

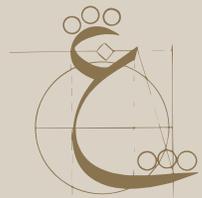
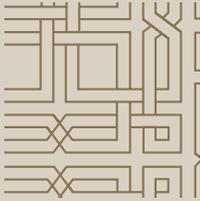


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06



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*“Kadim oldur ki
evvelin kimesne bilmeye”*

Kadim is that no one knows what came before.

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Bouquet, Olivier.

*Vie et mort d'un grand vizier:
Halil Hamid Pacha (1736-1785).
Biographie de l'Empire ottoman.*

PARIS: LES BELLES LETTRES,
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ANAİS MASSOT*

ABSTRACT

In this well-documented and illustrated masterpiece, Olivier Bouquet introduces the Ottoman world through the life of the Grand Vizier Halil Hamid Pacha (1736-1785), a “dignitary navigating between the pole of desire and the principle of totality”. After monographs on pashas and diplomats, Bouquet tackles the highest kul (servant) of the Ottoman sultan, the Grand vizier, in this new book.

Keywords: Ottoman State, Middle East, Everyday life, Political History, Microhistory, Material History, Ottoman Bureaucracy.

ÖZ

İyi araştırılıp resimlenen bu şaheserinde Olivier Bouquet, bize “bütünsellik prensibi ve arzu kutupları arasında yol bulan bir ileri gelen” olarak tanımladığı Halil Hamid Paşa'nın (1736-1785) hayatı üzerinden Osmanlı dünyasına bir giriş bahşediyor. Paşa ve diplomat monografilerinden sonra Bounquet, bu yeni kitapta, Osmanlı padişahının en yüksek rütbeli kulu (hizmetkarı) olan Sadrazam'ı ele alıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Devleti, Ortadoğu, Gündelik Hayat, Siyasi Tarih, Mikro Tarih, Maddi Tarih, Osmanlı Bürokrasisi



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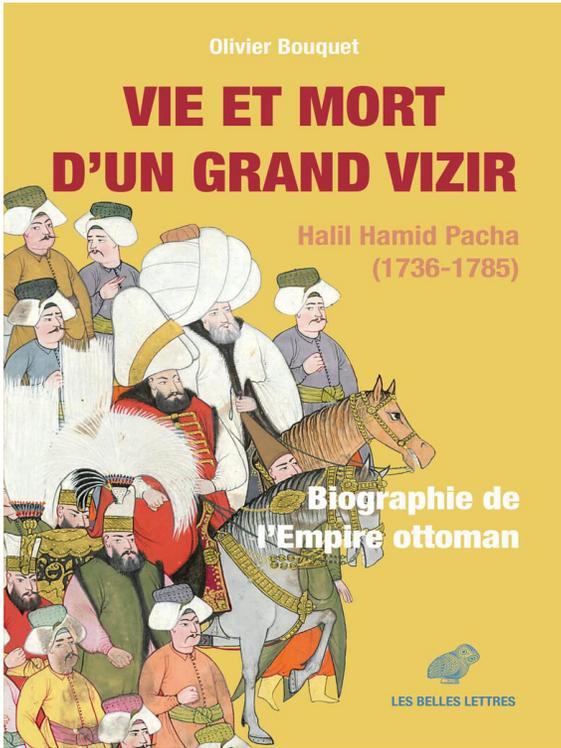
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The book comprises ten chapters with 382 photographs, illustrations, and eclectic quotes, introducing each chapter and establishing unexpected parallels with different periods and registers, and can be divided into three sections. The book's first section is the most unusual in that it outlines Bouquet's process of research, access to the archives, his encounter with gatekeepers, and the descendants of Halil Hamid Pacha, portraying the often-obliterated materiality of the archive. Through this narrative, he highlights the stakes and challenges of public genealogy, family archives, and foundations and their ability to challenge official narratives and assumptions regarding the transformation of the nature of the elite between the Ottoman and Republican periods. Showing great

sensibility to family psychology, Bouquet illustrates how the family's constant rediscovery of its lineage's past shapes its present. He points out Halil Hamid's complex legacy through the fate of buildings, waqfs, and statues. In addition, he highlights the appropriations or rejections of this legacy operated at the regional and national levels in the context of the Republic and the post-Kemalist period.

