



The Libraries in the Ottoman State

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ABSTRACT

Libraries, from past to present, have played a vital role in the process of developing, preserving and passing down culture by providing the information that the society, in which they have a place, have needed. Libraries, at the same time, are the institutions which are a part of the society and reflect the features of the society. With these aspects, libraries have an important position in the lives of societies and states both historically and culturally. In this study, libraries established in the Ottoman Empire from its foundation to collapse have been handled within a historical scope in general terms. In addition, in this study, both the effects of Ottoman library tradition upon political, social and cultural lives and the effects of the changes in the political, social and cultural lives in the Ottoman Empire on the libraries have been analyzed. Within the scope of the study, a general evaluation has been held in the area of library types ranging from the Waqf Libraries to Turkish Hearths Libraries established in Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Library, Ottoman State, Foundations libraries.

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I. Introduction

Libraries are educational institutions and culture organizations which have an important place in the Turkish states that had dominated in Middle Asia, Anatolia and the Balkans from Uyghur State to Turkish Republic, and represent a millennial tradition.

Historical documents show that in the Pre-Islamic Period, Turks began to establish libraries in Middle Asia firstly during the time of Uyghur State (AD 742-840). The writer of "Mongol History", Morujod'Ohsson, recounting from a Chinese traveller informs that there were public libraries opened for the use of people in Uyghur cities (Cunbur, 1963, p. 105). The Uyghur State was the first settled civilization founded by the Turks in history who had adopted a nomadic way of life. Comparing with the earlier nomadic Turkish States, Uyghurs gave much more importance to science and education. From this point of view, it is not accidental that libraries which are a part of settled life and an indicator of science, education and culture had appeared firstly in Uyghur State. Besides that, setting from the fact that the libraries in the Uyghur Period were open to public, it is possible to date the practice of public libraries in Turkey back to the Uyghurs.

From the IX. century, the fact that Turks began to embrace Islam rapidly brought about a significant change

in the Turkish history. After Turks adopted Islam, they were introduced to a new civilization, and were highly influenced by this civilization ranging from political, military, literary and scientific fields to cultural ones. In the Turkish states, one of the institutions influenced by Islamic civilization was unequivocally libraries. Hence, it is seen that the libraries established in Karakhanids, Ghaznevids, Great Seljuks and Atabegs that were among the earliest Muslim Turkish States were shaped within the frame of Islamic civilization. In the collection of these libraries composed in the body of madrasahs and foundations which were two important educational-cultural institutions, religious sources hold a quite respectable place (Candan, 2013, pp. 107-111). In this period, it is possible to claim that libraries undertook a considerable function also in conveying the rules and orders of the newly adopted Islam religion to people.

Following the Battle of Manzikert 1071 fought between Seljuk State and Byzantine Empire, the Turks who quickly proceeded into Anatolia, founded Anatolian Seljuk State here. Sources give that big libraries were established in Anatolian Seljuk State, and in Artuqid State which was a branch of Anatolian Seljuks. There were libraries in many of the madrasahs founded in the period of Anatolian Seljuks. From various foundation records, it is understood that the Seljuk sultans and statesmen had private libraries (Erumsal, 2004, p. 19). Particularly, in the

period of Kılıç Arslan II (1156-1192), the library built by Şemseddin Altınbey, one of the Seljuk Beys in Konya, which was their capital city, is one of the biggest and most important cultural institutions of this period. The fact that it was ordered to buy books which cost 100 Dinar every year within the endowment of the library so that library could be developed (Şehsuvaroğlu, 1978, p. 4) was an indicator of the value 13th Anatolian Seljuks gave on libraries.

After the Anatolian Seljuks were destroyed by Mongols in 1308, with the establishment of large and small beylics in Anatolia, the “Beylics” Period which would last until the mid 15th century started in Anatolia. In this period, while the main Anatolian cities such as Kastamonu, Ankara, Sinop, Kütahya, Birgi, Tire, Peçin (Milas), Ayasulug, Bursa, İznik, Ladik (Denizli), Gülşehir (Arapsun), Kırşehir, Amasya became centers of science and education, the cities such as Konya, Kayseri, Niğde and Sivas developed much more. Anatolian Beys were personally interested in the cultural progress of the places they controlled, and protected scholars and artists; being attentive to establishing madrasa, school, library, imaret and guesthouse, they pioneered the development of science and education. With the libraries composed in the body of madrasahs and imarets founded in each corner of Anatolia, the library tradition whose foundation was laid in Anatolia by Anatolian Seljuks was maintained. From the 1420s onwards, the Anatolian Beylics were incrementally captured by the Ottomans (Yazıcı, 1969, p. 22; Uzunçarşılı, 1988, p. 211, p. 220, pp. 229-231; Candan, 2013, p. 112).

