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SIR JAMES PORTER'S TURKEY: ITS HISTORY AND PROGRESS

*Erol GÜLÜŞTÜR**

In his *Memoir and Introduction*, Thomas Couser defines memoir as "literary face of a very common and fundamental human activity: the narration of our lives in our own terms" (2012: 9). In this manner, the author underlines our lives being brought out by our own words and the sentences we build. Additionally, Couser points out that memoir covers "human deep needs, desires and habitual practices" (2012: 9) because memoir is the picture of what humans live through. Couser also states that memoir includes "conversion narrative, confession, apology, testimony, and coming-of-age narrative" (2012: 9) all of which contain the life traces of the author. Another critic Thomas Larson regards memoir as a "living entity" (2007: 10) witnessing the phases of life experienced by the author. The best definition close to the book we have reviewed is by Julie Rak, she takes memoirs as texts being "merely about public personae or historic event" (2004: 308). Quoting from George Misch, she underlines that memoirs are not about a person, they do not take a person in their subject circles. They highlight memory whether it is recording or sketching (Rak 2004: 309). One of those who wrote about "public personae or historic event" is Sir James Porter, the English Ambassador to Istanbul, witnessing the historical progress of the Ottoman Empire for sixteen years. Born in Dublin, Ireland, Porter was sent to London where he learned Latin, French, and Italian which would assist him in diplomacy. His entrance into diplomacy was through Lord Cartered, working as the secretary of the state (Boogert 2019: 344). With the assistance and efforts of Cartered, Porter had posts on diplomatic missions only ending up as the ambassador to the Ottoman Empire's İstanbul from 1746 to 1762 (Boogert 2019: 344). After his post in the empire, he served in Brussels and was knighted in 1763 (Boogert 2019: 344). After he returned to England, he wrote two books on the Ottoman Empire. *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government, and Manners of the Turks* appeared in 1768 while *Turkey: Its History and Progress* was published by his grandson in 1854 (Boogert 2019: 344-345). They became massive textbooks on Turks and the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey: Its History and Progress consists of three parts and an appendix. The first part is a general outlook on the Turkish empire. The second part has four titles and is the shortest part of the book. The last part has eleven titles and stands as the longest part of the book. At the end of the book, the reader observes an appendix part of forty-one pages.

In the first part, Porter introduces the population, climate, and geographical structures of the empire, yet he generally focuses on the economic dimension and potential of the empire. He speaks of the empire's agricultural structure and products as well as the commercial condition of the empire, the countries with which the empire trades most, and the products exported and imported. In the section titled "General Description of the Turkish Empire", Porter remarks that the Turkish empire refers to all the countries under the Sultan. These countries stretch from Adriatic Gulf to the Black Sea. Porter divides Turkey into two: European Turkey and Turkey in Asia. European Turkey consists of various islands as well as Rumelia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thessaly, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Wallachia, and Moldavia having a total population of 15.500.000. Turkey in Asia comprises Asia Minor, Syria, Armenia and Mesopotamia. Porter states that

*Dr. Öğr. Üyes., Bingöl Üniversitesi, İngilizce Mütercim – Tercümanlık, Bingöl. erolgulustur@gmail.com / ORCID: 0000-0001-8100-7965.

