

ADALYA

23 2020



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Suna & İnan Kırac

Research Center for

Mediterranean Civilizations

23 2020

ISSN 1301-2746

ADALYA

The Annual of the Koç University Suna & İnan Kırac Research Center
for Mediterranean Civilizations

(OFFPRINT)



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The Annual of the Koç University Suna & İnan Kırac Research Center
for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED)

Adalya, a peer reviewed publication, is indexed in the A&HCI
(Arts & Humanities Citation Index) and CC/A&H (Current Contents /
Arts & Humanities)
Adalya is also indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Database of
TÜBİTAK/ULAKBİM TR index and EBSCO.

<i>Mode of publication</i>	Worldwide periodical
<i>Publisher certificate number</i>	18318
ISSN	1301-2746
<i>Publisher management</i>	Koç University Rumelifeneri Yolu, 34450 Sarıyer / İstanbul
<i>Publisher</i>	Umran Savaş İnan, President, on behalf of Koç University
<i>Editor-in-chief</i>	Oğuz Tekin
<i>Editors</i>	Tarkan Kahya and Arif Yacı
<i>English copyediting</i>	Mark Wilson
<i>Editorial Advisory Board</i>	(Members serve for a period of five years) Prof. Dr. Mustafa Adak, Akdeniz University (2018-2022) Prof. Dr. Engin Akyürek, Koç University (2018-2022) Prof. Dr. Nicholas D. Cahill, University of Wisconsin-Madison (2018-2022) Prof. Dr. Edhem Eldem, Boğaziçi University / Collège de France (2018-2022) Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özdoğan, Emeritus, Istanbul University (2016-2020) Prof. Dr. C. Brian Rose, University of Pennsylvania (2018-2022) Prof. Dr. Charlotte Roueché, Emerita, King's College London (2019-2023) Prof. Dr. Christof Schuler, DAI München (2017-2021) Prof. Dr. R. R. R. Smith, University of Oxford (2016-2020)
©	Koç University AKMED, 2020
<i>Production</i>	Zero Production Ltd. Abdullah Sok. No. 17 Taksim 34433 İstanbul Tel: +90 (212) 244 75 21 • Fax: +90 (212) 244 32 09 info@zerobooksonline.com; www.zerobooksonline.com
<i>Printing</i>	Fotokitap Fotoğraf Ürünleri Paz. ve Tic. Ltd. Şti. Oruç Reis Mah. Tekstilkent B-5 Blok No: 10-AH111 Esenler - İstanbul / Turkey Certificate number: 47448
<i>Mailing address</i>	Barbaros Mah. Kocatepe Sok. No. 22 Kaleiçi 07100 Antalya - TURKEY Tel: +90 (242) 243 42 74 • Fax: +90 (242) 243 80 13 https://akmed.ku.edu.tr
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KOÇ ÜNİVERSİTESİ



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Two Church Bells from Antalya: Traces of the Religious Soundscape of the Late Ottoman Period

ALEX RODRIGUEZ SUAREZ*

Abstract

This article examines two church bells found in Antalya. One hangs at the top of the Antalya clock tower while the other is on display at the Antalya Toy Museum. These two artefacts, which have not received any serious scholarly attention, were surely employed in Orthodox churches until 1923, when the population exchange between Turkey and Greece led to the conversion or demolition of most churches in the city. The two instruments are first described and then contextualized in the period that witnessed their use - the very end of the Late Ottoman period.

Keywords: church bells, Antalya, bell ringing, religious soundscape, Late Ottoman

Öz

Bu makalede, Antalya'da bulunan iki kilise çanı incelenmektedir. Bunlardan birisi, Antalya Saat Kulesi'nde asılı durmakta diğeri ise Antalya Oyuncak Müzesi'nde sergilenmektedir. Bilimsel açıdan yeterli ilgi görmeyen ve çalışılmayan bu iki çan, 1923 yılında Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasında gerçekleşen nüfus mübadelesine kadar şehirdeki Ortodoks kiliselerinde kullanılmışlardır. Bu mübadele sonrasında şehirdeki pek çok kilise ya başka amaçlarla kullanılmaya başlanmış ya da yıkılmışlardır. Makalede önce, bu iki çanın tanımlamaları yapılmakta, ardından da kullanımda oldukları Geç Osmanlı Dönemi'nin sonlarındaki dönem bağlamında ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kilise çanları, Antalya, çan sesi, dini ses, Geç Osmanlı

Introduction

The collections of several Turkish museums include Christian bells. For instance, such instruments can be found in the Tekirdağ Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography,¹ the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology,² the Bergama Museum,³ the Istanbul Archaeological

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This article was researched and written during my stay at The Koç University Suna & İnan Kırac Research Center for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED), where I was granted the short-term post-doctoral research fellowship (2019-2020). I would like to thank my colleague Hatice Demir, who helped me to get access to the clock tower and with whom I discussed the Christian community of Antalya and its monuments.

¹ The bell in this collection is dated to 1890 and has an Armenian inscription.

² The bell in this collection was cast in Piraeus, Greece, in 1906.