II. Libraries in Ottoman State: From its Foundation to the Tanzimat Reform Era

The Ottoman State, founded in early 14th century as a small beylic and became a great empire reigning in three continents, maintained the political, social and cultural heritage bequeathed from Anatolian Seljuk State and improved it. Examining the political, social, economic, judicial and cultural structure and institutions of the Ottomans, this continuity can be lucidly seen (Gündüz, 2009, pp. 200-202). It is possible to evaluate the libraries established in the Ottoman period within this frame. It is seen that the “foundation” libraries established within madrasahs and religious places, the educational institutions, which emerged firstly in the Muslim states and expanded during the period of Anatolian Seljuk State, increasingly maintained their presence in the Ottoman period as well (Emsen, 1960, pp. 14-18; Soysal, 1998, p. 34; Akgündüz, 1999, pp. 75-77).

Social services in the Ottoman State were run via foundations established by donors. Among these foundations established in order to fulfil the needs a man may have from his/her birth to death in each phase of his/her life, there were also book and library foundations established so as to meet the needs of teachers and students at school and neighbourhood residents in the district (Erünsal, 1991, p. XIII). Along with such religious places as a mosque, a dervish lodge and a shrine, the foundation libraries established around or within the madrasahs, which were educational institutions, were operated according to foundation certificate-charter that

included management forms and benefitting conditions determined by the founder of foundation (Keseroğlu, 1989, p. 83).

In the Ottoman State, within the period from its foundation to fall, libraries were established with different characteristics according to their building and settlement features. We can gather the aforementioned libraries under these titles (Anameriç, 2006, pp. 63-64):

- The private (personal) libraries established in the palaces where Padishahs lived during their period of shehzade and sultanate,
- Libraries established for personal purposes in houses, mansions, rooms and etc.
- The libraries established in various educational institutions such as mosque, madrasa, school and training center or nearby these institutions,
- The libraries found within or around such educational-worshipping institutions as dervish lodge, zawiya, shrine, big dervish monastery, outpost, masjid, dervish convent and Mevlevi lodge.
- The libraries which have specific and independent (detached) building.

The first written document about the Ottoman libraries belongs to the sultanate of Yıldırım Bayezid (1389-1402). Yet, it is known that the first madrasa in the Ottomans was established in the term of the second sultan of the state, Orhan Bey (1288-1359) in İznik in 1331 (Uzunçarşılı, 2011, p. 522). Setting from the reality that there would be no madrasa education without book and library, some writers (Parmaksızoğlu, 1974, p. 88; Cunbur, 1963, p. 111; Emsen, 1960, p. 15) date the foundation of library in the Ottomans back to Orhan Bey period. It is certain from the sources that also in the period of Murad I, Bayazid I, Mehmed I and Murad II who came to throne after Orhan Bey, a great importance was attached to scientific and educational institutions. In the Rise of the Ottoman State which continued up to the conquest of İstanbul by Mehmed II, - excluding Ottoman Interregnum (1402-1413)- in Anatolia and the Balkans were established madrasahs and libraries consistently (Erünsal, 1999, p. 236; Candan, 2013, pp. 113-114; Şehsuvaroğlu, 1978, p. 4).

The period of Mehmet II and the conquest of İstanbul are a milestone in the Ottoman State. This period symbolizes the passage to empire in terms of the Ottoman State. After he conquered İstanbul, Mehmed the Conqueror turned the new capital of the empire into a center of science and education in a short period of time having a lot of educational and scientific institutions built here (Uzunçarşılı, 1982, p. 643). In the period of Mehmed II, together with other scientific and educational institutions, libraries grew to a large extent as well. In this period, especially in the capital city, İstanbul large libraries were established. Except for the capital İstanbul, operations to establish libraries were maintained primarily in Edirne, the old center of the state, and other cities (Erünsal, 2003, p. 23). In the period after Mehmed II as well, with the growth of the empire, a wide number of libraries were established in Anatolia and the Balkans. There are some of these libraries that have reached today. It is known that the majority of the libraries in many parts of the empire were established by sultans, valide sultans, grand viziers and top government officials (Baysal, 1991,

p. 53; Erünsal, 2003, p. 25; Emsen, 1960, pp. 14-18).

