

NEW RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE OTTOMAN ARCHIVES OF ISTANBUL

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When I first came to the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* at its old location in the İstanbul Provincial Governorship's *Vilayet Bahçesi* in 1956, opportunities for research were extremely limited. The only collections that were readily available were the *Mühimme* and *Mühimme-i Mısır* registers of Imperial *fermans*, themselves not entirely complete, the mass of financial registers heaped together in the *Kâmil Kepeci* collection, and the thousands of documents brought together in the *Ali Emiri*, *Ibn ul-Emin*, *Cevdet* and *Fekete* collections¹. The summary catalogues compiled for the latter by a series of commissions were, however, not available to researchers, who therefore had to depend on the interest and goodwill of the archives staff to provide them with materials pertinent to their subjects. It was a difficult situation, made palatable only by the expertise and dedication of the reading room staff, then led by the late Ziya Eşrefoğlu, who always were willing, not only to produce registers and documents, but also to help beginners like myself to understand the mysteries of the *siyakat*, *divani* and other exotic scripts which Ottoman scribes used to conceal their work from all but the most initiated. Cataloging new materials proceeded very slowly in the hands of aged former civil servants whose chief qualification was their knowledge of the older scripts in which the documents were written; as they died out, moreover, this work slowed to a halt. Under such conditions, the pioneering work of such great Turkish historians as Ömer Lütfi Barkan, Fuat Köprülü, İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Mukrimin Halil Yinanç, Osman Ergin, Abraham Galante, Tayyip Gökbilgin, Halil Inalcık and others becomes that much more remarkable.

Research conditions improved tremendously during the next three decades, particularly during the directorships of Midhat Sertoğlu and Nejat

¹ See my descriptions of the collections in: "Archival Sources for Ottoman History: The Archives of Turkey." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 80 (1960), pp. 1-12; "Turkish Source Materials for Egyptian History." *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, edited by Peter Holt. London, 1968, pp. 28-48; and "Ottoman Archival Materials for the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Archives of Istanbul." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. VI (1975), pp. 94-114.

Göyünç, with reading room staff led by Ziya Eşrefoğlu's successors, Turgut Işıksal and Rauf Tuncay, and their successors led by Necati Aktaş and Attilâ Çetin, making catalogues of these collections available to researchers, though the latter still were left with the formidable task of searching through thousands of summaries to find documents pertinent to their topics. Research, moreover, continued to be limited by a whole series of restrictions. Research permission for no more than one year was granted only after months of delay, and then only for limited topics and periods of time, with opportunities for renewals erratic at best. Available catalogues continued to cover only a small portion of the collections, while the work of cataloguing other materials proceeded slowly if at all. Microfilming and xeroxing of materials was restricted to no more than one hundred photographs during each calendar year. Government restrictions, moreover, limited research to the years before 1914, thus excluding for a whole generation of researchers the registers and documents emanating from the last decade of Ottoman existence, involving both World War I and the Turkish War for Independence.

It is in the light of these long decades of difficulties for researchers, Turkish and foreign alike, that the rapid changes introduced to the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* since 1988, first under the direction of General Director Professor Dr. İsmet Miroğlu and Ottoman Archives Director Professor Dr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu, and since 1991 by the first professional archivist to direct the archives, Necati Aktaş, have come to astonish all those who experienced the problems of the past. The first step came in 1988 when the archives moved into two new five-story buildings located on Ticarethane Sokak behind the Yerebatan Cistern museum, opposite the Sultan Ahmed and Aya Sofya mosques, though plans remain for a subsequent move into new quarters within the outer precincts of the Topkapı Saray once the area is evacuated by Turkish army units watching over the passageways between the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus. Most of the limitations previously placed on research after 1914 were removed by a new archive regulation issued by governmental decree in June 1989, which also has greatly eased the process for obtaining research permissions and removed the burdensome limitations previously imposed on xeroxing and photography. Researchers now can obtain permission either by application to the Turkish embassy in their home countries, which should take no more than one month, or by direct application to the archives in Istanbul, which normally issues permits in one or two days. Residence permits no

longer are required for researchers who remain in Turkey less than three months.

