TRACES OF OTTOMAN MODERNIZATION IN ABDULLAH FRÉRES' STREET PHOTOGRAPHS OF ISTANBUL

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ABDULLAH FRÉRES'İN İSTANBUL SOKAK FOTOĞRAFLARINDA OSMANLI MODERNLEŞMESİNİN İZLERİ

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ABSTRACT

The history of photography is also the history of modernity and modernization. In other words, it is both an important element and proof of modernity. Street photographs, on the other hand, are visual documents that can present objective images of daily life through the public sphere. This study aims to examine the modernization steps of the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century through Abdullah Fréres' Istanbul street photographs and to make a visual analysis of the change in the multinational society structure. Following the invention of photography in 1839, the documentation of Ottoman modernization through photography is as important as written documents in terms of objective history reading. The visual reading was made through street images in this study because street photographs reflect reality directly and provide rich visual data. The reason why Abdullah Fréres', the court photographer of that era, photographs were preferred is that the siblings took many street photographs in different periods and regions of Istanbul during their careers between 1858 and 1899. The visual analysis was limited to thirteen Istanbul street photographs, as the photography studios of the period were mostly in the Pera region of the capital Istanbul and it was thought that it would be appropriate to bring a geographical limitation to the study. It is thought that the study will contribute to both the theory of photography and the field of history, as it is evidence that a multi-layered visual history reading can be made through the early examples of street photography in the Ottoman capital. As a result of the study, it was found that the street photographs signed by Abdullah Fréres carried traces of the reforms in the second half of the 19th century and this transformation process progressed slowly.

Keywords: *Abdullah Fréres, Ottoman Photography, Street Photography, Ottoman Modernization, Istanbul.*

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ÖZ

Fotoğraf tarihi, modernliğin ve modernleşmenin de tarihidir. Başka bir deyişle modernitenin hem önemli unsurlarından biri hem de kanıtıdır. Sokak fotoğrafları ise gündelik hayatın nesnel görüntülerini kamusal alan üzerinden sunabilen görsel belgelerdir. Bu çalışma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısındaki modernleşme adımlarını, Abdullah Fréres'in İstanbul sokak fotoğrafları aracılığıyla incelemeyi ve çok uluslu toplum yapısındaki değişimin görsel analizini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Fotoğrafın 1839'daki icadından hemen sonra, Osmanlı modernleşmesinin fotoğraf aracılığıyla belgelenmesi, nesnel tarih okuması açısından bakıldığında yazılı belgeler kadar önemlidir. Çalışmada görsel okumanın sokak görüntüleri üzerinden yapılmasının nedeni sokak fotoğraflarının gerçekliği dolaysız yansıtması ve zengin görsel veri sunmasıdır. Dönemin saray fotoğrafçıları Abdullah Fréres'e ait fotoğrafların tercih edilmesinin nedeni ise kardeşlerin 1858-1899 yılları arasındaki kariyerleri boyunca, İstanbul'un farklı dönemlerinde ve bölgelerinde çok sayıda sokak fotoğrafı çekmiş olmalarıdır. Dönemin fotoğraf stüdyolarının, başkent İstanbul'un Pera bölgesinde yoğunlaşması ve çalışmaya coğrafi bir sınırlılık getirmenin doğru olacağı düşüncesiyle görsel analiz, on üç adet İstanbul sokak fotoğrafı ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Çalışmanın, sokak fotoğrafçılığının Osmanlı başkentindeki erken dönem örnekleri üzerinden çok katmanlı bir görsel tarih okuması yapılabileceğinin kanıtı olduğu için hem fotoğraf kuramına hem de tarih alanına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Çalışma sonucunda, Abdullah Fréres imzalı sokak fotoğraflarının 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısındaki reformlardan izler taşıdığı ve değişim sürecinin yavaş ilerlediği bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Abdullah Fréres, Osmanlı Fotoğrafı, Sokak Fotoğrafçılığı, Osmanlı Modernleşmesi, İstanbul.

Introduction

The modernization process of the Ottoman Empire and the popularization of photography progressed simultaneously and interactively. When the first photographic image named *View from the Window at Le Gras*, was recorded by the lithographer Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833) in 1826, the Ottoman Sultan Mahmut II had closed the Janissary Corps and initiated a series of innovation movements, including both government and education. In 1839, the first photographic method daguerreotype patented by French inventor Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) was announced to the world as a technical invention, simultaneously with the announcement of the Tanzimat Fermanı, and the new reforms that were implemented more strictly.

In the Ottoman Empire, the reform movements, which started in the 18th century and intensified in the second half of the 19th century, were documented with photography, which is a modern method of recording in addition to written documents, but it was noticed that they were not referred enough within the scope of history readings. In the contemporary period when sociology uses photography effectively, it is thought that the discipline of history can go beyond the reading of official history by making more use of visual documents, and thus new findings can be reached. The premise that bias and inaccuracy are common in traditional historiography and reading can also be put forward for[1] photography, but in photography, which has many types, data can be presented beyond the basic intention over time. For example, a street photographer can make economic, sociological, and historical determinations about the period. A photograph taken for documentary purposes can have an artistic quality, as well as a photograph taken for artistic purposes can become a document over time. Elapsed time can strip the photograph of its purpose and equip it with new meanings outside the photographer's intention. The fact that the photograph is a document exceeds the purpose of the first shooting over time, as well as allowing new uses and readings. From this point of view, the street views in Abdullah Fréres' photographs dated between 1858 and 1899 contain traces of the daily life of that era and the change in the public sphere. The modernization of the urban structure, innovations in sea and land transportation, the process of women becoming more visible in social life, and traces of the change in clothing can be clearly read in those photographs.

In terms of photographic theory and history, these photographs can be considered among the first examples of street photography in the Ottoman lands. Just as Eugène Atget's (1857-1927) old and new Paris photographs*, which he described as *Documents Pour Artistes (1880)*, or Alice Austen's (1866-1952) *Street Types of New York (1895)* were later evaluated in the street photography category. As in the portrait photographs, it is seen that some of the street photographs were fictionalized by using decor, costumes, and figurants to create orientalist images. Regardless, the historical value of those photographs is not only because they were examples of street photography, but also because they contain traces of the period.

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1 Carr and Fontana, 1992, 14-15.

In this research, documentary source screening was used as a data collection technique, and content analysis and descriptive analysis were applied for the data analysis. In content analysis, photographs were considered as texts, and the interpretation of qualitative data and the discovery of new dimensions with layered analysis were completed with conceptual analyses. During the reflection and literature review process of this study, the texts of historians and architects were consulted for the impact of the Ottoman Empire's reform movements on the urban area and society of the capital Istanbul in the 19th century. The development course of the architecture, art, literature, and photography of the period in the first 60 years in the country was examined by comparing different authors' texts. Regarding Ottoman photography, Engin Özendes, Bahattin Öztuncay, Gülderen Bölük, Catherine Pinguet, and other authors were read comparatively and information was compiled. In some of the photographic history texts written in Turkish, some incorrect/incomplete information spread due to either not referring to a source or referring to the wrong source has been tried to be conveyed as accurately as possible by referring to the original sources and considering them comparatively with the current articles. In this text, the name of the photographer brothers was used as Abdullah Fréres, the original signature used in the photographs, instead of Abdullah Brothers, except for direct quotations. Thus, since the name on the photocards and the name in this text match, the confusion was eliminated.

The research population of the study consists of all works of the photographer siblings. The Istanbul street photographs of Abdullah Fréres, who constitutes the main axis of the research, were selected as a sample. Eight photographs were subjected to form and content analysis, and visual data about the period were read. The photographs are available from the digital archive of the American Library of Congress, Pierre de Gigord's digital archive in Getty, and the Tarih Kurdu internet page.

Abdullah Fréres, who had the title of court photographer, witnessed the transformation during that era by taking street photographs as well as the interior and exterior views of architectural structures such as factories, newly opened modern schools, historical mosques, palaces, mansions, fountains, churches, hospitals and barracks at the request of the sultan and left a very rich archive behind.[2] Some of this archive is in the American Library of Congress, some are in the British Museum, a significant part is in the Yıldız Palace Collection at Istanbul University's Rare Works Library, and some are in the hands of other collectors. Part of it was handed together with the studio sold to Sébah&Joaillier in 1899. However, when the archive of collector Pierre de Gigord, which consists of approximately six thousand photographs created by purchasing from antique markets in Turkey[3] is examined, it is seen that there are many street photographs signed by Abdullah Fréres. In order to make a better visual reading of the street photographs of this transformation era, it is necessary to examine the social conditions and reform movements of the period.

