such an approach ends up with the historian implicitly siding with one or the other camp. Dividing actors into progressives and reactionaries often obscures more than it reveals in the conduct and preferences of those categorized. Instead, this vocabulary has entered into the legitimacy of the Turkish Republic.⁵⁴ Too often, historical debates focus on what the crucial influence was on a particular author or whether to group him with one side or the other. Furthermore, there is the problematic teleology that these categories imply. The analytical setup that relies on reformists versus conservatives points towards the inevitability of Western modernity. Some of us have problems with accepting this inevitability and we are quite sure that the authors themselves would have had enormous problems with being categorized in such ways. Be that as it may, the main problem is of course not the sensitivities of dead authors. The main problem is that such categorizations add very little to our understanding of the interrelationships between the texts of the period under analysis. Conceptual history, however, allows us to distinguish, for instance, between Westernization as a phenomenon that happens regardless of the motivations of the political actors (that is, gradual emulation of Western practices and technologies and penetration of Western material culture), Westernization as a loaded accusation directed at one's opponents ("blind imitators of the infidels"), and Westernization as an explicit motivation. In most cases,

these are not analytically separated in scholarship and are being mistaken for each other at face value.

While this particular problem manifests itself as a tendency to reduce political struggles to teleological narratives in much of the Ottoman era, from the late Empire to the Republic, it manifests as a tendency to reduce thinkers to neatly defined ideological currents such as Islamism, liberalism, nationalism, Ottomanism, or Westernism. The problem here is not so much that these figures cannot be reduced to neatly defined camps. Rather, such predefined categories prioritize self-descriptions and accusations of the actors in question and ignore the fact that in most cases the differences between the camps are far less than the commonalities.

One other major benefit of conceptual history in Muslim context in general and Ottoman context in particular is that it allows for a more refined understanding of the changing relationship between religion, politics, and society. As demonstrated by Shahab Ahmed, there is a tendency in the broad field of Islamic studies to rely on a static and monolithic concept of Islamic tradition associated with more orthodox interpretations.⁵⁵ A parallel problem has been identified by the Ottoman historians in the past decade, with the nature of Ottoman Islam at different stages of the Empire's history being increasingly contested. Particularly with the introduction of the debate on Ottoman "confessionalization," syncretism, proselytization, orthodoxy formation, heterodoxy, and Sunnitization have been hot topics particularly in the context of Ottoman state formation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the Ottoman-Habsburg and Ottoman-Safavid imperial rivalries in the sixteenth century.⁵⁶

While these intense debates will definitely continue, one thing they have settled is the dynamic, fluid, and contested nature of early modern Ottoman Islam. This reflection, however, has not been picked up on by historians of the modern era who by and large still operate within

assumptions of linear accounts of secularization proposed by the earlier generation of historians. Scholars working on late Ottoman Islam and politics pervasively imagine a pristine, monolithic, and apolitical Islam prior to the impact of the Western ideas that subverted traditional concepts and frameworks.⁵⁷ While influence of translated ideas on how Islam and the religious community was imagined cannot be denied, imagining a pristine Islam prior to modernization means subscribing to a fundamentalist concept of tradition, which is itself a product of modern social and political context. Secularization, however it may be defined but particularly with regard to the relationship of concepts to institutions, is a major issue that could be better understood through conceptual history.

New Approaches to Conceptual History

Because it emerges in a different kind of problem-situation, deals with other types of sources, and has different kinds of methodological challenges, a research program seeking to explore key concepts of Ottoman history needs to adapt some of the tools of conceptual history to its specific needs. A lot has happened since the writing of Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck's *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, and we do not intend to reduce Europeanist conceptual history to its earliest and most rudimentary (yet perhaps most ambitious and most successful) instantiations. There are in fact a lot of theoretical tools on offer. Jani Marjanen and Margrit Pernau have each called for non-national, or entangled, historiographies of conceptual vocabularies.⁵⁸ When doing so, it is important to insist on the importance of translation for how concepts become part of vocabularies within a rhetorical tradition.⁵⁹ In a multi-authored volume on the entanglement and translation of concepts of *civility* and *civilization* between various

languages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Margrit Pernau et al. situated the Ottoman rhetorical tradition in the wider context of global intellectual history.⁶⁰