The second section, encompassing chapters 3, 4, and 5, depicts Halil Hamid's ascent to the highest position under the sultan and his life and works as a grand vizier. Contrary to most biographical works on Ottoman high dignitaries, Bouquet emphasizes the beginning of the Grand Vizier's career and describes the different departments where he was employed, with their practices, protocols, habits, rhythms, and materiality in detail. Later, he provides a complete image of the professional and intimate life of a Grand Vizier at the Sublime Porte. Visual reconstitutions of different offices, public and private rooms, textiles, utensils, tobacco, arms, and saddles point to the hierarchy of objects and users, the value and meanings attached to them, and how they convey status. This account provides the reader with a good grasp of the inner workings of the Ottoman bureaucracy, characterized by the strength of personal links and the valorization of skills. The contextualization and detailed outline of the decision-making process in the Sublime Porte and the production of imperial documents will greatly benefit Ottoman history students and scholars of Ottoman history

Throughout the book, prosopographical approaches allow the author to compare the path and life of Halil Hamid with other grand viziers to determine trends but also to question the

nature of the Ottoman elite, between meritocracy and clientelism, social mobility, and social reproduction. Examining the economic, military, and symbolic transformations he initiated when he was a Grand Vizier, Bouquet reveals Halil Hamid's role as a precursor of the early 19th-century reforms.

The author then turns to the institution of the waqf in dialogue with the stakes of the Grand Vizier's legacy and memory discussed in the first chapters. Chapter 5 examines the logic behind the Grand Vizier's establishment of waqf, from contributing to the imperial administration to inscribing himself into a specific space or province. He distinguishes reconquest waqfs, career waqfs, provincial administration waqfs, and family waqfs, helping us navigate through the complexities of the endowments, their various types, uses, processes, and transformations. Bouquet describes the intertwined nature of the sultanate, pious foundations, and the position of the grand vizier. Through these endowments, oscillating between public interest and personal appropriation, Halil Hamid shaped the city's urban landscape and contributed to inscribing the Sublime Porte into the space of Istanbul. According to Bouquet, "The waqf is a gradually formed aggregate, a symbolic and patrimonial projection of a political expansion by a Grand Vizier concerned with transforming his temporary wealth into eternal posterity, to the benefit of his family but also of men and women of the empire" (p. 220).

The book's last section, chapters 6 to 10, analyzes Halil Hamid's downfall, accompanying the former Grand Vizier through his revocation, exile, and confiscation of his property until his ultimate end. As with other aspects of Ottoman political culture, Bouquet challenges the analysis of the abrupt downfall experienced by many high officials in terms of "oriental despotism", instead revealing the internal logical of executions and confiscations, highlighting the precarious privilege of being entrusted with the heavy charge of grand vizier. How did this threat affect the choices and lives of high dignitaries? How did it shape their patrimonial strategies, the alliances they formed, the type of property they purchased, and their funding of waqfs? Bouquet takes us through cycles of promotion and demise, bi-factionalism, and public executions. He is careful not to frame the bi-factionalist characteristic of power struggles in the Ottoman administration as pitting reformers against conservatives, a tendency still persistent in Ottoman history. Chapter 7 reveals that one of the causes of Halil Hamid's demise was the reforms that he promulgated, which led to an influx of foreign experts and consultants. The accusation of collaboration with foreign interests is a recurrent theme of popular resentment and military mutinies, and it played a role in the assassination of the following sultan, Selim III (1761-1808). In retrospect, Sultan Abdulhamid I was wise to depose his Grand Vizier to safeguard his position.