³ This large bell, which comes from a church in Ayvalık, was cast in Bochum, Germany, in 1863; see Köken 2017a, 2017b.

Museums,⁴ and the Istanbul Military Museum.⁵ These objects, which are sometimes displayed outside the actual galleries, have not attracted much interest from scholars in the field of material culture. The reason may be that these bells are relatively recent, dated to either the second half of the 19th century or the early 20th. Nonetheless, these instruments are valuable because they can help us to recreate the religious soundscape of the Late Ottoman period. In this article I am going to discuss two bells found in Antalya. The first one hangs in the clock tower of the city while the second is on display at the Toy Museum. My aim is not only to describe them, but also to place them in their historical context. The goal is to use them to discuss briefly the religious soundscape of the Christian communities during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire.

1. The Bell from the Antalya Clock Tower (fig. 1)

The first reference to this bell is found in a book about clock towers in Anatolia by Hakkı Acun (1994). In the section about the Antalya clock tower he briefly describes the instrument that used to mark the hours.⁶ We are told that the artefact is the only part that survives from the clock mechanism. It shows Jesus, the Virgin *orans*, a saint and a Greek inscription. This description was later copied by other authors dealing with the Antalya clock tower and who do not seem to have had access to the actual instrument.⁷ The decoration of this object indicates that it originally came from a church.

Measurements: Height, 71 cm; diameter, 71 cm.

State of preservation: The bell is missing the clapper; in its place is a lightbulb (the instrument is currently employed as a lamp). The religious representations are eroded, and the surface shows many graffiti.

Inscription (on the lowest part of the main body, on one side): ΕΠΙ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΑΤΤΑΛΕΙ ΝΑΟΥ ΠΑΝΑΓΕΙΑΣ (fig. 2). Translation: "In the name of the church of the Virgin in Attaleia."

Decoration: On the top of the main body is a band decorated with leaves. The central part of the main body shows three single images: the Virgin seated on a cloud with both arms raised (fig. 3), half-figure of a male saint holding a scroll (St. John the Baptist?), and the Crucifixion of Jesus (fig. 4). Underneath each image is a leafy design.

The Greek inscription informs us that the bell was cast for the church of the Virgin in Antalya, which was actually dedicated to The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple.⁸ After the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923,⁹ the church was used for some years as the city museum. Today it is the Sultan Alaaddin Mosque.¹⁰ Formerly, one of the most

⁴ For details about one of the bells at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, see Rodriguez Suarez 2018, 303-4, fig. 16.1.

⁵ This bell, which was surely cast in Russia, comes from the monument that the Russians built at San Stefano (Yeşilköy, Istanbul) in 1898 to commemorate the Russian soldiers who died in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The monument was demolished in November 1914. Apparently, it had more than one instrument; see Mutlu 2007, 79-80.

⁶ Acun 1994, 9.

⁷ Cansever 2009, 41; Çimrin 2018, 125. Cansever changed the description slightly. According to her, the bell is decorated with images of the baby Jesus, the Virgin praying, and a saint. The inscription is written in ancient Greek.

⁸ Πεγλιβανίδης 1989, 1.252-53; Hellenkemper and Hild 2004, 1:330.

⁹ In 1923 Greece and Turkey signed the treaty of Lausanne, which ended the war between the two countries and agreed to an obligatory exchange of Greek Orthodox and Muslim populations.

¹⁰ Antalya Valiliği 2004, 38; Çimrin 2017, 59-63, 159-62. The lower part of the bell tower is still standing; see Yıldız and Duran 1999, 8-9.

important churches in the city, it was built in 1834. Because bell ringing was only allowed throughout the Ottoman Empire in 1856, the bell must have been cast at some point after that year. It may date to the second half of the 19th century. Of the two bells discussed in this article, the instrument from the clock tower is the larger one; however, its production is of inferior quality. For instance, the inscription has not been cast satisfactorily. Also, the three religious figures that decorate it are rather generic and not rendered in detail. The image of the Virgin seems to be more prominent since the inscription starts underneath it. This may be the case because the church where the bell was going to be employed was dedicated to her. The bell may have been cast in a foundry located in Greece. Two bells from the region of Antalya were produced in workshops located on the Greek island of Syros. One was used at the church of St. Nicholas in Demre,¹¹ while the other apparently came from a church in Kalkan.¹² The bell at the Antalya clock tower, however, does not show the nameplate of the foundry. The lack of a nameplate could indicate that the bell was not cast by a well-established foundry, or that the foundry had not been active for a long time.