Since Ottoman rhetorical tradition cannot be said to have been tied to the emergence of any specific public sphere, but was instead used in a number of fragmented social fields, Ottomanist conceptual historians need to be aware of the span of rhetorical contexts in which it was used. Like any other language, Ottoman was of course emergent, and cannot be considered a finished whole. However, we would assert that Ottoman rhetorical practice involved a particularly high frequency of translation between languages, and hence Marjanen's and Pernau's points are even more valid for the study of Ottoman conceptual history. Most Ottomans would be likely to know and use at least two languages in their everyday lives, and to draw upon different conceptual histories and traditions as they translated between these. The complex multilingual contexts in which Ottoman was used—and not just in the social margins but also in the practices of the state bureaucracy—imply that Ottoman conceptual history should try to be attentive to a wider range of sources than is in fact practically feasible. There is a growing literature on multilingual contexts of the Ottoman Empire, but no attempt has been made to integrate this in broad studies of Ottoman conceptual vocabulary.⁶¹ For reasons of how scholars are trained, it is unlikely that many are sufficiently proficient in all the languages relevant for the study of Ottoman concepts, at least if one aims for comprehensiveness. For a longer time span, this would likely entail learning not only Ottoman, Arabic, and Persian, but also Greek, Italian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, and Albanian in the study of particularly ubiquitous concepts. Ideally, the research program should at some point expand to study these in an entangled manner. For pragmatic reasons—Ottoman is time-consuming to learn and to study, and neither the study of Ottoman conceptual history nor the study of concepts in other languages

of the Ottoman Empire have come very far—we currently see this as a bit premature. Nothing would please us more than being proven wrong by scholars delving into the full complexity of Ottoman entangled conceptual history. At this point, however, it should suffice for any research design to focus on individual concepts or sets of concepts in any of these languages while recognizing the limits and acknowledging the methodological issues at stake.

While the Ottoman state archives represent one of the longest continuous textual records of any polity in the world, there was no integrated Ottoman public sphere before the Tanzimat and the introduction of mass printing. The absence of a text-based integrated public sphere does not mean that there were not “public” engagements in political discourse. One common practice was that of the *meddah*—the storytellers who entertained audiences in coffee houses. Another common practice was that of reading out particular Ottoman chronicles (*vekāyi 'name*) aloud in the coffee houses. Petitions from the periphery to the center (inevitably involving a degree of translation) should also be considered a network of communication that enabled a degree of integration of political vocabulary.⁶² As printed newspapers became fairly common in the Ottoman Empire, but literacy did not, the practice of reading aloud in coffee houses also included newspapers.⁶³ Hence, to the extent that we may talk about a public “sphere,” this sphere was perhaps more physical and less metaphorical, constituted as it was in the practices of reading aloud.

Ottoman rhetorical tradition is more or less co-extensive in time with the existence of the Ottoman Empire, and hence would span the entire six centuries of the Ottoman imperial project. As conceptual change happens at different speeds in different parts of the vocabulary, not all concepts are equally interesting to study in all periods. The irreconcilable tension in projects on conceptual history is how to strike a balance between conceptual innovation, importance and

representativity. The first emphasizes when a particular concept comes into use, or when a usage emerges for the first time, and would, by necessity, direct the scholar's attention to the social margins and to intellectuals who often hold no direct political importance beyond their ability to "think new thoughts." The second would emphasize politically significant usage—the ways that those in official political and governmental positions use particular concepts to shape society, legitimize their positions, and carry out their actions. Scholars seeking this would then look at governmental documents and treatises written by important statesmen. The third, representativity, would seek more of a "smallest common denominator" of how concepts are used that all can agree upon. One way to do this would be to emphasize dictionaries and encyclopedias, as has been rather common in conceptual history. Another way, although this is not possible when studying Ottoman concepts, would be to do as Frederick Schaffer has done: interview average people to get them to use concepts in conversations that mimic everyday interaction.⁶⁴ A third way would be to analyze massive corpora of texts, trying to identify patterns of use regardless of the text's purported importance. Ideally, conceptual historians should be able to combine all three. However, we doubt that this is feasible. It is particularly difficult to establish any kind of representativity of texts covering significant proportions of Ottoman political life. This said, Ottoman rhetorical tradition was almost exclusively a "high register," which may perhaps legitimize the fact that any major program on "key concepts of Ottoman history" would almost by default emphasize importance and innovation at the expense of representativity and multiple levels of analysis. The former would perhaps be because these concepts were used to deal with urgent matters of state survival and to organize state-subject relations, while the latter may perhaps fit well with our concern for showing the dynamic nature of Ottoman tradition.

Conclusion

There is a need to revisit and revive the synthesis between Ottoman intellectual, social, and political history. Conceptual history offers a methodological approach for doing this in a way that is attentive to the agency of the Ottomans themselves and the way they gave meaning to their own political relations. This is a fundamentally anti-Orientalist approach in its highlighting of indigenous agency and meaning. It is therefore curious that the works that hold the field are those of European orientalists such as Bernard Lewis and Ami Ayalon, whose works bear striking similarities with those of Turkish intellectual historians such as Niyazi Berkes. A reason for this is that history writing on the Ottoman Empire became a political issue intertwined with the Turkish republican project, and that project used a narrative that was by and large that of European orientalism. As a consequence, intertwined political and intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire is particularly ripe for revision. We suggest conceptual history as an approach that may allow us to make such revisionist work on a more synthetic level. In addition to the benefits to both Ottoman studies and conceptual history, a systematic work on Ottoman conceptual history would be of benefit to scholars working in both Islamic studies or European studies, providing a baseline for comparison and perhaps also for studying entanglements with a political tradition that is only now starting to gain its due attention.

