

## BOOK REVIEW

***Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, The House of Sciences: The First Modern University in the Muslim World, Oxford University Press, 2019, Hardback, 296 Pages (235x156mm), ISBN: 9780190051556***

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*The House of Sciences: The First Modern University in the Muslim World* is a welcome book by Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who has been carrying out an intensive work on the Ottoman scientific institutions for almost forty years. His earlier books and articles on Ottoman scientific literature and heritage including Ottoman astronomy, mathematics, geography, music, medicine, natural-applied sciences, military technologies, scientific-scholarly societies, scientific language and transportation-telecommunication techniques<sup>1</sup>, paved the way for the creation of an internationally recognized academic field of "Ottoman Science". His new book *The House of Sciences* should be considered to be the last chain of this academic series.

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of his books and articles in a chronological order, see Didar Bayır, "Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlunun Bibliyografisinin Ana Hatları", *İlim ve İrfan Yolunda Bir Hezarfen: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu'na Armağan/A Festschrift in Honor of Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*, H. Aynur, D. Bayır, T. Zorlu, F. Şen, M. Makhlof, J.P. Hogendik (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2021), 41-54.

The book mainly consists of one introduction, three main parts, an epilogue and an appendix. It also has a comprehensive bibliography and well-selected index that allows the reader to search for terms, concepts, people and institutions to follow easily.

The first part of the book titled “Genesis, Development, and Closure of *Darülfünun*” focuses on the formation of the educational tradition in the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the idea of a civil university from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Here İhsanoğlu discusses and analyses the social, economic, political, and intellectual reasons behind the four unsuccessful attempts to build a modern university *Darülfünun*. The reader could find interesting details such as financial and administrative structure of *Darülfünun*, curricula of the courses, first teachers and students, first graduates, education for girls, the impact of war and armistice years on education and transition from the Ottoman Empire to Republican Turkey. He also compares traditional and relatively contemporary approaches put forward by intellectuals, bureaucrats and rulers of the time to solve emerging educational problems that were mainly caused by new challenges and confrontations due mainly to the transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic.

Second part named “Transforming of Ethos and Developing New Forms and Institutions” takes up the transformation of education from traditional to modern through developing new institutions with new cultural content that deals with the new cultural norms and ethos. Here, İhsanoğlu, ably and comprehensively discusses the legal identity, autonomy and financial structure of the *Darülfünun* as well as the evolution of modern scholarly literature, terminology, and the tradition of academic research on the other. The author also identifies some concepts of the time such as “traditionalism” and “conservatism” and takes up the less known aspects of introduction of Darwinism to the Ottoman world and its repercussions.

Third part, “the Legacy of *Darülfünun*”, sheds light on the impact of the Ottoman University on the provinces and outside the Ottoman realm. Damascus Faculty of Medicine, Thessaloniki School of Law, Beirut School of Law, Qajar *Darülfünun* in Iran and Afgan *Darülfünun*) İhsanoğlu demonstrates how the *Darülfünun* in İstanbul inspired various leaders in the other parts of the Muslim world and how the students who was trained at the *Darülfünun* turned out to be influential advocates for the

new Arab nationalism by providing the necessary infrastructure for national universities throughout the Arab-speaking provinces. İhsanoğlu also shows that out of this intellectual ferment a new Ottoman Turkish scientific language developed, the terminology from which served as a convenient vehicle for expressing and teaching modern science throughout the empire. In this respect, İhsanoğlu's work, is probably the first monograph study of the development of such a language.

In the epilogue, İhsanoğlu embarks on drawing an analytical picture of the foundation of *Darülfünun* from the "Ottoman modernisation perspective" introduced by *Tanzimat* reforms and as a pinnacle of its public education policy. He draws attention to a noticeable parallel between the development of the Ottoman University and the process of the evolution of European university to industrial development posited by Fritz K. Ringer; accordingly, the establishment of *Darülfünun* belongs to an "early industrial phase." He further claims that, as was the case in Europe during the early industrial phase, there was in fact little connection between higher education and economic life. The Ottoman case followed a pattern of development similar to that in France and Germany, where the educational system served the needs of growing government bureaucracies, and these bureaucracies eventually did take an interest in both technological programs and economic development.

Also important to mention that the appendix of the book titled "The Topography of the *Darülfünun* (1900-1933)" is as important as the parts of the book, since it includes the copies of some rare documents. Researchers could find here first-hand sources belonging to faculties of Science, Arts, Divinity, Law and Medicine as well as institutes, research centres and libraries within the faculties.

Thirteen-page bibliography of the book is noteworthy as well. Beside up-to-date publications, it covers many archival materials of Ottoman and Republican periods; legal and official documents; domestic-foreign newspapers and journals as well.

*The House of Sciences* is an important contribution to the Ottoman studies in general with its rich sources, comparative approach, scope of coverage, and analytical framework, when we consider that it could provide the researchers studying various aspects of the Ottoman Empire with an insight into Ottoman scientific heritage and help broaden their

perspective, and introduce a new type of data to the academy. However, this book is particularly substantial in the trajectory of “Ottoman history of science and technology” studies, which is a relatively neglected, less-studied or less-preferred area, due mostly to sui generis jargon, know-how and additional requirements in terms of technical knowledge. Therefore, *The House of Sciences*, like many other books previously written by İhsanoğlu, should be acknowledged as a milestone or a founding work for the developmental process of the discipline both at home and in the world. Moreover, the author’s attempt to situate the Ottoman scientific/scholarly experiment in a global context constitutes another character of the book that should be taken into consideration.