A greatly expanded staff, including some four hundred young and energetic scholars, moreover, was put to work cataloging additional materials which were made available to researchers in rapid-fire fashion, producing a total of 77,623 registers and 1,654,286 documents between 1987 and the end of 1989. These changes have been most apparent, of course, for the materials after 1914. The continuous run of registers of Council of Ministers minutes (*Meclisi Vükelâ Mazbataları*) and of the archives of the Prime Minister's office (*Babıali Evrak Odası*) are now accessible, though the latter at least, can be used only by consulting the original registers of incoming and outgoing correspondence, which do not always indicate which dossiers individual documents were transferred to. Not only are the chronological catalogues of documents related to imperial orders available in the *Irade* collection for the years after 1914, but all the dossiers compiled in the Prime Minister's office for important subjects also have been opened to researchers. Documents regarding the Armenian Question, have been made available on a series of 19 microfilm reels for the years up to 1895, with the remaining 30 reels covering the years 1923 scheduled to be made available during the next year, and copies sent to the major national libraries in Europe and the United States.

Even for the years before 1914, already open to research, major new collections have been made available, including registers of Sultan Mahmud II's new *Asâkir-i Mansure Army* between 1806 and 1845. While the *Yıldız* Palace archives were partly available for some time as the *Esas Evrak* collection², an even larger portion of the collection which had not been fully catalogued is now open and fully available, including correspondence between Sultan Abdülhamid II and his diplomats in various European capitals and conferences, in two collections of documents presented to Sultan Abdülhamid through the hand of his chief Scribe (*Mâbeyin Başkâtibi*), the *Sadaret Hususi Maruzat* collection of 39,403 documents and the *Sadaret Resmi Maruzat* collection of 41,458 documents and also 6,987 documents left from the private archives of Kâmil Paşa, one of the major political figures of the time. Included in the *Resmi Maruzat Evrakı*, for example, are dossiers regarding Ottoman internal and external debts,

² See Stanford J. Shaw, "The Yıldız palace Archives of Abdulhamit II," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, vol. 3 (1971), pp. 211-237.

declarations of war, peace and martial law, arranging for temporary regulations (*karamames*) issued while the Parliament was not in session, orders for the dispatch and use of the army and fleet, expenditures within and outside the regular budget, treaties and concessions, and preparations of regulations for the different government departments.

Regarding East Rumelia between 1902 and 1909, 18,261 documents are available from its General Inspector's office (*Rumeli Müfettişliği*), 5,961 documents regarding Edirne, Yanya and İskodra, 47,469 regarding Monastir, 48,723 regarding Kosovo, and 50,481 regarding Salonica. For more limited periods involving the last century of the Ottoman Empire, collections recently opened include, in addition to those cited above, a register of petitions submitted to Sultan Abdülhamid II (*Yıldız Maruzat Defterleri*), covering some 15,679 documents for the years from 1880 to 1904, 973 registers of the Imperial Privy Purse (*Hazine-i Hassa*) for the years from 1826 until 1887, 1982 registers of the Ministry of Health (*Sıhhiye Nezareti*) from 1838 to 1923, 6 registers of 49,298 documents regarding Bulgaria between 1875 and 1918; one register of 8076 documents regarding East Rumelia between 1902 and 1904; 6 registers of 6017 dossiers related to Imperial Orders (*İrade-i Hususiye*) issued between 1893 and 1909.