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Contributions to the History of Concepts 7, no. 1 (2012): 1–11,

<https://doi.org/10.3167/choc.2012.070101>.

2. Leading examples include Margrit Pernau et al., *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth*

Century Asia and Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Maurus Reinkowski, "The

State's Security and the Subjects' Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic

Correspondence (19th Century)," in *Legitimizing the Order. Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*,

ed. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 195–212; Wael Abu-

'Uksa, *Freedom in the Arab World: Concepts and Ideologies in Arabic Thought in the*

Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Ivo Spira, *A*

Conceptual History of Chinese -Isms. The Modernization of Ideological Discourse, 1895–1925

(Leiden: Brill, 2015).

3. For the basic dynamic of fragmentation within academic disciplines, see Andrew Abbott,

Chaos of Disciplines (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

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4. Ehud Toledano, "A Comment on Virginia H. Aksan's 'What's Up in Ottoman Studies,'" *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 215–218.
 5. Little attempt has been made to surpass Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
 6. Kenneth Lee Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior, Janua Linguarum. Series Maior* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1954).
 7. Such an approach has obviously greater ramifications beyond Ottoman history. For a parallel discussion see Margrit Pernau, "Provincializing Concepts: The Language of Transnational History," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 483–499.
 8. For a discussion of conceptual relativism, possibility of translation, and other implications of the idea of neatly separated conceptual schemes see Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
 9. See for instance Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ariel Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to Modern State* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004); and Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).
 10. Einar Wigen, *State of Translation: Turkey in Interlingual Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

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11. See, e.g., Alp Eren Topal, “Against Influence: Ziya **Gökalp** in Context and Tradition,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28 (2017): 283–310, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etw059>.
 12. Burke Hendrix and Deborah Baumgold, eds., *Colonial Exchanges: Political Theory and the Agency of the Colonized* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
 13. Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 9.
 14. Johann Strauss, "Diglossie dans le domaine ottoman: Évolution et péripéties d’une situation linguistique" [Diglossia in the Ottoman Domains: Evolution and Vicissitudes of a Linguistic Situation], *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 75–76 (1995): 221–255, doi:10.3406/remmm.1995.2625.
 15. Ottomans shared a common maritime vocabulary with the Mediterranean cultures. See Henry Kehane, Renee Kehane, and Andreas Tietze, *Lingua Franca in the Levant: Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin* (Istanbul: ABC, 1988).
 16. See Hüseyin **Yılmaz**, *Caliphate Redefined, The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 1–4.
 17. For a study of an important such audience, see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*.
 18. Wigen, *State of Translation*, 41–49.
 19. Hasan **Kayalı**, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
 20. For enthymeme, see, e.g., Lloyd F. Bitzer “Aristotle’s Enthymeme Revisited,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45 (1959): 399–408, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335635909382374>.
 21. Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

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22. The task is similar to what Susan Buck-Morss does in her Hegel and Haiti article, showing that Hegel's slave/master dialectic was directly informed by his reading of current events, Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 821–865.
23. Victoria Rowe Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love: Turkish Modernity and Mystic Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).
24. Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 170–171.
25. Şerif Mardin, "The Mind of the Turkish Reformer 1700–1900," *Western Humanities Review* 14 (1960): 413–436.
26. Marinos Sariyannis, "Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought." *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 125–126, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18775462-00401004>.
27. See Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 3–6.
28. Geoffrey Lewis dealt with the lexical rupture of the Turkish Language Reform, which is a related issue. Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
29. Şerif Mardin, "Conceptual Fracture," in *Transnational Concepts Transfers and the Challenge of the Peripheries*, ed. Gürcan Koçan (Istanbul: Istanbul Technical University Press, 2008).
30. See Lewis, *Turkish Language Reform*, and İlker Aytürk, "Politics and Language Reform in Turkey: The 'Academy' Debate," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 98 (2008): 13–30.