Towards the end of the 17th (XVII) century, a new type of library was added to the library types which were open to public or some groups of public like madrasa, shrine, mosque, dervish lodge, hospital and a bazaar which was kind of artisan. The distinctive feature of this type of library whose operation is no different from other libraries is that they were established in a detached house. In addition to their feature of being established in a detached house, these libraries are also important for having a rich collection and being the archetypes that reflect the library characteristic of the period. The first detached library established in the Ottoman State is Köprülü Library which was built by Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and whose foundation certificate-charter was prepared in 1678 (Emsen, 1960, p. 18; Erünsal, 2003, p. 257). The libraries having independent building brought a different concept of library and librarianship in the Ottoman State. Such kinds of libraries were placed in a different category from others in terms of the variety, number and salary policy of their staff, reader services, protection/improvement of collection, cataloguing / classification (classification of sciences), socialization of knowledge and its contribution to production. The most striking characteristic of this type of library is that they serve open to public and there is no kind of restriction. Particularly from the 18th century onwards, foreign travellers benefitted from these libraries as well, and gave place to them in their travel books, memoirs and notes (Anameriç, 2008, p. 88).



Fig. 1. The First Private Library in Ottoman State: Köprülü Library.

The most important event in Ottoman Empire in the 18th century was the establishment of the first printing press printing the publications in Turkish by Ibrahim Muteferrika (1674-1745) in 1729. This event was important for both the history of publication and the history of library and books. In order to have the permission to establish a printing press, Ibrahim Muteferrika prepared a brochure related to the benefits of the printing press for the state, society and the Turkish works of art in Istanbul. He presented this brochure to the Grand vizier. This brochure consisted of twelve items and explained the necessity, importance and benefits of the printings. The seventh item of the brochure is about the libraries. In this item there are statements following “The

libraries are established in Istanbul and other cities of the empire thanks to the printing. The students easily obtain the books they need for their education and the country develops.” (Candan, 2011, pp. 472-473). The first printed book in Turkish appeared 274 years later after Gutenberg had presented his first printed book in Europe. The experts base this delay to the religious, social and economical reasons (Ersoy, 1998, p. 421; Baysal, 1991, p. 71). No matter what the reason was, the delay in the coming of the printed press to Ottoman Empire affected the cultural development of Ottoman Empire in a negative way. It is possible to say that this delay also affected the development of the libraries in a negative way. Consequently, with the usage of the printing press the number of the printings increased and this situation raised the “reader” class in society. From this point of view, the printed press indirectly affected the Ottoman Libraries in a positive way.

III. Ahmet who was a sultan of 18th century Ottoman Sultans had a library established in Topkapı Palace and this library added important benefits to Ottoman Library Culture. This library was a very magnificent library with its physical aspects and collection. It was also known as Enderun Library. According to some sources, I. Mahmut was known to having established the first public library “Ayasofya Library” in 1740. I. Abdulhamit established a library that bore his name in 1780. Many foreign traveller also mentioned this library. Hamidiye library gained fame in Istanbul. Many foreigners also benefited from this library (Cunbur, 1963; Anameriç, 2006, p. 70).

One of the important events for the libraries in the era before the administrative reforms was the establishment of the ministry of foundations in 1826. The effect area of the state related to the administration of foundations expanded with the establishment of this ministry. Consequently, the role of state in the development and administration of libraries increased. The intensive studies about the control and counting of libraries were carried out in this area (Erünsal, 2003, p. 29).

When we have a general outlook of the libraries in Ottoman State till the era of administrative reforms; it is seen that the act of foundation of these foundations have a good organization model. The user services, technical services and organizational services in the foundations take place in the acts of foundations (Emsen, 1960a, pp. 119-121). However, it is not possible to say the same thing for the collections of these libraries. The collection of the richest library of Ottoman Empire didn't reach the number of 6000 even in its powerful era. It is clear that the first independent library except from mosque, madrasah, lodge and shrine was established in 1661 in Ottoman Empire and this table is not positive (Keseroğlu, 2010). Besides, after Ottoman Empire began to decline with its social institutions from 18th century, the libraries also began to decline in terms of both organizations and collections. A foreign expert, D'Ohsson, in his work published in 1778 “The general Outlook of Ottoman Empire” presented very negative findings and things about the libraries in Ottoman Empire (Baysal, 1991, pp. 53-54).