The Antalya Clock Tower

The clock tower is one of the most famous landmarks of Antalya. It was built reusing one of the towers of the ancient city walls erected during the Roman period. The structure built to contain the actual clock, once topped by a dome, was first dated to the 19th century.¹³ Later Acun dated it more precisely to the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909), who promoted the expansion of clock towers throughout Anatolia and the Levant.¹⁴ More recently, it has been argued that the clock tower actually dates to the very end of the Ottoman period when works were apparently underway in 1921.¹⁵ The bell in the clock tower could support this late date; however, we do not know for certain when the instrument was placed in the clock tower. A possible reconstruction of the events is the following: The bell was employed in the church of the Virgin until the population exchange, when it was left behind. When the clock tower was completed, a bell was needed to mark the hours and so our instrument was used for this purpose. The bell may also have replaced a previous instrument that broke at some point after the Greek community abandoned Antalya. An alternative hypothesis is that the bell may have been confiscated before the population exchange, rather than being left behind. In any case, the recycling of bells was not a new practice in the Ottoman Empire. Many bells, presumably taken or looted from churches and monasteries, had already been reused in clock towers. One instance is the bell from the Ottoman clock tower of Kyustendil (Bulgaria), which was built in 1665. Donated to an unknown church by a certain Radoslav, the instrument was cast in 1429.¹⁶ Also, many clock towers built in Bosnia during the Ottoman period received bells taken from churches in Dalmatia.¹⁷ The lack of a bell-casting industry in the Ottoman Empire explains the

¹¹ Doğan et al. 2014, 40-41; Doğan and Fındık 2018, 51, 53-54. It is on display at the Museum of Lycian Civilizations, Demre and dated to 1876.

¹² It was cast in 1897 and today is on display at the Kalkan City Hall. Online article dated to May 2015: <http://www.gazetevatan.com/118-yillik-kilise-cani-bodruma-atildi-794993-yasam/>

¹³ Turfan 1997, 40c; Antalya Belediye Başkanlığı 1990, 171.

¹⁴ Acun 1994, 9. For his silver jubilee, in 1901, the sultan decreed that all provincial cities should build a clock tower in his name; see Acun 1994, 6; Uluengin 2010, 20.

¹⁵ Güçlü 2013.

¹⁶ Rodriguez Suarez 2018, 306-7, fig. 16.2. The clock tower is not standing anymore, but the bell still marks the hours on top of the Kyustendil City Hall.

¹⁷ Škegro 2015.

reuse of church bells.¹⁸ Thus, the instrument from the church of the Virgin may be the last known instance of a bell recycled in a clock tower.

2. The Bell from the Antalya Toy Museum (fig. 5)

This artefact, which is exhibited along with teddy bears, dolls and models, was put on display at the Antalya Toy Museum in 2011. Its museum label states that, according to a witness, the instrument came from a church in Lara, to the east of Antalya.¹⁹ The building was demolished after the population exchange, and a hotel currently stands on its location.²⁰ We are also told that the bell was broken because it was thought to contain gold. The museum label also describes briefly the instrument: It is decorated with Christian iconography and produced in Venice. On the other hand, Hüseyin Çimrin, the author of a recent book about the Old Town of Antalya, states that the bell at the Toy Museum comes from the clock tower.²¹ He copies the description of the bell from Acun's book, discussed above. It is possible that Çimrin confused the two bells because of certain similarities between Acun's description and the bell at the Antalya Toy Museum, namely the depictions of Jesus, the Virgin, and a saint. Nonetheless, the bell at the museum is decorated with more images and does not include any Greek inscription.

Measurements: Height, 57 cm; diameter, 59 cm.

State of preservation: The bell is cracked; however, it does not have any patina. The outlines of the figures are crisp. These details indicate that the instrument is neither very old nor was it used for a long time.

Decoration: The shoulder of the bell, the part above the main body of the instrument, shows a band with garlands and shells. Below this, the top of the main body is decorated with motifs that include flowers and hanging tassels. On the main body of the bell are eight single images, four religious figures, and four elongated cartouches that alternate. The Christian representations, which are not labelled, include Jesus on the cross, a seated male saint blessing and holding an open book (fig. 6), an enthroned Virgin with the Child, and a half-figure of an Orthodox ecclesiastic (fig. 7). The cartouches are decorated; on their top is a helmet with two wings under which are two intertwined serpents. In their interior two of the cartouches bear the same image - the face of a man with grapes instead of hair. This is Bacchus, god of wine (fig. 8). The image is an intriguing instance of a figure of classical mythology used to decorate a bell. The other two cartouches bear inscriptions. Below the figures, on the curve of the bell, are two different decorative motifs, one bigger and the other smaller, that alternate around the instrument. Finally, the rim is decorated with an ornamental band with small tassels.

Inscription: One of the elongated cartouches bears the nameplate of the foundry that cast the bell (fig. 10). It reads: PREMIATA / FONDERIA / DE POLI / IN / VITTORIO. The other elongated cartouche bears the year in which the bell was produced: 1902 (fig. 9). The first number resembles a J.²²

¹⁸ I only know of one bell cast in the Ottoman Empire to be employed in a clock tower, that of Trikala, which was cast in 1648 and showed an Ottoman inscription. It went missing during the Second World War; see Κατσόγιαννος 2014, 67-70, 75.

¹⁹ A church dedicated to St. Andrew, built next to a sacred spring, was located in Lara; see Πεχλιβανίδης 1989, I.86.

²⁰ The accuracy of this account cannot be proven.

²¹ Çimrin 2018, 125.