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31. **Özlem** Berk-Albachten, “The Turkish Language Reform and Intralingual Translation,” in *Tension and Tradition: The Dynamics of Translation in Turkey*, ed. **Şehnaz** Tahir-Gürçağlar, Saliha Paker, and John Milton (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2015).
32. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–1997); Karin Tilmans and Wyger Welema, “Applying Begriffsgeschichte to Dutch History: Some Remarks on the Practice and Future of a Project,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 2, no. 1 (2006): 43-58.
33. Victor Klemperer, *Language of the Third Reich: LTI - Lingua Tertii Imperii* (London: Continuum, 2006).
34. Gabriel Motzkin, “On the Notion of Historical (Dis)Continuity: Reinhart Koselleck’s Construction of the Sattelzeit,” *Contributions to History of Concepts* 1, no. 2 (2005): 145–158, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187465605783406244>.
35. Among others, see particularly **Yılmaz**, *Caliphate Redefined*; Marinos Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought up to the Tanzimat: A Concise History* (Rethymno: Institute of Mediterranean Studies, 2015); and Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
36. Mardin, “Conceptual Fracture.”
37. The most recent collection of Koselleck’s translated articles focuses on this key metaphor. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, trans. and ed. Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018). See also Helge Jordheim, “Does Conceptual History Really Need a Theory of Historical Times?” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 2 (2011): 21–41, <https://doi.org/10.3167/choc.2011.060202>;

John Zammito, “Drilling Down: Can Historians Operationalize Koselleck’s Stratigraphical Times?” *Configurations* 23 (2015): 199–215, doi: 10.1353/con.2015.0015.

38. Typically, the watershed between “medieval” and “early modern” would in an Ottoman context be set either at the Ottoman Civil War (1402–1413) or the conquest of Constantinople (1453).

39. When dealing with the Ottoman language, the line between “early modern Ottoman” and “late Ottoman” is typically drawn at the turn of the eighteenth century.

40. A brief discussion of the *longue durée* of those semantic shifts and their legacies is available in Iver B. Neumann and Einar Wigen, *The Steppe Tradition in International Relations: Russians, Turks and European State-Building 4000 BCE–2018 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 151–156, 230–232.

41. See Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1869–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

42. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Histoire De La Littérature Turque Du XIXeme Siècle*, trans. Faruk Bilici, Ferda Fidan, Valerie Gay-Aksoy, Gül Mete-Yuva, and Catherine Erikan (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012).

43. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

44. Maurus Reinkowski, “The State’s Security and the Subjects’ Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th Century),” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 195–212.

45. See, for instance, Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986);

Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700–1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1985); Ethan L. Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

46. Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*; Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans*, Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, Rifa'at Ali Abou-el-Haj, *The Formation of the Modern State*; Şahin, *Empire and Power*.

47. Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

48. Holbrook, *Unreadable Shores of Love*.

49. Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, and Douglas A. Howard, “Genre and Myth in the Ottoman Advice for Kings Literature,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 140–41.

50. Limiting the analysis to monumental “great texts,” a practice that has been criticized in European conceptual history. See Melvin Richter, *The History of Social and Political Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 88.

51. See Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 29–43.

52. See Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*; Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*.

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53. The standard Seyfettin Özege Catalogue of Ottoman print material lists around twenty-five thousand titles and estimates the total to be around thirty thousand. It should be noted that these numbers include short works like pamphlets and exclude periodicals.
54. Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye’de Siyasi İdeolojiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2016).
55. See Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2015).
56. For an excellent summary and discussion, see the introduction to Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).
57. See, for instance, İsmail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri [The Political Views of the Islamists]* 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Dergah, 2001).
58. Jani Marjanen, "Undermining Methodological Nationalism: *Histoire croisée* of Concepts as Transnational History," in *Transnational Political Spaces: Agents—Structures—Encounters*, ed. Mathias Albert et al., *Reihe Historische Politikforschung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009); Pernau, "Whither Conceptual History?"
59. Wigen, *State of Translation*.
60. Pernau et al., *Civilizing Emotions*.
61. Johann Strauss, "Türkische Übersetzungen zweier europäischer Geschichtswerke aus Muḥammad ‘Alī’s Ägypten: Botta's ‘Storia d'Italia’ und Castéra's ‘Histoire de Catherine,’” [Turkish translations of two European works of history in Muhammad Ali's Egypt: Botta's “Storia d'Italia” and Castéra's “Histoire de Catherine.”] in *XXIII: Deutscher Orientalistentag. Vom 16. bis 20. September 1985 in Würzburg. Ausgewählte Vorträge*, ed. Einar von Schuler (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1989); Johann Strauss, “Diglossie dans le

domaine ottoman.”); Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Centuries)?” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003): 39-76; Fariba Zarinebaf, “From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28, no. 1 (2008): 154-169.

62. See, for instance, Henning Sievert, “Intermediaries and Local Knowledge in a Changing Political Environment: Complaints from Libya at the Turn of the 20th Century,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 54, no. 3–4 (2014): 322–362.

63. Cengiz Kırılı. “Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 75–96.

64. Frederic C. Schaffer, *Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).