III. From the Tanzimat Reforms till the Republic

The era of administrative reforms (Tanzimat) began in 1839 with the declaration of administrative reform (Tanzimat Declaration) and brought a lot of judiciary, military, economic, cultural and educational innovations with modernization and newness in Ottoman Empire. "the word meaning of Tanzimat is amendment or reform" In western languages it is used as Ottoman Reform. Tanzimat Era finished in 1876 when II. Abdulhamit ascended to throne and the declaration of constitutionalism. However, it can be said that in a more general meaning Ottoman Reform continued till the collapse of Ottoman Empire in 1922 (Akça & Hülür, 2007, pp. 235-245).

In Tanzimat Era, the sweeping changes were carried out. In 1857, National Education Secretary was established and ascended to the degree of secretary for the first time. In 1869, the National Education Regulation which legalized the management and organization of education was published (Soysal, 1987, p. 21; Keseroğlu, 1989, pp. 88-89). The National Education Regulation is important not only for education but also for librarianship. Including the foundation libraries, the control and management of all libraries in the renewed education organization were left to the National Education Secretary with this regulation (Cunbur, 1964, p. 28).

The library established by Munif General in Ottoman Community Science was the first western library. Ottoman Community Science Library is a research library in terms of the scientific sources in its collection. It is also a public library in terms of its services to community. In addition to this, the library takes the membership fee from its users. Another aspect of Ottoman Community Science Library is that it is the first library which has English, French, German, Romaic and Armenian publications in its collection as a library giving services to community (Keseroğlu, 1989, pp. 90-91)

After the short-ending I. Constitutionalism Period (1876-1878), the "tyranny" period of II. Abdulhamit (1878-1908) is generally mentioned as a totalitarian management and strict censorship policy of the sultan. However, many studies both in the realm of education and culture in the Ottoman Empire were carried out in this period. Some of the studies which were carried out were about the libraries. In 1881 Munif General wrote a very important legal document for the libraries called "An Ordinance about the Management of Libraries".

All the missions and services of the libraries managed by the state were identified with this ordinance. The publication of "The Will of Seniyye" which was intended to find out the number of the books in the libraries of Istanbul in 1882 was the one of the important studies about the libraries in this period (Anameriç, 2006, p. 70). Besides, in this period a library called "Public Library" was begun to construct for the first time by the state. This library was "Beyazit Public Library" that was established in 1882 and began to give service in 1884 (Keseroğlu, 1989, p. 92). The construction of the library was controlled by Grand vizier Said Pasha in personal.

Moreover, II. Abdulhamit supported the construction of library with his own budget. These two behaviors for the construction of the library are noteworthy (Anameriç, 2011, p. 542)



Fig. 2. Beyazit State Library.

The statistic studies realized by the Ministry of Education between 1894 and 1896 include the number of schools, students, lectures, libraries and books in Istanbul and other provinces. According to these statistics, between 1894 and 1895 there were totally 323 libraries; 47 in Istanbul and 276 in other provinces. There were totally 183.731 published and written works; 71.129 in Istanbul and 112.602 in other provinces. In other words, the percentage of 14.6% libraries in Ottoman Empire were in Istanbul at this period. However, the percentage of 63.5% the total collection of libraries was again in Istanbul. The distribution of the libraries in other provinces were as follows: the percentage of 8% were in Balkan Provinces, the percentage of 53 were in Anatolian Provinces, the percentage of 2 were in island provinces and the percentage of 23 were in Middle-east and Arabian Provinces (Maarif-i Umumi..., p. 5, pp. 22-25, pp. 56-59 quoted by; Anameriç, 2008, p. 119).

In the period of II. Constitutionalism, which is also known as the collapse of Ottoman Empire, important developments occurred. After the Ottoman Constitution was out of order for 29 years, II. Constitutionalism was the period known to having been announced on 24 July 1908 and ended on 6 November 1922 with the ending of Ottoman Empire. This period lasted for 14 years and some events happened such as parliamentary democracy, election, political party, military coup, dictatorship and two great wars (Balkan War and First World War). The collapse of an Empire lasted for 600 years was witnessed (Beydilli, 1999, pp. 119-135).

The Union and Progression Party, which was the first political party of Turkish Political life, played an important role in the political, economic, social and cultural structure of II. Reform Movement. The national economy, education and cultural aims of The Union and Progression Party formed the state policies. In this period the schools were opened, the libraries and the museums were established, the cinema and theatrical organizations

were performed and the studies in the aim of building the consciousness and national identity of public were carried out. Briefly, the political perceptions including national and occidental ideas of party determined the studies on the social and cultural areas of II. Reform Movement (Anameriç, 2008, p. 123).