²² This is not the only case. A bell at Cetinje Monastery (Montenegro), cast by the De Poli foundry in 1882, also shows a number 1 that looks like a J; see Bypa 2005, 37.

Part of the decoration of this bell is peculiar. While the figures of the Virgin and the Crucifixion are common in the imagery found on bells, the other two figures are rare and may have a story to tell. The seated saint resembles Byzantine and Post-Byzantine representations of St. Nicholas.²³ The rendition is very similar to that of the saint in an icon dated to the 19th century and today on display at the Antalya Museum.²⁴ The latter would have decorated a church in Antalya or the nearby region. The saint on the bell is depicted with a balding head and a round beard. He wears the *omophorion*, the distinguishing vestment of an Orthodox bishop. This is a long scarf decorated with crosses and worn over the shoulders.²⁵ Falling over his legs we see the lower part of the *epitrachelion*, a liturgical stole worn by priests and bishops and usually decorated with embroidered images of saints.²⁶ One of the most popular saints in the Christian world, St. Nicholas was the bishop of Myra (modern Demre), located southwest of Antalya.²⁷ The church where he was originally buried was partly rebuilt by the Russians in the second half of the 19th century and abandoned after the population exchange.²⁸ Thus, the fame of the saint and its connection with the Antalya region could explain his representation on the bell. In fact, there was a Greek Orthodox church dedicated to St. Nicholas in Antalya.²⁹ Moreover, a reliquary containing relics reputed to have belonged to St. Nicholas is also on display at the Antalya Museum.³⁰ Before 1923 these relics were kept at the Metropolitan church of Antalya, which was dedicated to St. Panteleimon.³¹

The depiction of the Orthodox ecclesiastic is detailed. The bearded man, who also has long hair, wears a *kamelaukion* - the tall hat worn by monks and priests in the Orthodox Church. This is covered with a veil that hangs over his shoulders, a detail that could indicate the individual depicted is a monk, but not necessarily. He also holds a crosier (pastoral staff) in his right hand while he is blessing with the left one. The crosier, or *paterissa*, is like those used by high-ranking prelates of the Orthodox Church, for instance, bishops and abbots. Its top is surmounted by a pair of serpents whose bodies are intertwined and their heads are facing each other. There is a small cross between them. This artefact is inspired by the staff of Moses, also known as the rod of God mentioned in the Bible.³² Hanging from his neck are a pectoral cross and two *encolpia*. The latter is a medallion with an icon in the center; the one represented further down probably intends to show a portrait of Jesus. The combination of the cross and the *encolpia* could indicate that the individual in question is an archbishop. Finally, he wears a *mandyas*, a cloak that opens in front and stretches down to the knees.³³ It is decorated with crosses and, on one side, shows the double-headed eagle, the symbol of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Such elaborate *mandyas* are usually worn by bishops. It is difficult to say

²³ For details about his figure, see Kazhdan 1991, 1:1469-470, s.v. "Nicholas of Myra". For representations dated to the Byzantine period, see Ševčenko 1983, 182, no. 3.0, 317, no. 37.0, and 335, no. 41.0. These icons do not depict him seated; however, his physical features are very similar. He is also shown blessing and holding a book. His image had already decorated a Serbian bell cast in 1432; see Cormack and Vassilaki 2008, 422, no. 172.

²⁴ Yener 2015, 266-67, no. 104.

²⁵ Kazhdan 1991, 3:1526, s.v. "omophorion"; Woodfin 2012, 13, 15-16.

²⁶ Kazhdan 1991, 1:725, s.v. "epitrachelion"; Woodfin 2012, 9-11, 15.

²⁷ For the city of Myra, see Akyürek 2015.

²⁸ For the church, see Doğan et al. 2014; Doğan and Findık 2018.

²⁹ Πεχλιβανίδης 1989, I.251; Hellenkemper and Hild 2004, 1:329; Çimrin 2017, 162.

³⁰ Yener 2015, 257-59.

³¹ Çimrin 2017, 141.

³² Exodus 4.2.

³³ Kazhdan 1991, 2:1282, s.v. "mandyas".

with certainty who the individual depicted on the bell is. However, he surely is a prelate of the Orthodox Church, perhaps a bishop. The image of St. Nicholas on the other side of the bell supports the possibility that we are indeed looking at a bishop. The association between the two images could have a further explanation. St. Nicholas was bishop of Myra, a city that became a metropolitan see.³⁴ In the 11th century the city of Attaleia, modern Antalya, was elevated to a metropolitan see.³⁵ In 1902, when the bell was cast, the individual who occupied this position had the title of metropolitan of Pisidia and Antalya. As we have seen above, the metropolitan church of Antalya was dedicated to St. Panteleimon. In this church, demolished in 1932, were preserved the relics of St. Nicholas today in the Antalya Museum.³⁶ Thus, there is a chance that at the beginning of the 20th century the metropolitan of Antalya considered the figure of St. Nicholas to be his predecessor. The depictions of St. Nicholas and the bishop/metropolitan on the bell would have proclaimed this relationship. In any case, the two images confirm that the bell was meant for an Orthodox church located in or near Antalya. The iconography and quality of the instrument could suggest that this may have been the metropolitan church of St. Panteleimon; however, this is just a hypothesis. While the bell does not include any Greek inscription, the selection of the Orthodox prelate to decorate it reveals that the instrument was commissioned. Therefore, it is highly likely that the individual or the party that ordered it requested this specific iconography.³⁷