It should not be supposed, however, that older Ottoman materials have been neglected. The catalogs of the older document collections are being checked and revised and perhaps most important of all, computerized indexes are being prepared to greatly simplify the task of finding pertinent documents. Important collections of registers and documents previously even unknown to researchers have been catalogued and made available, including the account registers of the Accounting Office (*Bab-ı Defteri*) for the years from 1512 to 1853, the Istanbul Markets Regulation office (*Istanbul İhtisabi*) from 1450 to 1840, the Janissary Pay Registers (*Bab-ı Defteri Yeniçeri Kalemî*) from 1544 to 1826, Army Infantry pay registers (*Bab-ı Defteri Piyade Mukabelesi*) from 1556 to 1842, Cavalry registers (*Bab-ı Defteri Süvari Mukabelesi*) from 1565 to 1845, Poll tax registers (*Bab-ı Defteri Cizye Muhasebesi*) from 1559 to 1848, and registers relating to non-Muslim millets from 1475 to 1836, 1230 registers of the Ottoman Imperial Mint (*Darphane defterleri*) from 1696 to 1881.

As if all of this is not enough to whet the appetite of those doing research on Ottoman history, other collections are still in process of being brought together, catalogued, and made available, including the vast ar-

chives of the Ottoman ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, the latter only recently transferred to the custody of the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other archives, though separate, also are now available to researchers, including those of the Ministry of War, available in the Historical Research Department of the Turkish General Staff (*Genelkurmay Harb Tarih Arşivi*) and of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*) and Presidential Palace (*Çankaya Köşkü*). In addition, all archival materials regarding the Turkish Republic are now being concentrated in the new Republican Archives (*Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) in Ankara, and it is to be hoped that this collection, still in the process of organization under the direction of Dr. İsmet Binark, will soon be made available.

The main problem remaining to researchers on Ottoman history now is to go through and consult the immense volume of materials being made made available to them. There can no longer be any excuse, however, for any scholar doing research on any subject concerning the Ottoman Empire, even involving relations between it and the Great Powers or matters concerning the various nationalist revolts that inflamed the Empire during its last century, not to spend considerable time examining the sources now being made available in the *Başbakanlık Arşivi*.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN THE BAŞBAKANLIK ARŞIVI OPENED FOR RESEARCH SINCE 1987

Catalogue	Dates		Number of documents	Number of registers
	Hicri	Miladi		
OPENED DURING 1987				
<i>Müzehep fermanlar kataloğu</i>	970-1324	1526-1906	821	1
<i>Yıldız Maruzat defterleri</i>	1298-1332	1880-1904	15,679	1
<i>Hazine-i Hassa defterleri</i>	1242-1305	1826-1887	973	1
<i>Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası Amedi Kalemî defterleri</i>	1255-1341	1839-1923	425	1
<i>Darphane Defterleri</i>	1108-1299	1696-1881	1.230	1
<i>Sıhhiye Nezareti defterleri</i>	1254-1341	1838-1923	1.982	1
OPENED DURING 1988				
<i>Maliye Nezareti Temettuat</i>	1260-1261	1844-1845	17.747	9
<i>B. E. O. Mümtaze Kalemî Bulgaristan Evrakı</i>	1292-1336	1875-1918	42,298	6
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Rumeli Evrakı</i>	1320-1322	1902-1904	8,076	1
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Kosova Evrakı</i>	1320-1322	1902-1904	10,402	1
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Baş Muhasebe</i>	885-1252	1480-1836	7,800	3

CATALOG REVISIONS AND INDEXES OPENED DURING 1988

<i>Cevdet Bahriye</i>	1015-1304	1606-1887	12,743	2
<i>Cevdet Askeriye VI</i>	960-1314	1553-1897	5,983	6
<i>Cevdet Darphane</i>	1075-1282	1664-1866	3,821	
<i>Cevdet Eyalet-i Mümtaze</i>	1112-1288	170-1871	1,032	
<i>Cevdet Dahiliye</i>	1012-1298	1603-181	17,486	17
<i>Cevdet İktisat</i>	1063-1292	1653-1876	2,261	
<i>Cevdet Nafia</i>	1106-1320	1597-903	2,785	
<i>Cevdet Sıhhiye</i>	1070-1306	1659-1889	1,451	
<i>Cevdet Saray</i>	1002-1310	1593-1893	9,019	
<i>Cevdet Timar</i>	981-1299	1573-1882	8,794	
<i>Taltifat</i>	1323-1329	1905-1911	5,238	5
<i>İrade-i Hususiye</i>	1315-1327	1893-1909	6,017	6
<i>Bahriye ve Taltifat</i>	1331	1913	1,053	1
<i>Yıldız - Kâmil Paşa evrakı</i>	1274-1325	1858-1907	6,987	2
<i>Maliyeden Müdevver defterler</i>	830-1306	1426-1888		15,336