Chapter 8 narrates the exile of the former Grand Vizier. Along the road to his unsure destination, Bouquet describes the materiality of the journey, passing through various geographies and simultaneously conveying the anticipation of new and clear orders from the sultan. The exile of high dignitaries is described as a strategy to ward off rebellions of revoked dignitaries and their networks. However, Bouquet highlights the temporary nature of exile, often leading to a new appointment in provincial administrations. Former grand viziers, for instance, were often appointed governors of a province. Thus, the concept of exile in the given period can be seen as a necessary step in the career of high dignitaries rather than representing a way of humiliation and political downfall.

What happened to Halil Hamid's property when he was dismissed from the position of Grand Vizier? Chapter 9 describes the procedure of confiscation of his estate and its internal logic: "Confiscation is a practice that is more ordinary than exceptional, frequent without being systematic, at the same time logic and arbitrary" (p. 378). As with the revocations and exiles of high dignitaries, Bouquet analyzes the justification of confiscation in the eyes of the sultan and the population. Confiscation prevents the creation of dynasties from accumulating power and wealth; it allows the sultan to recover the abundant wealth he has bestowed upon his grand vizier, to reimburse debts, or to fill the often-indebted treasury. The question of the separation between personal wealth and property belonging to a position has been a difficult question in the Ottoman Empire, not only for high dignitaries but for all types of *kul*. It was also a cause of tension within Ottoman Christian communities upon the death of a patriarch or bishop; it was unclear what belonged to the individual, family, or successor, leading to prolonged struggles. The necessity of confiscation justifies sudden revocations to prevent the flight of wealth. However, as Bouquet detects through an impressive work of cross-referencing documents on Halil Hamid's resources and expenses, there is always a way to circumvent confiscation to ensure the prosperity of the offspring. Following a pattern established throughout the book, the description of Halil Hamid's houses allows the author to describe the urban topology of the city of Istanbul, its architecture, and the interior of the 18th-century Ottoman houses.

The final chapter revolves around the mystery of the destiny of Halil Hamid. Since Chapter 6, Bouquet skillfully entertained an intrigue regarding the fate of the revoked Grand Vizier. Was he to be named governor-general of Mecca and Habesh and to lead the pilgrimage? Contradictory orders follow one another, and we await, together with Halil Hamid Pacha, any hint from Istanbul regarding the final destination of his exile. In an interesting detour taking us centuries ahead to Bouquet's fieldwork in Bozcaada, a small island in the Aegean Sea, we stumble upon Halil Hamid's tomb and thus understand that he never reached Mecca. Our curiosity cannot help but be aroused by the thoughts of a former Grand vizier being buried there. What happened to him? Did he spend the rest of his life on this small island, far from the luxuries of Istanbul? We will say no further to preserve the reader's experience of Bouquet's skilled narration and the discovery of the outcome of the intrigue in the epilogue.

Bouquet proposes a fresh approach to biographies and proves that even 'great men's history' can enlighten us on the everyday lives of Ottoman subjects. The book can at times be perceived as too detailed; however, most of the descriptions, be it of objects, costumes, neighborhoods, houses, rooms, etc., are given social, political, or cultural meanings, rendering them relevant for historians, but also to the larger public interested in the life of Ottoman subjects in the 18th century and the political culture of the Ottoman empire. One of the main strengths of the book is its ability to weave material history into other types of historiographies while simultaneously using the tools of narration. Bouquet's underlying reflection on the archival work of historians is another thread to follow. The author's effort to uncover the appropriations, rejections, or transformations of Halil Hamid's memory in different periods of the history of the Turkish Republic proposes a framework for the analysis of the political uses and misuses of the imperial past in contemporary Turkey. As such, this multifaceted and interdisciplinary work is unprecedented in Ottoman history and the material history of the Middle East. Undoubtedly, this work will encourage historians to revisit the biographical genre by embracing Bouquet's innovative and interdisciplinary historiographical method.