The nameplate of the foundry informs us that the instrument was cast in the Italian city of Vittorio (today Vittorio Veneto), formerly known as Ceneda. It is the product of a foundry still active, the De Poli Fonderia, which the inscription describes as PREMIATA, that is, “award-winning”.³⁸ On the website of the foundry it is claimed that its activity started in 1453.³⁹ However, the earliest extant bells with the De Poli signature are dated to the second half of the 17th century. They were cast by a certain Antonio de Polis, who was established in Venice.⁴⁰ Still, the bell of the Antalya Toy Museum is the product of one of the oldest bell casting foundries in both Italy and the whole world. The foundry apparently moved to Vittorio in 1810. When our instrument was cast between 1893 and 1922, it was managed by a woman, Vittoria De Poli.⁴¹ The bell at the Toy Museum is not the only De Poli bell to have reached the Ottoman Empire; for instance, in 1898 the foundry produced a carillon of six bells for Smyrna.⁴² In fact, a pamphlet published in 1904 and listing all the bells cast by the foundry between 1820 and 1903 informs us that twenty-six instruments were dispatched to Turkey. One of them probably was the bell at the Antalya Toy Museum.⁴³ De Poli bells continued to be imported to Turkey

³⁴ For details about the office of metropolitan, see Kazhdan 1991, 2:1359, s.v. “metropolitan”.

³⁵ Πεχλιβανίδης 1989, I:303; Kazhdan 1991, 1:228-29, s.v. “Attaleia”. In the 14th and 15th centuries the metropolitans used the title of Metropolitan of Perge and Attaleia; see Hellenkemper and Hild 2004, 1:299.

³⁶ Çimrin 2017, 141; Hellenkemper and Hild 2004, 1:330.

³⁷ A few Athonite bells cast in the Republic of Venice in the 18th century already show images related to the monasteries that commissioned them; see Ivron (1720, 1779) and Hilandar (1785), Rodriguez Suarez (forthcoming), bells nos. 5, 13 and 17.

³⁸ The foundry was awarded medals and praise in many World Fairs; see Anonymous pamphlet 1953, 7-8.

³⁹ Official website of the foundry, <http://www.fonderiadepoli.it/index/storia/>.

⁴⁰ In 1661 Antonio cast a bell that found its way to a church in Slovenia. Its inscription reads: OPVS ANTONII DE POLIS VENETI · ANNO DOMINI 1661; see Gnirs 1917, 220. Antonio’s first will is dated to April 1651; see Avery 2011, 469, no. 314.

⁴¹ Tranchini and Salvador 1983, unpaginated, ch. 4.

⁴² Tranchini and Salvador 1983, unpaginated, ch. 10.

⁴³ Tranchini and Salvador 1983, unpaginated, ch. 10.

after 1903. A bell today on display at the narthex of the Hagia Sophia Museum, Istanbul, was cast at the PREMIATA / FONDERIA / DE POLI / IN / VITTORIO in 1906.⁴⁴

Bell Ringing and Bell Casting in the Late Ottoman Empire

These two bells represent a significant change in the history of the Christian communities under Ottoman rule. For centuries the use of church bells had been forbidden.⁴⁵ As a result, Greeks, Armenians, and other Christians in the Ottoman Empire could not be called to mass by public means, at least not in major cities.⁴⁶ The religious soundscape of the Ottoman Empire was dominated by the *adhan*, the Islamic call to prayer. Only in certain privileged locations the use of bells had been tolerated, for instance, on some Aegean islands, on Mount Athos, and in Mount Lebanon.⁴⁷ The Imperial Reform Edict (Islâhat Hatt-ı Hümâyûnu) of 1856 proclaimed the equality between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in the freedom to ring bells for religious purposes.⁴⁸ This significant document of the Tanzimat period is dated to 18th February 1856, and it is mentioned in article no. 9 of the peace treaty that ended the Crimean war and signed on 30th March 1856.⁴⁹ The correlation between the edict and the war, in which Great Britain and France supported the Ottoman Empire against Russia, cannot be a coincidence. It has been suggested that the edict was promoted by the sultan's Western allies. Actually, the document does not mention bell ringing.⁵⁰ A part of it, however, deals with the repair and the construction of buildings such as churches and schools. For this, the edict differs between locations where all the population belongs to the same denomination and those where people of different denominations live together. In the case of the former, their inhabitants are free to exercise their religion in public. In the latter, the plans for new buildings shall be submitted to the Ottoman government for approval. Nonetheless, it is added, the Ottoman government will take measures to ensure that each denomination is entirely free to exercise its religion. Thus, regarding the use of bells the text of the edict was certainly unclear. Since using a bell usually requires the construction of a structure, for instance, a bell gable or a bell tower, it could be argued that hanging a bell needed approval from the local authorities.