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2 Özendes,1998, 100.

3 Micklewright, 2013, 75.

Ottoman Reforms and Their Social Impact in the Second Half of the 19ᵗʰ Century

Reform movements in the Ottoman Empire started between 1789 and 1807, when Selim III was in power, and radical arrangements were made by reviewing the state governance system during this period.[4] The French Revolution of 1789 began, and the concepts of freedom, equality, and fraternity influenced the whole of Europe. Following the developments in Europe carefully, Selim III resorted to the opinions of the local and foreign opinion leaders of the period and made reformative decisions in many fields such as political, governance, judicial, military, diplomatic, and so on. While libertarian ideology spread with the French Revolution was making an impact on the uprising of the ethnic groups for independence in many parts of the multinational empire, Selim III, especially saw reforms as a solution for the problems created by the rebellions.[5] The first constitutional trial was made with the Sened-i İttifak (1808), then Tanzimat Fermanı (November 3rd, 1839), Islahat Fermanı (February 28, 1856), I. Meşrutiyet (December 23rd, 1876) and II. Meşrutiyet (July 23, 1908) and Western renewal movements continued. The first census that only men were counted in 1831, the *Takvim-i Vekayi Newspaper* (November 1st, 1831) began to be published, participation in international fairs and even organizing the International Ottoman Fair in Istanbul in 1863, and most importantly, the foundation of girls' schools similar to today's secondary schools in 1858 were among the important steps for modernization.

According to İnalcık[6], the innovations in the Tanzimat period were not only westernization but also an attempt to rebuild the Ottoman Empire, whose economic and social base was about to disappear. On the other hand, the reform period was the time when the first external borrowing was made in 1854 to overcome the economic distress caused by the Crimean War (1853-1856). When the war with Russia ended in defeat in 1877-78, both the territory was lost (Cyprus was left to England in return for the help received to pay the debts to Russia) and the military and economic losses were great.

Zürcher[7] summarizes the period from the late 1830s to the 1875s, when Britain put economic and political pressure on the Ottoman Empire, as "the rapid increase in trade and loans with the empire after the imposition of the free trade regime in 1838; the support of the British and French for the survival of the empire". In addition, Zürcher states that reforms in law, education, finance, and other state institutions were the other determinants of the period after the Tanzimat Fermanı. In this process, the bureaucracy replaced the palace and settled at the center of power. Zürcher[8] also defines the period when Muslims started to react to the constitutional movement and the privileges of Christians as "the period of 1873-1878, which ended with a severe economic and political crisis".

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4 Tanör, 1999, 33.

5 Tanör, 1999, 33-39.

6 İnalcık, 2006, 14.

7 Zürcher, 2000, 14.

8 Zürcher, 2000, 14-15.

In the period between 1875-1908, when the first serious foreign investments were made, economic growth was still very slow because while administrative and technical reforms were continuing, nationalist and liberal rebellions were being fought, and the palace was taking back its power by replacing the bureaucracy.[9] In the last years of the century, when all these transformations were happening, integration with the international economy took place, but the domestic opposition also started to grow rapidly. In Zürcher's[10] words, the dramatic steps of the last sixty years of the 19th century had both positive and negative consequences. One of the biggest reasons for this was the multinational empire structure.

The 19th century was the century when the West wondered about the East and the East wondered about the West and went into an intense journey of discovery. Social scientists and historians commonly use the definition of *Orientalism* for the mystical Eastern perception of the West and *Westernization* or *modernization* for the modern Western perception and imitation of the East for this period. In more contemporary terms, it can be said that the Ottoman Empire was a complete area of *acculturation* and power with its ethnic and religious diversity, and intense population movements spreading over a wide geography. Mutlu[11] defines the concept of *acculturation* as synonymous with assimilation and in a cultural anthropological context, as "… the process of adopting new cultural patterns through the interaction between different cultural groups, coming into closure with one group or both groups internalize the culture of the other". In essence, acculturation is a natural result of the interaction between ethnic and religious cultural groups created by migrations, although the reasons vary. Berry[12] argues that the most important result of acculturation is multiculturalism, and that single culture, single language, and single identity are impossible in immigrant-receiving countries. Berry[13] lists the cultural dimensions of plural societies' acculturation as *diversity, equality, compatibility, richness, space and time*. Economic, political, and historical similarities/affinities of individuals and groups are decisive while establishing relations with each other during acculturation and this may vary according to geography. Although acculturation was intense in the Ottoman lands, which were a plural society in terms of ethnicity and religion, the same plural structure caused problems to be faced in some periods of war and crisis, but it led to positive effects in the modernization process.

On the other hand, Hobsbawm[14] uses his multinational definition for the Ottoman Empire and emphasizes that this feature caused problems, especially in the Balkans between 1848 and 1870, and caused a large number of rebellions by Christian peoples. Following Greece and Serbia, which had already achieved their independence, the accelerating 'Balkanization' of the Balkans at the end of 1850, when Romania left with

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9 Zürcher, 2000, 15.

10 Zürcher, 2000, 16.

11 Mutlu,1998, 239.

12 Berry, 2006, 31.

13 Berry, 2006, 32.

14 Hobsbawm, 2003, 98.

the 1870 uprising, broadened the framework of the question of nation. After the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848, the idea of the *nation-state* spread all over the world as well as among the peoples within the great empires, the empires facing economic crises gradually began to lose power and disintegrated after World War II. The *national question* issues also affected the Ottoman Empire and were influential in its disintegration as a result of historical dialectics beyond all other justifications.

Modernization is a kind of *Europeanization*[15] experienced by technological, political, and cultural innovations in the West with the contribution of orientalists and creating an effect both in society and the palace. Photography emerged precisely in this process and was used effectively both technologically, aesthetically and ideologically (propaganda). Abdülhamid II who didn't leave the Yıldız Palace much due to security concerns, but benefited from photographs while closely following both the developments in the world and the events in the regions under his rule, sent his collections of photographs for propaganda purposes to the libraries of America and England to show the power of the empire to the West. For this reason, the sultans of this period worked with photographers, giving them titles such as "photographer of the Sultan", allowed them to have status and use it in their commercial lives.

Photography had become an indispensable tool for modernization as well as for orientalism. *Orientalism* is a relatively negative concept defined by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* published in 1978. The concept, which also means Eastern science, includes a way of seeing the Eastern image of the West, more precisely, a way of seeing the East through a Western's eyes, in fact, secretly aiming to take over the East. Said[16] defines orientalism as a relationship of power, domination, and varying degrees of complex hegemony between the West and the East.

One of the people who defined Said's concept of orientalism through the Middle East and the Far East was the French writer Pierre Loti (1850-1923), who spent a long time due to his military duty and also took street photographs[17] in Istanbul. The orientalist depictions in his novel *Aziyade*, which was published in 1879, and consists of the memories of an English naval lieutenant who was in Istanbul in 1876-77 and moved to Eyüp after staying in Pera for three months, are interesting. In the novel, "... the pleasant smells of the East are permeated in the veil...",[18] "Here are all the subtleties of Eastern complacency... ",[19] "A white glow unique to the East..."[20] and many other descriptions actually seem to be expressions of admiration for the East, but they mostly reflect the observations that Loti shaped with his own fantasies.

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15 Mardin, 1991, 11-18.

16 Said, 1989, 18.

17 Özendes, 2017, 288-290.