The idea of "National Library" appeared with 1789 French Revolution and was continuously supported in this period. Between 1912 and 1920 in various cities the libraries with the name of "national" were established although they did not function as national libraries. For example, in 1912 Izmir and Kayseri, in 1917 Eskisehir and Konya, in 1918 Diyarbakır and in 1920 Bursa National Libraries were established (Baysal, 1991, p. 55). Especially all the national libraries established between 1912 and 1918 were supported by the municipalities and rural organizations of The Union and Progression Party (Anameriç, 2008, pp. 127-128). These libraries which were established as "National Libraries" but functioned as public libraries played an important role in terms of building national consciousness for the people in those regions.

Two important events are crucial related to the libraries in the period of II. Reform Movement. First; the report prepared by Ahmet Zeki Bey about Istanbul Libraries in 1909. This report is important in terms of the situation of libraries in Ottoman Empire. The statements in the report show that the situation of the libraries in Ottoman Empire is not good. (Şenalp, 1974, p. 39) second one; as a common committee decision of the ministries of National Education and Documentation, the management and controlling of the all libraries except from Ottoman Library in Bayezit were given the ministry of Documentation. According to the written sources related to this issue, this application caused a binary structure and had negative effects on the libraries (Onat Öz, 1997, p. 84; Candan, 2011, p. 119).

During the war of Trablugarb between 1911 and 1913, I. and II. Balkan Wars and 1914-1918 I. World War which affected the large part of Europe, the libraries, far from the current issues, had the attention and the necessary requirements were carried out in spite of every negative things. The most important of these are the public and national libraries in Izmir, Eskisehir, Konya and Diyarbakır. Especially the Germans established public libraries and reading halls in every part of Ottoman Empire during I. World War. The main aim of establishing these places was to spread and complete the national consciousness, that's to say, using it as a device of propaganda. (Fuad, A., 1924, p. 452 quoted by; Anameriç, 2008, p. 129)

Between 1919 and 1922 fewer developments were seen compared to other periods in terms of library and librarianship. Because this period includes the political and military struggles in various fronts in order to protect the national freedom and integrity as a result of the invasion of Anatolia by the Allied States after I. World War.

Finally, it would be useful to briefly touch upon Turkish Hearths Association which was established in

Constitutional Period in 1912, and contributed to the formation of national state in Turkey in the establishment years of the Republic. The Turkish Hearths, with the cultural and political mission they undertook, functioned as a bridge between the Ottoman State and Turkish Republic. The Turkish Hearths established by nationalist university students on March 12, 1912, was founded in order to raise cultural consciousness and form a cultural union among the Turks in the world, and performed activities for this purpose. One of the activities organized by the Turkish Hearths is the attempt of founding a library within the body of hearths. In pre-Republican period, the Turkish Hearths did not have a noteworthy effort in library studies. The libraries forged in this period are composed of small collections formed within associations. In Republican Period, however, it is seen that the attempts of establishing libraries are accelerated (Keseroğlu, 1989, pp. 100-103).

IV. Conclusion

Libraries being established in Ottoman Empire from its foundation till the end of 19th century were generally shaped within religious institutions and palaces. In the libraries established in this period, collections consisted heavily of religious books. Social and cultural changes experienced in Ottoman geography especially as of second half of the 19th century had a reflection on the libraries as well. In the structure of libraries established in Ottoman Empire in this period, the marks and effects of modernism and nationalism which are the dominant ideology of that period are clearly seen. Libraries of this period, at the same time, had a positive effect on social and cultural transformation experienced in Ottoman geography.

Ottoman Empire is a great state that reigned upon millions of km² over three continents throughout the 600-year history of its. Upon the lands that Ottoman Empire reigned there are tens of countries today. In this respect, Libraries in Ottoman Empire is such a broad and comprehensive topic that it cannot be covered with a couple of books. However, it would not be righteous to put forward that there are adequate researches done upon this topic in the literature. The aim of this study, which carries out a general overview of Ottoman Libraries, is to draw attention to this essential issue. Researches that may be carried out related to libraries established in Ottoman period within the borders of the countries continuing to exist on the broad geography once Ottomans reigned have a great importance both from the aspect of social and cultural history of those states and from that of librarianship history.

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