⁴⁴ Rodriguez Suarez (forthcoming, bell no. 40). This bell may have come from an Orthodox church in the Ottoman capital. Again number 1 also resembles a J. Also, one of the reliefs decorating this instrument is the same Virgin with the Child that appears on the bell of the Toy Museum. The only difference is that the one in the Hagia Sophia shows the throne surmounted by a canopy.

⁴⁵ During the Ottoman conquest most bells were looted and melted down; see Rodriguez Suarez 2018. However, bell ringing could indeed be heard in some European cities of the Ottoman Empire. These artefacts were associated with public clocks and so their use was not religious.

⁴⁶ The use of the *semantron*, the traditional instrument of the Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean, seems to have been restricted but tolerated in certain locations. According to a document issued by Sultan Mehmed II in 1453, the population of Galata was not able to use bells or *semantra*: *Τὰς ἐκκλησίας τον να τας ἔχουν και να τας ψάλουν. μόνον καμπάνας και σιμανδύρηα να μηδὲν χτηποῦν απο τας εκκλησίας* [sic]; see Dallegio d'Alessio 1939, 118, 124. On the other hand, a 16th-century Ottoman source reports the use of the *semantron* (*yulfka tahtayı*); see Düzdağ 1983, 95, no. 406.

⁴⁷ Παπαδόπουλος 1959, 210-14.

⁴⁸ Hanioglu 2008, 75; Παπαδόπουλος 1959, 309-10. A few Catholic churches had already been granted the right to ring bells some years before. Adolphus Slade, future admiral of the Ottoman navy and traveller throughout the Ottoman Empire between 1829 and 1831, reports that Catholic churches in Pera, Izmir, and Thessaloniki "have the privilege of using bells"; see Slade 1854, 511; Anastassiadou 1997, 68. Bell ringing is also reported in a few monasteries and churches of Cyprus before 1856; see Κοκκινόφτας 1998, 214-17.

⁴⁹ Hertslet 1875, no. 264, 1255. The article refers to the improvement of the conditions of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁰ Hertslet 1875, no. 263, 1245.

The introduction of bell ringing was a slow and gradual process; also, it differed according to the church and its location. For example, after the proclamation of the edict a British missionary urged the ringing of bells in Nablus, Palestine, to announce the new era. When the governor of the town asked him if he had permission, his reply was that the edict gave it to him.⁵¹ In 1858 the Archbishop of Cyprus, Makarios I, requested permission to use a bell at the Orthodox cathedral of Nicosia. While the request was initially rejected, through the mediation of the French consul the Ottoman authorities finally gave the authorization.⁵² In 1860 the Franciscan Grgo Martić got permission to use a bell in Kreševo, near Sarajevo, from Topal Osman-Paşa, the governor of Bosnia.⁵³ He was only granted the permission if the bell was first pealed softly so that the Turks would get used to its sound slowly. Fifteen years later the Muslim population of the town was still complaining that “the Turkish ear and ringing bells cannot coexist in the same place at the same time.” Thus, while in theory after the edict churches and monasteries were free to use bells, it seems that at the beginning an authorization had to be granted by the local authorities. If this was granted, as we have seen in the Bosnian case, it could be met with resistance from their Muslim neighbors, who were not accustomed to this new religious soundscape in the public space.

A letter dated to July 1860 and sent by the consul J.A. Longworth to the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Bulwer, provides an insight into how Muslim Ottomans may have experienced this sonic change. We are informed that in Vidin, in modern north-west Bulgaria, the local authorities rejected the petition of the Christians to use a bell. And regarding this event he explains: “It may be remarked that this use of bells in the East has always been considered as tantamount to a recognition of Christianity being the established worship of the place. In some towns, therefore, inhabited almost exclusively by Christians, this concession has been made by the Government. But at Widdin, where more than three-fourths of the inhabitants are Turks, it would have involved an insult to their prejudices and a dangerous experiment on their forbearance.”⁵⁴ This passage shows how the introduction of bell ringing could be perceived by the Muslims as an attack against the dominant status of their religion in Ottoman society. Until the Tanzimat reforms the religious soundscape of the Ottoman Empire only reflected one religion, that professed by the sultan. The silence of churches represented the subordinate role of Christians in the Ottoman realm. Thus, the pealing of bells was the sonic reminder of the newly achieved equality between Muslims and Christians. As late as 1891 in some locations the Muslim opposition to bell ringing was so significant that the Ottoman authorities had to forbid their use to avoid public disorder.⁵⁵ Also, a report written by a spy recorded two Muslims talking about the use of bell ringing near the Dolmabahçe Palace. One apparently declared: “These infidels are ringing bells and the palace is right here. Oh God! Give us a chance and we are going to make them sorry to have been born.”⁵⁶ For some Muslim Ottomans bell ringing amounted to provocation, and this

⁵¹ Masters 2001, 162. It must be noted that after an incident an angry mob took the bell away from the Protestant mission house.

⁵² Κοκκινόφτας 1998, 217-20.

⁵³ Andrić 1990, 30.