18 Loti, 2020, 24.

19 Loti, 2020, 25.

20 Loti, 2020, 26.

Although the concepts of *modernization* and *Westernization* are different, for the East, both define the approach of recognizing, adopting, admiring, and even modeling the West. The context here is more of an effort to be like the one who is better off technologically, socially, and culturally. The modern concept always precedes the new and involves trying the new. What is new can also be temporary. In fact, it is impossible to be modern for the East, which is not very eager to adopt the new (immediately) and where a culture built on meaning instead of symbols is dominant. Instead, modernization, that is, trying to be modern, is a little more possible because it secretly includes preserving its own essence. This perspective is clearly observed in 19th-century Ottoman modernization. Visits to the West, readings about developments in the West, innovations always take place by protecting themselves first. It may seem natural for this to happen, but in the end, it has led to purgatory and identity debates. In his novel *Kaplanın Sırtında*,[21] which describes Abdülhamid II's days of exile in Thessaloniki, Livaneli discusses the east-west dilemma as follows: "Here, the Doctor, while waiting for the Sultan to light a cigarette and take a breath, *ah, our lazy and mystical, our Eastern world, which carries the tiredness of centuries and is pleasure-loving without knowing the world*, he thought." While the Sultan thought that he was successful with his innovations, he was overthrown and replaced by his brother. This change of power, which is thought to bring the Ottoman Empire closer to the West, continues to be questioned in the Doctor's internal speech:

> When they took the reins by overthrowing the Sultan, who they thought was defending the old order, and replacing him with his puppet brother, they thought that the imperial chariot would move more smoothly, even quickly, on the Western road, but now things were worse. So the Sultan was desperate. Of course, the Ottoman Palace was aware of the growing distance from Europe, more than anyone else. The dynasty was struggling to become Westernized, at least since the Selim period, and was dying for this cause. On the other hand, Sultan Hamid, who was afraid that those issues would cost him his life, perhaps because he had no other choice, did his best by making Western-style reforms that were Islamist in disguise by modernizing schools, publishing foreign books twice as much comparing the times before him, opening girls' schools, trying to apply the European clock, and trying to connect the country with railways.[22]

Indeed, the innovation movements started during the Selim III period could have been effective, but perhaps the biggest problem was that the entrance of the printing press to the imperial borders was delayed by 300 years. Europe, which reached rational knowledge and paved the way for inventions with this knowledge, first experienced the Renaissance and Reform and then the Industrial Revolution and the Ottoman Empire could not make positive parallel progress in the same process. On the other hand,

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21 Livaneli, 2022, 232.

22 Livaneli, 2022*,* 232.

although technological superiority was in the West at that time, the richness of the East in terms of raw material resources always caused the gaze to be focused on the East and the Eastern geography to be colonized. The travel opportunities of railways and maritime transportation created overseas trips and travel culture, and Istanbul became one of the most touristy places.

Ortaylı said[23], "One of the factors that accelerated Ottoman modernization is nationalism movements, which also prepared the destruction of the empire. Nationalism is a phenomenon that has existed since the beginning of Ottoman rule in the Balkans and has developed and strengthened over time". As stated above, nationalism movements were quite exhausting the multinational Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Ortaylı, on the other hand, is far from the idea of linking national movements in the Balkans to the 1789 Revolution. According to Ortaylı[24], cultural and nationalist movements have existed in the Balkans since the 16th century for those who speak different languages and live in different religions. According to Ortaylı, who argued that there was Ottomanism (not Ottoman-supporting) in the face of nationalism, and Ottomanism was a lifestyle and social order, not yet an ideology: "After the 18th century, Ottomanism will begin to be an ideology nurtured by the caliphate and official Islam. Finally, one of the reasons why this type of Ottomanism changed and each of the Muslims in the Empire switched to nationalism as a nation is the effects of Balkan nationalism."[25]

Ortaylı[26] sees that the most important impasse of the delayed Ottoman modernization, was that the reformers who tried to establish a political and administrative structure required by the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire, took over an economic infrastructure that was not suitable for that age. The way their worldview, their understanding of civilization, and the state traditions showed them could not overcome economic obstacles. On the other hand, the steps taken toward modernization or Westernization appeared in the street photographs of the period.

Ottoman Photography and Abdullah Fréres

During the first sixty years of photography in the Ottoman geography, four sultans changed in power in the first 22 years. The 31st Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid (July 2nd, 1839- June 26th, 1861) in the next 15 years, the 32nd Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz (June 25th, 1861- May 30th, 1876) in the next 3 months, the 34th Ottoman Sultan Murad V (May30th, 1876- August 31st, 1876) and the following 33 years, the 34th Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II (August 31st, 1876- April 27th, 1909) were in power. During their rule, the sultans worked with photographers, commissioned some as court photographers, and used photography as a diplomatic tool to prove the power of the empire and show the innovations to the Western countries.

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23 Ortaylı, 1987, 178.

24 Ortaylı, 1987, 49.

25 Ortaylı, 1987, 50.

26 Ortaylı, 1987, 178.

The daguerreotype, the first method of photographic imaging, was announced to the world by the French Academy of Sciences on August 19th, 1839, paving the way for its development and dissemination by Daguerre, the inventor. Approximately three months later, the Ottoman society learned about the new invention with a report in the 186th issue of the newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* dated October 28th, 1839. In the 95th issue of the *Ceride-i Havadis* newspaper dated July 17th, 1842, it was reported by Compas, a student of Daguerre, that the new technique was also practiced in Istanbul. In addition to Compas, the German Abresche, the Italian Carlo and Giovanni Naya brothers, and the French Laurent Astras were among the first photographers.[27] The popularization of photography took place by the mobile photographers and daguerreotype studios opened in Pera. The increase in the number of studios opened with the cheapening of the daguerreotype caused the increase of amateur photographers and photography to become an important component of daily life in Istanbul.

Istanbul was one of the important stops in the trips of Western travelers who were curious about the East. Starting in the middle of the 19th century, these trips attracted attention with their orientalist features and photography played an active role in documenting the trips. In 1840, Thomas Cook organized the first collective trip and these trips, which became widespread afterward, attracted visitors to Istanbul: "Visitors wanted to take home the pictures of the places they saw, as well as carpets and other handicraft products. This request was met by a few European painters who used to live in Istanbul."[28] When the painters were replaced by photographers over time, fictional photographs began to be taken for tourists with an orientalist perspective in the studios in Pera, and harem scenes were among the most preferred.

The first practitioners of photography in the Ottoman Empire were mostly Greeks and Armenians who were proficient in chemistry, and the photography studios they opened were initially visited intensively by the rich layer of society and traveling tourists, and later by all segments of the population. In Pera, there were studios of many photographers such as Vasilaki Kargopoulo, Abdullah Fréres, Gülmez Fréres, Pascal Sebah, Nikolai Andreomenos, Mihran İranyan, Guillaume Berggren, Bogos Tarkulyan (Phebus), Achilles Samancı and Papazyan Fréres. In addition to Istanbul, most of these photographers opened studios in Anatolian cities such as Izmir, Bursa, Edirne, and other Ottoman lands such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq and carried out their photography activities in a wide geography. Although it was an expensive technique at the beginning, photograph production with new methods such as *carte-de-visite* became cheaper and spread rapidly and became popular.

In the studios in Pera, 6x10 cm *carte-de-visite*, 108x165 mm *cabinet card,* or *cabinet portrait* photographs developed by French daguerreotypist André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819-1889) were taken and sold. The technique, which Disdéri patented in 1854, allowed four, six, or eight photographs to be taken on the same collodion negative plate.

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27   Genim, 2015, 444.

28   Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 7.

He was doing this with a kind of multi-lens camera he developed himself. The 6x10 cm images fixed at the end of the process were pasted on cardboard in business card format and delivered. "The shrinking of portrait formats reduces the cost and saves scale while making the photograph accessible to a larger audience: In 1855, the price of an oversized portrait (about 18x24 cm.) ranged from 25 to 125 francs depending on the photographer, while business card images sold for about 1 Franc each."[29] Özendes[30] states that carte-de-visite technique has gained popularity because it accelerates and cheapens portrait shooting, but it also brings some problems: "Compositions prepared more carefully in the first years have become soulless pictures, especially due to the carelessness of ordinary workshop photographers due to the quickness of carte-de-visites." By the 1880s, the business card was replaced by a larger cabin portrait. Cabinet portraits could be displayed in the cabinets of the houses in a way that could be seen remotely, and it was preferred because the photographer had space to advertise himself on the back of the larger card. However, since the oversized cabin portrait photographs revealed flaws in the face, the studios started employing artists who retouched. Numerous retouchers were also working in the studios in Istanbul, and one of them was a miniature artist named Vichen Abdullah.

Those who learned about the technical innovations in the West, brought them to the country, and spread them were mostly from different ethnic and religious structures. Some professions were widely available only to those belonging to a particular ethnic group. Multiculturalism, that is, multilingualism, multi-religion, multi-ethnic structure, constituted the mosaic of the empire. Three Armenian brothers, Vichen, Hovsep, and Kevork, worked as photographers in their studios in Pera and Cairo under the Abdullah Fréres brand during their long careers between 1858 and 1899. Contributed to the promotion of the empire at international fairs with the title of court photographer during the reign of Abdulhamid II. With the brand Abdullah Fréres and the title of the sultan's photographer, they have left a rich visual archive to the present day with their portrait, architectural, street, and landscape photographs taken in the geographies related to the empire and in Istanbul.