religion in Turkey changes with regard to the empire's nations. Although the official state religion is Muhammadan, the number of Christians is more than Muhammadanism. Porter reveals that the Greek Christians and the Armenian Christians have a Patriarch, the Catholics and the Lutheran Protestants have religious authorities and churches and the Jews have a Chief Rabbi in Istanbul. In the first part, Porter touches on geographical structure as well. He underlines that despite being dependent on the region, the climate is mild on the whole. In terms of external appearance, the empire is mountainous, the number of plains is limited while rivers, seas, and lakes are abundant. Another title in the first part is "The Natural and Industrial Productions of Turkey". Porter indicates that natural productions like wheat, barley, oats, rice, saffron, pepper, and fruits are grown in different parts of the empire. Moreover, wine, pekmez, olives, cotton, tobacco, flowers, walnut wood, pistachios, sumach, gall apples, gum, and soda are crucial for the empire. He reminds us that rearing cattle is more popular than agriculture. The empire benefits from horses, cattle, buffalos, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, bees and fish. What's more, Porter points out that the mineral riches of Turkey are immense. However, people rarely benefit from the booty. The country has copper, iron, calamine, gold, quicksilver, metallic treasures, rock salt, liquid salt, sea salt, and coals in different regions. Blades, sabies, carpets, soaps, and paper are other industrial products in the empire. Porter highlights that trade of industrial productions is carried mainly in big cities and the government is not capable of promoting the industrial products. Watchmaking and jewellery are not exercised by the Turks but by the Greeks. Tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, joiners, and saddlers are not very popular in the country. Additionally, the Turks do not engage in architecture business, other minority groups perform it. Blades, sabies, carpets, soaps, and paper are other industrial products in the empire. In "The Mercantile Condition of Turkey", Porter strongly emphasizes that Istanbul is an attraction of merchandise thanks to its location anchoring the East and the West. He gives a record of the merchandise development of Istanbul. From Byzantines to Venetians, Istanbul remained a major merchandise city having a financial tie both with the East and the West. For its position, Istanbul had the chance to trade with many countries; for example, thanks to the Black Sea, Greek colonies were good partners, and Russia was a profitable country to trade with. The exports were gold, silver, silk, embroidered girdle, leather, fruits, and wines while the imports were composed of iron, building wood, pitch, honey, wax, hides, fish, corn, and furs. In "The Commerce of Turkey", Porter touches on the commercial relations of the empire. He underlines that the empire had big commercial relations with fourteen countries among which England, France, and Austria outnumbered others in export and import numbers. He also counts Istanbul, Selonichi, Adrianople, Larissa, Selimnia, Sophia, Scutari, Serajevo as commercial cities of the empire. The first part functions as the introduction of the empire. The reader is provided with the empire's economic perspective with a detailed and comprehensive outlook.

The second part of the book hints at the historical progress of the Ottoman Empire. It specifically sheds light on the progress of the Turks throughout history, the descent of the Turks, the establishment of the Ottoman Empire and its institutions, a general description of the military system, the conquest of Istanbul and its consequences, the emperors from the founding of the empire to the day of Porter, the decline of the empire, the reforms of Selim I, Selim II and Mahmud II. The second part begins with "From the Invasion of Europe to the Conquest of Constantinople, 1453". Taking from the Roman empire, Porter brings an account of the Turkish empire. He states that following Islamism, the name of the Turks was known. The Turks came from the Altai range and converted to Islam when Arabs took over Persia and Turkestan in the seventh century. The Turks came together under the empire of Sedjuk. After the empire was divided into several kingdoms, Osman - from whom the Turks got the name - founded the state. Under his reign along with Orchan, sumptuary laws, the army, the coinage were regulated. After Murad I took the post, he conquered from the Hellespont to the Balkans. Afterwards, Bajazet I came to power. Porter describes him as a man of injustice, tyranny, violence, and unrestrained. Following Bajazet I, Saliman, Muhammed the First, Murad II and Muhammed II mounted the throne, the latter conquering Istanbul in 1453. "From the Fall of Constantinople to the Treaty of Carlowitz, 1699" is the next title in the second part. According to Porter, the reign of Muhammed II means a lot. He observes that in Turkish history he is of great importance in defeating empires, kingdoms, and cities. Porter reveals him an emperor destroying non-Muslim churches, monasteries, art, and cultivation while forming and restoring Muslim's lives. After his death, Bajazet II took the throne and struggled with rebellions and wars by his sons. Selim I succeeded Bajazet II. Under his reign, he conquered Syria, Palestine, and Egypt through which he earned the title of Chalif. Soliman II "the Magnificent" remained on the throne for forty-

seven years. He took Belgrad, which was a target of the empire for a long time, two years after mounting the throne. Then Selim II became the head of the empire, he subjugated Cyprus. Murad III, his successor, clashed continuously with Austria and the empire declined power in his reign. Muhammed III, Achmed I, Murad IV, Muhammed IV, Soliman III, Ahmed II, Ahmed III were other names serving in the empire by 1730. In "From the Treaty of Carlowitz to the Reign of Sultan Mahmud II", Porter points out that Mahmut II continued reforms that Selim had commenced after coming to power at 23. Porter states that Mahmud II is one of the emperors who remained on the throne for a long time in Ottoman history fighting a number of rebellions. Porter stresses that his determination for the exercise of reforms was considerably outstanding although he ended up failures due to the national manners prevailing in the empire. This part provides extensive detail on Ottoman history. Porter exhibits the characteristics of a historian through the information he conveys and the writing style he uses. This part notably enlightens the reader about historical developments and cornerstones of the Ottoman Empire.