⁵⁴ Ye’or 1996, 412-13.

⁵⁵ Hanioglu 2008, 85.

⁵⁶ Kırılı 2006, 255; Kırılı, personal communication. The report is dated to the 22nd April 1841. The church in which the bells were used is not named; however, the date before the 1856 edict suggests that this might have been a Catholic church; see footnote 49.

could ignite violence. Its use in certain locations resulted in the killing of priests and other violent acts.⁵⁷

The use of Christian bells in the Ottoman Empire became more common with the passing of time. Nonetheless, in situations of war, bells could once again become the target of Ottoman soldiers. For example, during the Cretan revolt (1866-1869) churches in Chania were looted and their bells taken away.⁵⁸ In 1898, after the establishment of the Cretan State and the expulsion of the Ottoman forces from the island, many church bells were dug up.⁵⁹ They had been buried for safety. The right to ring bells could also be withdrawn in specific occasions; for instance, the Ottoman authorities of Haifa forbade the practice during the First World War.⁶⁰ The reason for this was that the Christian community of the city supported the allies, that is, France, Great Britain and Russia, the enemies of the Ottoman Empire in the war.

After the 1856 edict churches and monasteries that were allowed to use bell ringing started to acquire bells.⁶¹ Nevertheless, there were almost no foundries specialized in the production of such instruments in the Ottoman Empire. Bell casting is reported in very few locations; for example, bell masters had been based in Karyes, Mount Athos, since at least the mid-19th century.⁶² The Greek foundry Brothers Galanopouloi, first established in Pogoni (Epirus), claims that their business has a history of two hundred and fifteen years.⁶³ That bell casting may have existed in these two locations before the edict is not a coincidence, since Mount Athos and the region of Zagori (near Pogoni) were allowed to use bells during the Ottoman period.⁶⁴ In any case, the number of bells imported from abroad suggests that the local production of bells was not significant and therefore most instruments had to be imported. Some came from Russia, such as those employed at the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.⁶⁵ Many Russian bells were actually gifts. Other bells were produced in Western Europe. This is the case of the bell at the Antalya Toy Museum, which was cast in Vittorio Veneto. Western bells also came from other locations, such as Genoa and Marseille.⁶⁶ The demand for bells was probably so high that an Italian foundry, the Fonderia Colbachini, opened an office in Istanbul.⁶⁷ Finally, bells were also imported from Greece, where some workshops were established after the country became independent in the first half of the 19th century. However, the quality of the latter was lower than those imported from Russia or Western Europe, where the tradition of bell casting was centuries old. The bell from the clock tower may belong to this last group, although it cannot be excluded that it was cast somewhere in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, in April 2012 the Turkish police requisitioned two bells in Keşan, in the province of Edirne. The instruments were apparently going to be sold. One of them was cast by a certain Galanou workshop

⁵⁷ Παπαδόπουλος 1959, 310.

⁵⁸ Παπαδόπουλος 1959, 310.

⁵⁹ Dawkins 1953, 219.

⁶⁰ Yazbak 1998, 211-12.

⁶¹ This was accompanied by the construction of bell towers; see, for instance, Okuyucu Yılmaz 2008.

⁶² Riley 1887, 77.

⁶³ Official website: <https://www.kambanes.gr/εταίρια.html>. One of the owners told me that in their depot is a bell dated to 1803; personal communication. Today the foundry is located in Paramythia (Epirus).

⁶⁴ For Zagori, see Delilbaşı 2012, 50-51.

⁶⁵ Russian bells were also exported to Greece and Bulgaria; see Williams 1985, 63.

⁶⁶ A bell at the church of St. Benoît, Istanbul, was cast in Genoa. A bell cast in Marseille was sent to Lindos, Rhodes.

⁶⁷ Martinello et al. 2003, 87.

in Izmir in 1907.⁶⁸ Future research may discover further bells cast by this and other local workshops.

The use of church bells in Anatolia did not last long. In 1923 the Greek Orthodox community was forced to move to Greece. Many bells were left in the new Turkish Republic, where they became useless.⁶⁹ A few eventually found their way to Turkish museums; however, in the last years some have been stolen and subsequently found by the police. The latter is the case of the two bells found in Keşan and two other instruments that, after having been confiscated by the police, were given to the Istanbul Archaeological Museums.⁷⁰ I am hoping that from now on such artefacts will receive more attention from scholars. They are important instances of material culture, and their study can provide details about the revival of the Christian soundscape in the Late Ottoman Empire. Finally, I believe that the two bells discussed in this article should be moved to a more suitable location, for instance, the Antalya Museum, where they would be available to the wider public and could be studied properly.

⁶⁸ The nameplate of the foundry reads ΚΑΤΑΣΚΕΥΗ / Ν.Α / ΓΑΛΛΑΝΟΥ / ΣΜΥΡΝΗ; online news websites: <http://www.edirnehaberci.com/edirne/can-calmak-buna-denir-h78440.html>; <https://www.haberler.com/kesan-da-2-adet-tarihi-can-ele-gecirildi-3573368-haberi/>. In 1908 the same workshop produced a chandelier donated to the Athonite Monastery of Karakallou; Κουφόπουλος and Μαμαλούκος 1997, 109.