Vichen (1820-1902), Hovsep (1830-1908) and Kevork (1839-1918) are the names of three siblings of an Armenian family with eight children who settled in Istanbul from Kayseri. Their grandfather, Asdvadzadur Hormuzian worked as a purchasing officer (mübayaacıbaşı) in I. Abdülhamit's palace and during this duty, he changed his surname from Asdvadzadur (Armenian meaning: Given by Allah) to Abdullah (servant of Allah).[31] Kevork, one of the brothers, studied art in the Murad-Raphaelyan school of the Armenian diaspora in Venice between 1852-58. Vichen, one of the brothers in Istanbul, was known for his miniatures on mother-of-pearl and ivory. In 1856, he began working in the studio of the German chemist Rabach, retouching daguerreotypes. "Viçen, who came from the art of miniature painting, colored the daguerreotypes by hand and increased the sales

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29 Bajac, 2004, 55.

30 Özendes, 1998, 54-55.

31 Özendes, 2017, 133.

prices simultaneously with the interest of the customers."[32] In 1858, Kevork returned to Istanbul from Venice, took over Rabach's studio in Beyazıt with his brothers Vichen and Hovsep, and started working as photographers.[33]

The photograph studio was run by three brothers, but there is not much information about Hovsep's interest in photography or art: "The name Hovsep is most often mentioned in the years when he accompanied Kevork in Egypt. Then suddenly, in 1908, Hovsep reappears and dies this year."[34] In this process, Vichen and Kevork, who developed their knowledge in the field of chemistry and physics required by photographic technology through their domestic and international visits, were introduced to both diplomatic circles and the influential names of the period in photography during their month-long visits to Paris. More importantly, they learn the intricacies of the *wet collodion* technique developed by the British photographer Frederick Scott Archer (1813-1857) in 1851 to make negative films. The technique developed by Archer was a multi-stage and fast technique, but it was widely used until 1880 to master the details on paper because it allowed an infinite number of albumins to be printed.

When they returned to the country, the brothers, who effectively applied the *wet collodion* technique in portrait and landscape photographs, soon started to make a name for themselves. In the early 1860s, they moved to Pera, where the Western-style population was concentrated, and handed the studio in Beyazıt to Andreomenos in 1867. "Pera, which is the meeting place of foreigners with its theaters, entertainment places, patisseries, restaurants, and western shops, immediately opened its doors to photography as an innovation."[35] Due to the great appreciation of the portrait of Sultan Abdülaziz, which they took in 1863, they were awarded the title of *Ressam-ı Hazret-i Şehriyar-ı* (*Painter of the Sultan*), which was the title of court photography and was not defined as the photographer yet, but as using the title of the painter.

In the same year, the International Ottoman Fair opened for the first time in Istanbul under the name of Sergi-i Umum-i Osmani and Abdullah Fréres participated in the exhibition with his photographs. The court regime attached importance to participating in international fairs in order to closely follow the innovations in the field of industry and technology, and with this idea, they gained experience in the 1851 London, 1855 Paris, and 1862 London Fairs. The fair, which took place between February 27 and August 1, 1863, and was opened by Sultan Abdülaziz, was organized in Sultanahmet Square. Special structures were designed for the fair in the square and more than ten thousand indigenous agricultural, art, and craft products were exhibited. Countries participating in the fair such as England, France, and Austria also presented the machines and tools they use in agriculture to the audience.[36] In the February-March 1863 issue of *Mecmu-i Fünun*

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32 Öztuncay, 2008, 120.

33 Özendes, 2017, 138.

34 Pinguet, 2021, 89.

35 Özendes, 2017, 33-37.

36 Kanca, 2013, 159,

magazine, a comment is published about the fair, where traditional and modern artworks, as well as industrial products, were exhibited, and that the quality of photographic artworks in the Ottoman Empire had reached the level of European countries.[37] The fact that the photographs perceived at the European level by the author were seen by approximately one hundred and fifty thousand visitors at the five-month fair made a significant contribution to the promotion and popularization of the art of photography.

Five years after the fair in Istanbul, in 1867, the II. Paris International Fair was held and Abdullah Fréres gained their first overseas success and fame with the exhibition at this fair. In the Ottoman part of the fair, products such as "hand-woven silk and wool carpets, fabrics embroidered with gold and silver glitter, cotton woven, luxury furniture, ceramics, musical instruments, army-related tools, folk clothing, Cyprus, Samos and Izmir wines, tobacco, etc."[38] were exhibited. In the fair, which was open for about six months, all the cultures of the imperial lands were tried to be introduced and visitors were introduced to Turkish delight, Turkish coffee, Turkish music, and folk dances. Abdullah Fréres' works in the art section of the exhibition included portraits of the Sultan, ambassadors, and clergy, as well as portraits of Levantine women and panoramas of Istanbul. When there was a lot of positive criticism about them in the foreign press, their reputation increased once again.

Paris II. International Fair had another importance for the Ottoman Empire, which was that Sultan Abdulaziz, an Ottoman sultan, who was invited to open the exhibition, visited European countries for the first time without war. On a trip to Paris, Abdulaziz's nephew, who would later become the sultan, Prince Abdulhamid II was also there. The Paris Fair was important not only in terms of Abdullah Fréres' career but also because the Ottoman sultans and princes had the opportunity to see and get to know European cities, architecture, technology, art, and modern life culture more closely. These trips and fairs, which included England, Prussia, and Austria after Paris, accelerated the steps of modernization and brought the Ottoman Empire closer to being a part of the West.

Meanwhile, the photographer brothers transferred the old studio in 1869 and opened their temporary studio in the Şark Passage in Pera. In the same year, when they took a portrait shooting at the invitation of the Crown Prince of England, Edward, they were highly praised in terms of the results. The excellent details of the wet collodion process, combined with the balanced composition arrangement, could be striking. Here, it should not be forgotten that since the portrait paintings made by the court painters were replaced by portrait photographs, the models looked like they were posing for the painter. According to Atay[39], "Works of Abdullah Brothers are woven with the discipline and essence of the rules of framing, composition, and perspective of Classical painting aesthetics. They were not only satisfied with images adorned with people or human figures, but they also detected human traces." In June, the portrait of Abdülaziz, which

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37 Kanca, 2013, 178.

38 Özendes, 2017, 140.

39 Atay, 2022.

they took from the profile at Dolmabahçe Palace, was applied to the medal made for the Sultan's trip to London. They took photographs of French Empress Eugenie during her visit to Istanbul and gave them in an album format.[40]

As a result of this success story, "On July 4th, 1873, it was published in the 11th issue of the *Mecmua-i Maarif* newspaper and the 182nd issue of the Şark newspaper as Sultan commanded that the Abdullah brothers could not be imitated by others."[41] Sultan Abdulaziz was a reformer and had a progressive mindset. For this reason, he immediately understood the power of photography as a propaganda tool, cooperated actively with photographers, and allowed considerable payments from the palace budget.

Abdullah Fréres' photographic career, which started in 1858, was continuing in the studio in Pera and on the streets of Istanbul. The photographer brothers moved once again in 1870, and this time their studio looked like a center of art with its stained-glass ceiling where they could get daylight more efficiently, a collection sales place, a gallery, popular decorations of the period for portraits, and a literature department.[42] They even exhibited the paintings of the famous painters of that era in the studio gallery.

When Abdulaziz was deposed and replaced by Abdulhamid II, the brothers' titles as court photographers continued, but their status changed after the defeat in the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78. Kevork Abdullah was invited to take photographs of Russian Army generals and other ranking soldiers who settled in Ayastefanos after the war. When Sultan Abdülhamid II learned that he invited the Russian generals to his house for dinner, it ended up with the retrieval of their title of court photographer and the Sultan's tughra on their business.[43]

Abdulhamid II, in the year he took over the throne, declared the I. Constitutional Monarchy by Kanun-i Esasi. After the defeat of the war two years later, the Parliament, which was formed by election from the representatives of the multinational empire, was dissolved and ended the I. Constitutional Monarchy period. The economic problems that came with the ongoing uprisings and the defeat in the Balkans created complete chaos. During this period, the brothers who worked for the palace for the first two years were also forbidden to take photographs of the Sultan and the dynasty members because they lost the title of 'Sultan's Photographer'. Vichen Abdullah, one of the brothers struggling with economic hardship was taking orientalist-inspired portraits in the studio in Pera, going out of the studio and shooting the streets, architectural structures, and landscapes. On the other hand, moving away from palace shots seems to have created more time for people's portraits and street shots: "They photographed various parts of the empire, palaces, mansions, pavilions, mosques, public fountains, churches, embankments, aqueducts, factories, barracks, hospitals, etc. in the streets in their folkloric clothes."[44]

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40 Özendes, 2017, 148-153.