OPENED DURING 1989

<i>Maliye Nezareti Masarifat</i>	1250-1338	1834-1920		19,481
<i>Maliye Nezareti Defterleri</i>	1253-1337	1837-1919		1,828
<i>Maliye Nezareti Vâridat</i>	1252-1337	1836-1873		5,238
<i>Maliye Nezareti Cüzve Muhasebesi</i>	1254-1276	1838-1859		1,544
<i>Maliye Nezareti Ceride</i>	1253-1330	1837-1911		2,100
<i>B. E. O. Sadareti Evrakı</i>	1256-1261	1840-1845	4,051	2
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Mektubi Kalemî</i>	1262	1846	2,563	1
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Divan-i Hümayun Kalemî</i>	1256-1262	1840-1846	1,236	1
<i>Meclis-i Vâlâ Riyaseti</i>	1253-1284	1837-1867		478
<i>Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı</i>	1294-1311	1877-1893	39,403	5
<i>Yıldız Sadaret Resmi Maruzat Evrakı</i>	1293-1327	1876-1909	41,458	3
<i>Yıldız Mütenevvia</i>	1293-1314	1876-1896	39,812	8
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Sadaret Baş Kitabet</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	18,261	1
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Konsolosluk Sefaret</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	3,784	3
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Müteferrik Fotoğraflar</i>	1286-1338	1867-1920	7,751	1
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Makamat</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	18,261	1
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Edirne, Yanya ve İşkodra</i>	1319-1327	1901-1909	5,961	1
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Manastir</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	47,469	5
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Kosova</i>	1322-1327	1904-1909	48,723	6
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Selanik</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	50,481	7
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Arzuhallar</i>	1322-1327	1904-1909	18,331	5
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Jandarma, Müşiriyet, Kumandanlık</i>	1318-1327	1900-1909	29,912	3
<i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Umum Evrak</i>	1320-1327	1902-1909	21,174	1
<i>Müteferrik</i>	875-1295	1470-1882		
<i>Meşihat</i>	1025-1256	1616-1840		
<i>Tibbiye</i>	1126-1137	1616-1840		667
<i>Mühür Tatbik</i>	1148-1270	1735-1854		
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Baş Muhasebe</i>	918-1269	1512-1853		4,671

<i>Bab-ı Defteri Mukataat Hazinesi</i>	1238-1255	1823-1839		778
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Mevkufat Kalemî</i>	933-1255	1527-1839	4,382	
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Ceridesi Odası</i>	1213-1255	1798-1839		39
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Asakir-i Mansure</i>	1221-1261	1806-1845		2,544
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Yeniçeri Kalemî</i>	961-1241	1544-1826		1,499
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Piyade Mukabelesi</i>	963-1258	1556-1842		956
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Cizye Muhasebesi</i>	966-1264	1559-1848		855
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Büyük Ruznamçe Kalemî</i>	896-1254	1491-1838		743
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Anadolu Muhasebesi</i>	989-1257	1541-1841		844
<i>Bab-ı Defteri Bab-ı Seraskeri</i>	1244-1293	1828-17x876		318
<i>B. E. O. Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî</i>	1256-1262	1840-1846		1,181
<i>Bab-ı Asaî Defterhane-i Amire Defter Kataloğu</i>	857-1268	1453-1852		851

CATALOG REVISIONS AND INDEXES OPENED DURING 1989

<i>Irade Talifat</i>	1312-1325	1894-1907		
<i>Hususiye</i>	1310-1326	1892-1908	32,355	11
<i>Tel ve Posta Nezareti</i>	1310-1331	1892-1912		
<i>Maliyeden Müdever</i>	1211-1326	1796-1927		8,545