⁶⁹ A number of Catholic churches are still open, and they preserve their bells. However, at the churches of St. Polycarp (Izmir) and St. Paul (Konya), which I have recently visited, they do not ring them.

⁷⁰ One bell was cast for a church dedicated to the birth of the Virgin Mary on the island of Skiathos, Greece. It is the product of a workshop based in Piraeus. It is unclear how this bell ended up in Turkey. The other one shows an Armenian inscription.

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FIG. 2 Greek inscription on bell no. 1.

FIG. 1 Church bell no. 1 (second half of the 19th century?), Antalya clock tower. Photos of this bell used with the permission of the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü.



FIG. 3 Image of the Virgin on bell no. 1.



FIG. 4 Crucifixion on bell no. 1.

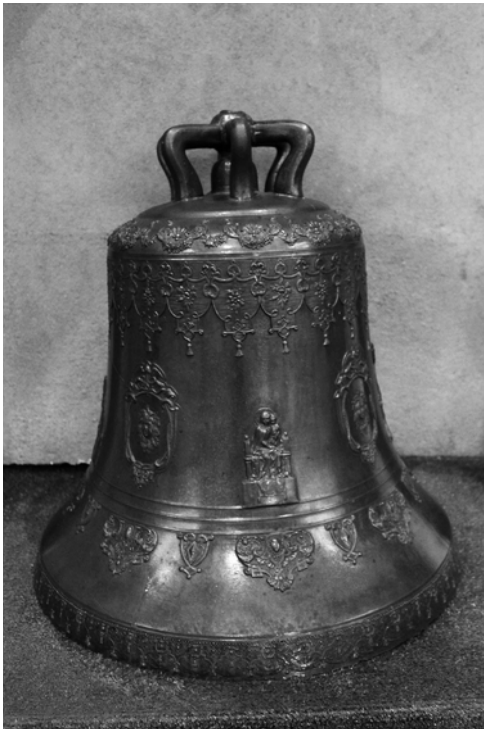


FIG. 5 Church bell no. 2 (1902), Antalya Toy Museum.

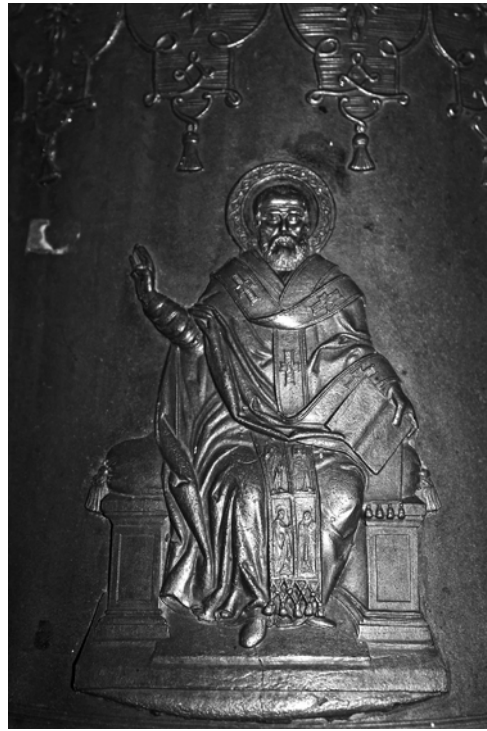


FIG. 6 Image of a seated saint, probably St. Nicholas, on bell no. 2.

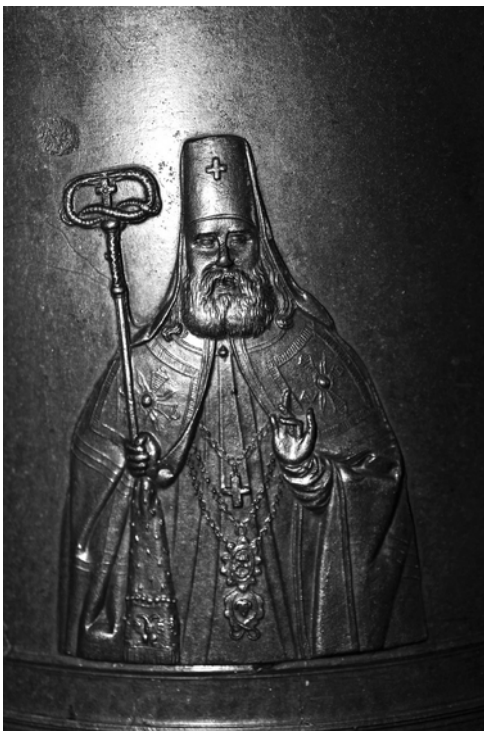


FIG. 7 Image of an Orthodox prelate, possibly a bishop or a metropolitan, on bell no. 2.



FIG. 8 Cartouche bearing the head of Bacchus on bell no. 2.



FIG. 9 Cartouche bearing the year in which bell no. 2 was cast.



FIG. 10 Cartouche bearing the nameplate of the De Poli foundry on bell no. 2.