41 Özendes, 2017, 153.

42 Pinguet, 2021, 93.

43 Özendes, 2017, 159.

44 Özendes, 2017, 162.

Kevork and Hovsep went to Egypt in 1886 at the invitées of the Egyptian Hidiv (governor) Tevfik Pasha and opened a branch of their studio in Cairo. Together with Tevfik Pasha and his delegation, they made trips to Luxor, Karnak, and Assuan along the Nile River and created the historical and cultural photographic record of Egypt. The albums, which consist of the photographs they took in Egypt, included many street images of daily life as well as architectural and historical shots.

With the efforts of Vichen Abdullah, the brothers, who regained the title of court photographer in 1889, added ten medals they had previously received from various emperors under the Sultan's tughra on the photographic card. From that point on, the photocard read "Serfotografi Hazret-i Şehriyari-Chief Photographer of the Sultan"[45]. In this period, Vichen, was taking photographs of foreign guests of the sultan, especially the visits of Kaiser II. Wilhelm and King Alexandr of Serbia to Istanbul. He was also commissioned to take photographs of the rare artifacts and weapons in Topkapı Palace, and the Duyun-i Umumiye Office.

The invention of photography also grew the 19th-century empires' interest in creating visual collections. Victoria, Queen of Britain, Emperor of Brazil II. Pedro and the French Emperor Napoleon's collections, although differed by country, became a diplomatic gift to be exchanged. Imperial photographic collections "included great works of engineering and architecture, scientific subjects, travel, and exploration in addition to photographs of family members and privileged foreigners. The repertoire of the Second Empire was even wider, archaeological and geographical discoveries and military expeditions were subjected."[46] Çelik states that photographic collections functioned to glorify imperial modernity and that the Ottoman administration joined this initiative with a ten-year delay.[47] The preparation of Gift Albums or Yıldız Palace Albums, which were prepared to visually document the modernization initiatives in the Ottoman Empire and show them to the West, was carried out during this period. The Yıldız Palace Collection, which includes photographs dated between 1862 and 1917, consists of portraits of dynasty members, architectural structures, institution buildings, constructions, student portraits, animal photographs, activity reports, weapon catalogs, ship photographs, and images of residential areas. The collection, which consists of 962 albums and 38599 photographs in total, includes engravings, hand-colored photographs, and original printed photographs.[48] Today, the collection is preserved in the Rare Works Library of Istanbul University. A total of 51 albums, consisting of photographs of historical and modern structural elements representing the power of the state, were sent to the American Library of Congress in 1893 and to the British Library in 1894. 35 of the albums sent as diplomatic gifts consisted of photographs of Abdullah Fréres.[49]

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45 Öztuncay, 2015, 82.

46 Çelik, 2015, 155.

47 Çelik, 2015, 155.

48 Nuhoğlu and Çolak, 2007, 45-46.

49 Öztuncay, 2006, 229.

During this period, Kargopoulos was also a court photographer and was creating typological photographic archives such as criminal portraits for Abdulhamid II. The Sultan, who did not like to have his own photograph taken, was very interested in technology and art and had a studio established in the palace: "Artillery Colonel Ali Sami was giving photography lessons in the palace and one of his students was, Abdulhamid's son, Şehzade Burhaneddin Efendi. The cinema device was presented to the palace by a Frenchman just a year after it was invented by the Lumière Brothers."[50] There was also a painting and sculpture workshop in the palace. Özendes[51], mentioned that Abdulhamid II spent most of his time in the palace with painting, music, and photography, and in addition to the trips of the rulers of other countries who came to visit, he also took photographs of "... naval ships, military institutions, factories, workers, state buildings, schools and police stations, mosques, ethnographic environment, archaeological views, and nature" in the country.

The Ottoman administration, which was trying to industrialize, continued to participate in international fairs, and Abdullah Fréres took part in some of these fairs with their photographs. Within the scope of the 400th anniversary events of the discovery of America, 50 countries participated in the International Chicago Fair held in 1893. The Ottoman Empire took part in the fair by building an exemplary Turkish village with even a mosque. Ship models, furniture, traditional hand-woven carpets, fabric types, tile artifacts, gold and silver embroidery, and jewelry were exhibited for five months in the Turkish village in the exhibition area. "It is also important to note that Abdülhamid II, who especially interested in the fair, sent a collection of Ottoman photographs aimed at promoting the image of the Ottoman Empire to the West, and this collection was donated to the US National Library after the fair."[52] Abdülhamid II. requested that the general views of Istanbul, as well as the famous places, be taken especially by Abdullah Fréres as a gift to the American Library, and the decision to cover the payment from the interior budget is included in the Ottoman archive delivery note dated June 5, 1894.[53]

Abdullah Fréres could not resist anymore due to the taxes imposed on photographers in 1892, the competition between the studios getting too intense, and the fact that the palace started to work with mostly military photographers. In 1899, he handed the studio with all its materials and archives to Sébah&Joaillier for 1200 gold liras. "The buyer company had a right of inheritance, and the *successors of Abdullah Fréres*, who assured that the photographs would have the same quality, were authorized to use their signature.[54] After the sale of the studio, Vichen, who became a Muslim with his wife and three sons, took the name Abdullah Şükrü and died in 1902. Hovsep died in 1908 and Kevork in 1918. In 1900, Vichen's son Levon (Ziya) opened a studio in Pera, number 417,

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50 Pinguet, 2021, 95.

51 Özendes, 1998, 175.

52 Kanca, 2013, 164-165.

53 Önen, 2016, 154-155.

54 Pinguet, 2021, 98.

under the name *Abdullah Fréres Fils (Abdullah Brothers' Son)*. In 1902, Sébah&Joaillier added the phrase *Abdullah Fréres' Successor* to the back of the photocards. The brand of Abdullah Fréres continued for a while after the brothers quit photography.

Traces of Modernization in Istanbul Street Photographs Signed by Abdullah Fréres

Ottoman Caliph Abdülmecid's 1915 oil painting named *Beethoven in Harem* (Fig. 1) is a striking representation of Westernization entering the palace with music, clothing, and other modern rituals. The modernization steps that took place until the obvious representation in this painting can be seen in the photographs of the period. Istanbul street photographs by Abdullah Fréres contain visual data about the change in the social, demographic, architectural, economic, and cultural structure of the empire in the second half of the 19th century.

> It was possible to come across street photographers who put large cameras on wooden tables and had heavy negative chests with them in the frequently visited and famous areas of the city. … many travelers posed to document their faraway trip. Photographers used the size of 24x30 cm to get the big picture. Thousands of famous or unknown passengers from many countries used to come to the city. Pilgrims and emperors of friendly nations came with their pompous delegations to see the happiness showcased in Ramadan, and soldiers, scientists, and masters were invited. The city attracted artists, adventure seekers.[55]

As can be seen from this text, the number of street photographers in Istanbul is considerable, but the ones among Abdullah Fréres' photographs that can be included in the street photography category are chosen. Although the emergence of street photography in the public sphere unfolded as a genre after the World War II, street photographs taken by photographer siblings, who became famous mostly in studio portraiture, can also be considered within the scope of this genre. The fact that they captured too many images in the areas they worked all of their careers, not only architectural, historical, touristic, landscape, and ethnographic portraits, but also in the street and daily life photography fields, led to this

Fig.1: Abdülmecid Efendi, *Beethoven in Harem*, 1915, 155,5 cm x 211 cm. (Wikipedia)

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55 Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 98.

study to be made. Street photographs, which are very strong documents both in terms of content and aesthetics, allow reading and interpreting Ottoman modernization.

According to İlhan Tekeli[56], with the Trade Treaty made with the British in 1838, the empire widened to the world economy, and with the Tanzimat Fermanı in 1839, the search for a new governance model began. These two important turning points created a serious transformation in the urban order in the second half of the 19th century. The newly adopted economic relations and form of government should have ensured integration with the modern world, and this could not be sustained by traditional institutions and methods. Tekeli[57] had identified five problems to be solved for Istanbul and other Ottoman cities; the first is the structuring of a central business area, the second is the improvement of housing areas, the third is the creation of new housing areas for the increasing population, the fourth is the meeting of the need for sufficient infrastructure and the fifth is the finding of solutions to prevent frequent fires in the wooden neighborhoods of the city. Although Tekeli[58] states that the reforms made in seventy years have not fully achieved their goal, he finds the arrangements made in the city center remarkable. He states that the city center became multi-centered over time according to developing technology and needs, but the infrastructure remained insufficient. He points the finger on the same situation occurs in the residential area and that the change experienced has three different dimensions: although the limited transition from wooden houses to masonry houses was an element that increased the land prices, the formation of new residential areas in the city by the sequential construction of houses and apartments.