The third part of the book extensively speaks of the general description of the Turks in terms of their religion, justice system, manners, and customs. In the section titled "Mohammedan Religion", Porter touches on the Turks' commitment to Islam, and their views on Christians and minorities, but he mostly throws out his ideas about the prophet Mohammad. On Turks, he defines them as "*jealous, suspicious and vindictive*" (Porter 1854: 225). He also calls them vengeful and when the religion is in question, they become "*supercilious and morose*" (Porter 1854: 225). Then, Porter sheds light on Islam and makes iniquitous and incongruous comments on the prophet Mohammad. By characterizing it the Koran as an absurd book, he implies that it was not a book of divine religion, but some inventions produced by a human being. Porter makes harsh criticism of the Turks by means of the Koran. According to Porter, Turks exert "*violence, fraud, and rapine*" (Porter 1854: 227) on those who do not have faith in the holy book, the Koran. He implies that they are not tolerant of other religions and the right to life is overlooked. The pressure on non-Muslims decreases only if they have money. Porter notes that the Turks regard non-Muslims as "*giaour or infidel*" (Porter 1854: 228). Additionally, "*dumur or hog*" (Porter 1854: 228) is used by Turks as a pejorative reference to non-Muslims. In the section titled "Religious Government", Porter underlines that religious disputes are not observed among Turks and introduces the four sects -Bektaschi, Mevlevi, Kadri, and Seyah- in the empire. He gives information about their founders, teachings, and religious structures. In the next title, "Koran", Porter speaks of the Koran as a text which shows the interests of the prophet's family and his supporters. He does not regard the Koran as an original holy book, instead reveals it as a "*discordant, incoherent jumble of sentences*" (Porter 1854:252). In the section titled "Turkish Ministers", Porter mentions Turkish vizirs. The striking thing he states about vizirs is that they were concerned more about their interests, not the states; and in tough situations, their security was more prioritized than the state's. In the section titled "Turkish Administration of Justice," he reveals the privilege of the rich in the courts, the existence of bribery during the court process, Muslims' superiority to Christians in the intendment of law, and offensive punishment of the false testimony in the empire. In the section titled "Turkish Manners and Customs", he covers Turks' justice system, the relationship between men and women, marriages, entertainment, prohibitions, drinks, and opium. Porter highlights that the justice system runs smoothly, and the laws are perfect in the empire reminding that it is merit not lineage which is important for the qualified positions of the empire. Porter genuinely indicates Turks' respect for the elderly and men's kindness to the women giving the detail that men do not beat women. The reader learns that women cover their faces and their faces are visible only to their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In terms of marriage, Porter underlines that the marriage age for men is about 13-14 while 11-12 for women. He also mentions entertainment styles and the disgrace of gambling among Turks. He adds the point that wine drinking and the use of opium are observed in the empire. This part mostly depends on Porter's observations and personal ideas. We see his biased attitudes on some issues, especially on Turks' religion. Porter offers an elaborate and broad set of information about Turks' social and cultural lifestyles.

The appendix part includes his letters on leaving Istanbul, a letter from Prince Charles of Lorraine and Allan, Lord Bathurst, Porter's Memoirs of the Negotiation of 1741 between Austria and Prussia as well as renewed negotiations in 1742.

Turkey: Its History and Progress aims at uncovering Sir James Porter's - serving 15 years as an ambassador to Istanbul - knowledge, observations, and comments on the Ottoman Empire. In the book, we find unjust, exaggerated, and derogatory comments as well as objective, formal, and diplomatic information. He is observed to use an insolent and pejorative language specifically when he comments on Islam, the Koran, and prophet Mohammad. He takes a critical stance regarding Turks' approaches to the minorities as he claims they are oppressed and looked down on by natives. We may perceive a subjective and biased attitude in this regard. On the other hand, the issues of commerce, treaties, and international relations he discusses are based on objective, vindictive facts. In a broader sense, the book is a good source for the general description of the Ottoman Empire, especially its outlook on the 18th century. Today, we have a lot of sources on the Ottoman Empire; however, the information supplied first-hand is dramatically limited. As Sir James Porter lived and served in Istanbul as an ambassador, the book he penned is of great importance for the researchers. In the book, the contemporary researcher can obtain plenty of comprehensive and detailed information regarding historical data. The book is an accumulation of both subjective and objective assessments. The reader will benefit from the social, political, economic, and historical scope of the Ottoman Empire from the point of view of an English diplomat. In this manner, the book is a useful text for researchers of literature, history, and diplomacy.

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