Tekeli[59] emphasizes that public transportation systems were more definitive than private vehicles in the structuring of Istanbul as a modern city and sets three milestones for urban transportation; the start of regular urban ferry services in the 1850s, the start of rail transportation such as trams, tunnels, and suburban trains in the 1870s, and the use of electric trams in 1914. Before ferry transport, boats served an important function as a means of transporting both passengers and goods.

The introduction of steam-powered ferries as well as boats in maritime transportation is one of the most important stages of technological reform in the Ottoman Empire. In 1850, three years after the establishment of the Bosphorus Transport Company 'Şirket-i Hayriye', six ferries (steam-powered ships) started to transport in the Bosphorus. Seven more steamboats were added in 1859, and by 1899 the number increased to 28. By 1914, the number of modern transportation ferries had increased to 47.[60] Ferries were boarded with tickets, and numerous new piers were built, with cabins where passengers could both wait and buy tickets. Eminönü, Üsküdar and Kadıköy piers were the busiest.

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56 Tekeli, 2006, 363.

57 Tekeli, 2006, 363-364.

58 Tekeli, 2006, 371-373.

59 Tekeli, 2009, 23.
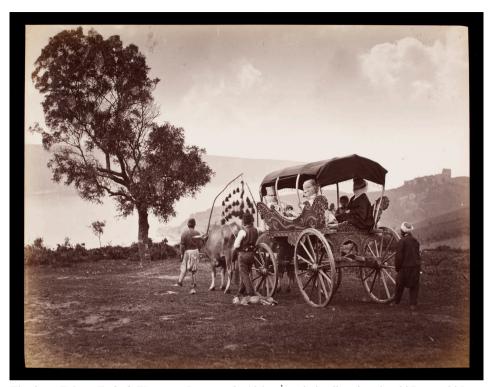
60 Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 72-73.

Fig. 2: A. Fréres, *Turkish Women in Promenade*, 186-a, İstanbul, Albumin print, 227mm x 295mm
(Getty - a)

Ortaylı[61] argues that the wind of change that started in Istanbul and other major port cities in the 19th century covered many areas and that the new lifestyle was not only masonry mansions, European furniture, and European table manners: "Women were having education. People were reading newspapers and magazines, and most importantly, they were reading novels. Although the veiling continued to a large extent, high-class women were entering social life and male-female flirtation began in the promenades. Women were also entering some lodges." The involvement of women in social life in a modern sense was one of the important stages of social change because traditions and religion determined the place of women in social life in Ottoman society.

Regions such as Kağıthane, Küçüksu, and Göksu were among the cool promenade places that Istanbulites often visited during the holidays and summer heat, and the photographers of the period documented daily life in these regions. Although the photograph in Fig.2 is fictional, it represents a change in social life in the context of showing women on a promenade in Çamlıca, one of the famous hills of Istanbul. In the

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61 Ortaylı, 2007, 16.

photograph, the child with the veiled elderly women got into the *Koçu Car* moved by two oxen. The *Koçu Car* was a very fancy-covered promenade carriage moved by oxens. The driver in the front, a man in European clothing next to the car, and another man in traditional clothing behind the car can also be seen in the photograph. Women started to use their carriages in the city, and on their out-of-town trips, they started to use very fancy cars with colorfully painted cases, decorated with flower pictures, known as *Talika*, and people should get in from the back. "Women, from the moment they start getting into the cars, it was noticed that the decorations in the cars have increased."[62] The inclusion of women in daily life resulted in the aestheticization of objects of daily use.

There are other photographs taken on the same day, in the same place, and with the same women, and some of the photographs have the sign of Sébah&Joaillier. The reason for this is that Abdullah Fréres handed the photography studio to Sébah&Joaillier with the photographs and all their rights. In his article about the history of the Sébah&Joaillier brand, Casaretto[63] also states that on the photographs taken by the brothers in the sale in 1899, there was the name of the studio they handed as the signature instead of their own names. This information also explains the confusion in photographs taken in similar places, but with different signatures because they were previously sold or included in gift albums.

Behdad[64] argues that orientalist photographs are effective at the level of aesthetic fantasy and that such photographs are neither interested in the message they convey to Middle Eastern people nor in the depiction of the socio-cultural situation: "But still, the aesthetics of orientalist photography is very important in terms of understanding what Barthes calls studium; that is, what gives photography functions such as 'informing, representing, surprising, giving a meaning, provoking desire." According to what Önen found in the Ottoman Archive Documents and reported in his master's thesis, during the reign of Abdulhamid II, some studios in Pera were raided upon the reports that the image of Muslim Turkish women was humiliated, and all the negatives were broken.[65] Among the raided studios, there was Abdullah Fréres' studio in 1892.

The document dated January 22nd, 1892 and numbered 1914/76 in the Ottoman archive is about a[66] very clear decision "regarding the destruction of photographs taken by prohibiting Armenians from taking pictures of women in various clothes for confusing the ideas of Muslims in the photograph studio of the Abdullah Brothers". Likewise, in the archive document of Yıldız Saray-ı Hümâyûn Chief Literary Office dated February 10th, 1892, and numbered 4482, there is an article to "punish the photographers who take photographs of Greek and Armenian women by dressing them to wear veils and

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62 Ertürk, 2022,

63 Casaretto, 2018.

64 Behdad, 2013, 28-29.

65 Önen, 2016, 159-160.

66 Önen, 2016, 152-153.

Fig. 3: A. Fréres, *Turkish Chef Accompanying His Family*, Istanbul, 186-b. , 241mm X 29mm
([Getty - B](#))

abayas".[67] Although this decision was mostly valid for studio portraits, the image in Fig. 3 is one of the photographs designed and taken from an Orientalist perspective.

Although many photographs taken from different angles in the same place carry Sébah&Joaillier or another signature, it is assumed that the photographs taken on Çamlıca Hill were originally taken by Abdullah Fréres. On the other hand, according to Özendes[68], in 1890, Abdullah Fréres also bought some glass negatives from Sébah&Joaillier Studio and included them in their own collection. It seemed normal for photographers to buy negatives from each other and sell them under their own names at that time because photography was valued like any commercial commodity that could be bought and sold. Ironically, this attitude also evokes the method of *appropriation* adopted by postmodern artists in the contemporary period by seizing the works of certain artists for different reasons and writing their own names.

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67 Önen, 2016, 159-160.

68 Özendes, 2017, 169.

According to Pinguet[69], the men and women in the photograph in Fig. 3 were the figurants hired to create the scene, and according to his findings, the photograph in Fig. 2, dated 1870, has the title *Muslim Women in the Car*. Indeed, when examined carefully, the correctness of Pinguet's argument emerges. The people in the photograph titled *Turkish Chef Accompanying His Family* in Fig. 3 are the same as the people who were having a promenade in the photograph in Fig. 2. It is seen that the orientalist scene set in the studio was arranged on the street and it is seen that a kind of Orientalist street coffee house environment was created with decor materials such as hookah, pot, and cushion.

Ali Behdad, who stated that photography was the Middle East in the 19th century, says in his interview in the documentary *Saraydan Bakmak (Thruogh Ottoman Eyes)* that photography made Orientalism extremely popular in that era: "Photography made Orientalism one of the main subjects of Europe. The photograph had become very easy to buy and reproduce. Many European travelers also took photographs from the places they visited and created albums."[70] Studios that were aware of this situation were almost competing to shoot Orientalist portraits.

Abdullah Fréres took and sold Orientalist photographs to increase their income, especially after losing the title of court photographer, and they kept the decorations and traditional costumes required for these photographs in their studios. "The Abdullah Brothers were masters, especially in studio photographs. For this reason, velvet curtains, various columns, trendy sofas of the day, mother of pearl inlaid tables that would symbolize the East, hookahs, sticks, and glitter embroidered slippers were the must-have accessories for the environment they would create."[71] While Orientalist-inspired photographs were generally sold by studios in the form of photocards at first, the started to be sold in the form of postcards since the 1890s. Many entrepreneurs, especially the famous postcard publisher Max Fruchtermann (1852-1918), sold the plates they bought from studios cheaper by printing them in the form of postcards in the printing press. Photographic postcards having the name of the place, date, and photographer written on the front or back side could be mailed to the desired person by writing short notes on them. "Thanks to the reproduction of photographs through postcards, more photographs of the studios of that era have survived, and their information about the era and about the photograph itself had been carried to the present day."[72] The landscape prepared by the photographers, the portrait with a view and the photocards consisting only of portraits also started to function as postcards and became popular over time.

Numerous fictional street portraits taken by Abdullah Fréres in the studio were also available. In the photographs taken in the studio, the models were posing in a way that describes their work. As can be seen in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, a realistic effect was tried to be achieved by the porter with the loads they carry on their backs and by posing as if they

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69 Pinguet, 2021, 92.

70 Behdad, 2018.

71 Özendes, 2019, 32-33.

72 Bölük, 2014, 79-80.

Fig. 4: A. Fréres, *Porter 1*, 1860-1870 (Getty, Pierre de Gigord Collection. ([Getty - c](#))

Fig. 5: A. Fréres, *Porter 2*, 1880-1900 (Retrieved from the [Library of Congress - a](#))

were walking. The first porter photograph was taken in an early period, in the 1860s-1870s and the porter wears a traditional outfit. In the second photograph, in addition to the view of Istanbul created with the mosque, tree, mountain, and sky in the background, the flower in the pot and the soil poured on the ground support the theatrical fiction.

When examined in detail, it can be seen that the dress of the porter in Fig. 5 is a kind of uniform. It can be seen that the sleeve parts of the jacket are embroidered from the side and compatible with the pants. The diversity of these portraits is a visual reflection of the diversity of the Ottoman social structure, as well as the change in the porters' clothes in the photographs taken at different times carry the traces of the reform. Similarly, traces of the change can be found in occupational groups such as street vendors, barbers, players, chimney sweepers, beggars, coffee makers, and sharpeners, as well as in street portraits of different groups of ethnic and religious origin.

In the photograph titled *View From the Bridge* in Fig. 6, Galata Bridge is seen, where men, women, porters, and horse carriages cross. The crowd on the bridge is quite normal considering the population growth of the city. The population growth of Istanbul in the second half of the 19th century increased simultaneously with other European capitals, and the population of the capital and its surroundings was around 391,000 in 1844 and 851,527 in 1886.[73]

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73 Çelik, 1986, 37.

Fig. 6: A. Fréres, *View From the Bridge*, Galata, Istanbul, 1870-1880 (Getty, Pierre de Gigord Collection, Retrieved Getty - d)

The Galata Bridge, which was built between Eminönü and Karaköy in 1845, had a wooden floor and it was forbidden to smoke on it because of the fire danger. Three people in white uniforms were in charge of collecting tolls, and at the other end, there were officers doing the same job. According to the toll schedule of the bridge, the transition to criminals crossing in the police observation, dervishes, fire brigade workers going to the fire area, members of the police and law enforcement, and members of the army was free of charge. While those who crossed on foot were charged 5 coins, porters carrying goods were charged 10 coins, laden animals were charged 20 coins, empty horse carts were charged 100 coins, laden horse carts were charged 200 coins, and 3 coins per animal were received for sheep, goat or other animal herds.[74] On the other hand, it is seen that the boatmen in the Bosphorus continue to carry both cargo and passengers.

Determining and solving urban problems in Istanbul in the 19th century was far from unique. In the same period, other European capitals such as Paris, Rome, and Vienna were also in the process of reconstruction. Worker migrations from rural areas to industrial cities crowded the cities and the reconstruction process was initiated within

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74 Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 88.

the framework of chronic housing problems. Writing that the second half of the 19th century was the period of development of European capitals, Çelik[75] states that in the restructuring of Istanbul, European cities that had not yet completed their own structuring were imitated, but economic inadequacy negatively affected the construction activities, and as a result, the city began to lose its Turkish-Islamic identity.

Street photographs, which convey the course of change in society and urban texture to the present, carry different layers of information on ethnic diversity. Üsküdar, located on the east side of the Bosphorus, covered a large area where Muslim, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish populations lived together. In the second half of the 19th century, some of the minorities lived around Galata and some lived on the shores of the Marmara Sea and Haliç. Armenians were settled in Kumkapı-Samatya, Greeks in Fener, and Jews in the Balat-Hasköy region.[76] This population spread in the city was arranged after the conquest in 1453 and the mosaic kind of a structure formed by different ethnic structures was preserved.

However, since Üsküdar was a region mostly inhabited by Muslims, it also appears in the photographs of the era when the change was slower. Among the observations of the French writer Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) on his trip to Istanbul in 1843, his depictions of Üsküdar support the reality revealed in the photographs. Stating that Üsküdar was a much more Muslim region compared to the cosmopolitan Istanbul, de Nerval writes about Üsküdar in his book *The Magnificent Istanbul*: "In this city, the old Turkish tradition continues. The style of clothing brought by Tanzimat is not here. Everyone is walking around in white or green turbans. (…) The innovations made for strengthening the Istanbul buildings, stone roads, sidewalks, lanterns, horse-drawn carriages, are seen as dangerous innovations here."[77] The author de Nerval visited all the districts of the capital in his trip that coincided with the month of Ramadan and he described Istanbul, which he called the most beautiful city in the world, as follows:

> Istanbul is a strange city! Glory and misery, tears and joy, tighter rule than anywhere else, but also more freedom than anywhere else! Four nations live together and do not hate each other. We cannot see the tolerance and kindness that Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews show to each other as people living in the same land, among our people belonging to various provinces or parts.[78]

The Magnificient Istanbul, in which the author questioned the Tanzimat and its effect, consisted of his İzmir and İstanbul trips, as a part of his two-volume *Voyage en Orient* scopes his trips to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

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75 Çelik, 1986, xvi.

76   Akın, 2002, 2.

77 de Nerval, 1974, 94.

78 de Nerval, 1974, 15-16.

Fig. 7: A. Fréres, *A Street in Üsküdar*, 1870-1880 (Getty, Pierre de Gigord Collection, Retrieved from Getty – e)

A Street in Üsküdar (Fig. 7) shows the historical Üsküdar Bazaar with wooden shops with awnings on the right and left. One of the most important subjects of street photography is bazaars, markets, and street vendors. Abdullah Fréres also photographed the important bazaars and markets of the period as well as the fictional portraits of the peddlers they shot in the studio. It is understood that the photograph was taken in the summer months by those who carry umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun. In the middle of the photograph, the minaret of the Davut Pasha Mosque is seen and in the back, the double minaret of the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque and the domes of the bath are seen. In the right corner of the photograph, it can be understood that one of the children carrying a load in a basket noticed that he was photographed while resting in front of the fountain. People ahead of him are also looking carefully at the photographer, wondering what he is doing. It is seen that the goods sold in the shops are transported by horses. It is seen that the women on the street are dressed in traditional clothing, some of the men are dressed in traditional clothing and some of them are dressed in modern clothing.

Bölük[79] emphasizes that the fact that Üsküdar is more traditional and more religious than other parts of Istanbul, which also emerged in de Nerval's observations,

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79 Bölük, 2014, 159.

Fig. 8: A. Fréres, *Turkish Barbers*, Istanbul, 1870-1890 (Getty, Pierre de Gigord Collection, Retrieved from Getty- f)

confirms the multiplicity in the number of mosques and shrines. Apart from the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque, whose construction belongs to Mimar Sinan, there are many mosques, tombs, fountains, and baths in Üsküdar. Despite all this, in the region, seven photography studios were opened including A.T. Sedefciyan and G. Amira's,[80] and served the people of Üsküdar.

The photograph in Fig. 8 shows the *Turkish Barbers* working. "According to the stories, barbers (the best of whom came from Eyüp) not only shaved beards and cut hair, but also pulled teeth, applied suction cups, and leech treatment. After the leeches were removed, lemon juice mixed with crushed coffee was put on the bleeding ground."[81] Barbers, who could make medicines against diseases such as baldness and scabies as well as haircuts, traveled to different neighborhoods during the day. While the barbers wearing fes hats in the photograph are doing their work seriously, customers and other waiting people are looking at the camera that is recording them with curious eyes.

The fes worn by barbers was one of the symbols of change in the Ottoman Empire. It was Serasker Hüsrev Pasha, who brought the fes worn by Algerian sailors to

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80 Bölük, 2014, 160.

81 Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 59.

the Ottoman lands, and it was Sultan Mahmud II, who wanted it to be worn as an official title first in the army, and then in all public institutions. The *setre* (jacket) which was similar to Western clothes and later would be named İstanbulin with small additions, trousers, and the red fes came from the East (Algeria), created the synthesis of the East and West. Şerif Mardin emphasizes that the founders of[82] Tanzimat not only conveyed the military and administrative structure of the West but also its daily culture. Many things were *European-style*, such as the style of clothing, the style of houses, the items used, the circulation of money, and human relations. In those street photographs, it can be observed that these radical changes were not widely accepted by society in general.

Fig. 9: A. Fréres, *A Street in Istanbul*, 1890 (Tarihkurdu.net - a)

Fig. 10: A. Fréres, *A Street in Beyoğlu*, 1880-1893 (Library of Congress – b)

A Street in Istanbul, which also includes dogs with a crowded population on the streets of Istanbul, is important in terms of showing the dual progress of urban construction. On the right side of the photograph in Fig. 9, which dates back to about 1890, there are rows of wooden houses with traditional architecture, with their ground floors made of stone. One of the reasons that the houses were made of wood, was that wood was an earthquake-resistant material, while the other reason was that brick and building stone were twice as expensive. Moreover, wood building material could be procured more easily: "Wood material, which was provided very easily from the large forests on the Black Sea foothills, was brought to Istanbul by cargo ships."[83] Financially

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82 Mardin, 1991, 15.

83 Schiele and Müller-Wiener, 1988, 11.

viable wooden houses were constantly causing large and small fires in the capital that had narrow, short, and labyrinth-like streets. More than a hundred people died in the Great Beyoğlu Fire on June 5, 1870, and about 3,000 buildings, including many photograph studios, were burned down.[84] The administration, looking for solutions to prevent fires, suggested modern houses made of stone or brick material, like the one that can be seen on the left of the photograph, instead of wooden houses. During the seventy years after the Tanzimat, large fires were an important factor in Istanbul's urban planning (Fig. 10), as well as providing transportation to new residential areas that were in demand.[85] The narrow and short street in Abdullah Fréres' photograph is very important in terms of reflecting the transition process from traditional housing to modern housing.

Fig. 11: A. Fréres, *Soğukçeşme Street*, 1880-1893 (Eskiistanbul.net)

Fig. 12: A. Fréres, *Students, private school Mekteb-i Hamidi-yi*, 1880-1890 (Library of Congress – c)

Street photography is a type of photography done in public spaces and can reflect period information as much as schools, streets and avenues. Among the promotional photographs taken by Abdullah Freres for the palace are modern school buildings and portraits of students. In Fig. 12, there are two girls who are students of the Mekteb-i Hamidi-yi (Trade School) and they pose with their uniforms and books in their hands in the photograph taken in the schoolyard. In education, which was one of the most effective areas of the Westernization process, many girls had started to receive education in both state

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84 Keyvanoğlu, 2017, 171.

85 Çelik, 1986, 79.

schools and private schools belonging to foreigners. Abdulhamid II wanted photographs of these schools and students to be taken, and albums containing these photographs were sent as gifts to Western states. In this way, it was proven how powerful and developing the country was. In the street photograph in Fig. 11, there are male students in formal school uniforms in front of the Sultan's Gate at the entrance to the Hagia Sophia rear courtyard opening onto Soğukçeşme Street. Similarly, many portrait photographs of male students were taken in pairs or trios and placed in albums. Military, engineering, architecture, medicine and art schools, mostly boarding schools, were opened one after another, and students coming from the countryside to these schools were first photographed in their local clothes and then in their official school uniforms as an indication of modernization. The changes and transformations over time were considered important steps for the country's progress and catching up with the West.

The process of change that can be summarized in the street photo titled *Mandate Car* in Fig. 13 represents the traditional and the modern at the same time. In the background of the photo where people posing in traditional clothes for transportation on a mandate car, the modern buildings of Istanbul Technical University in Gümüşsuyu,

Fig. 13: A. Fréres, *Mandate Car*, Maçka, 1880-1893 (Tarihkurdu.net - b)

Fig. 14: A. Fréres, *Fire Brigade. Position of the Second Battalion of the Fire Brigade drilling with hooked ladders*. Istanbul, 1880-1893 (Library of Congress – d)

which was founded in 1773 as Müdendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun and changed to Mühendishane-i Berr-i Hümayun in 1793, can be seen. The school, which was influential in modern architecture and engineering education both in the last 150 years of the empire and throughout the history of the republic, is an educational institution that educates many students. The contrast caused by the transportation on a buffalo cart and the modern university building in the same street photo is a perfect definition of the period. The

four-storey Fire Department building in the street photo in Fig. 14 also draws attention with its modern structure. The stone building that stands out in the background of the image, and the fire brigade working in modernized and official uniforms in the front, again reflect the old and the new together in the photo. Innovations in architectural details and routines of daily life have been frozen together and transferred to the present day.

Conclusion

Street photographs are objective witness documents that bear visual traces of social change. Street photographs from the second half of the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire's westernization process was at its most intense, provide opportunities for sociological and historical readings as much as studio portraits, architectural and landscape photographs of the period. There are many street photographs taken by Abdullah Fréres, the brothers who owned one of the famous photography studios of this period, on the streets of Istanbul, Bursa and Cairo. However, this study was limited to analyzing the traces of modernization in the street photographs of Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. With this limitation, research conducted by historians, sociologists, writers, architects and city planners on this period of Istanbul was consulted and findings on the social and cultural environment of the city were utilized. The reason for working with Istanbul street photographs is that the steps towards modernization were first initiated here and that Abdullah Fréres, the palace photographer, took many street photographs while taking photographs of Istanbul's modernizing military and educational institutions and architectural structures on official duty. A similar analysis study can also be conducted through orientalist portraits taken in Pera studios. Similarly, striking clues can be obtained by examining architectural examples such as Western-style public buildings and business centers or city plans. Written and visual cultural products can carry the documentation of social change processes into the future, but street photography, which has a strong objective recording feature, can perform this task more completely.

The fact that photography, a modern image production technique, was announced in the Ottoman press, and then first traveling photographers and then local photographers opened studios in the capital and were supported by the palace administration, in itself reflects the understanding of change of the period. Starting with Selim III, palace administrations, which closely followed the technological developments in the West, initiated reform movements in order to fix the economy that had been damaged by the rebellions that started in the Balkans and the lands that were lost. Public reforms such as constitutional studies, the opening of modern schools and factories, and the reorganization of urban areas and transportation were documented with photographs and used in the local press, exhibited in international fairs, and tried to be proven with gift albums sent to western states. On the other hand, when the communication, propaganda, promotion and orientalist touristic functions of photography in this process are taken into account, it is a natural situation that it also reflects the traces of westernization of the same period in a striking way.

In the fictional street scenes in studios and portrait photographs taken on real streets, street vendors, shopkeepers in bazaars and markets, and people of different ethnic origins, signs of westernization in their attire are striking. The use of fezzes instead of turbans, wearing tight trousers and jackets instead of traditional shalwars, civil servants and students starting to wear official uniforms, and the uniforms determined by civil servants and some professional groups are all seen in the photographs. Another important finding is that women began to become visible in daily and business life, and this was reflected in street photographs, albeit to a small extent. As can be seen in the photograph in Fig. 12, the opening of boarding schools for girls was one of the most important innovations of the period, but it was not yet possible for women to take an active role in social life. Since Muslim Turkish women could not be photographed due to the ban on images, it was quite common for women of different ethnic or religious origins to be photographed in costume to represent them. Muslim Turkish women are seen in a small number in bazaar photographs, but the women featured in postcards and card-de-visite prints, which were widely purchased by tourists during this period, were of different ethnic origins. In studio and street settings or street photographs taken in summer resorts (Fig. 3), Muslim Turkish women were only representative, as in painting.

Another finding obtained from street photographs is that the roads leading to the main streets have started to widen (Fig. 10). Wide streets and avenues, which are one of the requirements of modern urbanization, were essential to solve the problems that arose with the increase in the city population. Wide roads were also important in terms of providing easy access to extinguish frequent fires and providing the infrastructure for urban public transportation services such as trams. It is also observed in the photographs that new modern public transportation vehicles such as trams and ferries have become effective in urban transportation. It is also noticeable in the photographs that there is a hybrid urban structure where traditional wooden houses and masonry houses coexist.

Street photographs with Istanbul's rich historical texture and architecture in the background are visual documents of the modernization process. Abdullah Fréres' street images can also be read as visual documents of the slowness of a country where the printing press entered 300 years late, despite attempts to close the gap with the West in the fields of information and technology, in finding a response in society.

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