



1898-1901 YILLARI ARASINDA MALUMAT GAZETESİNDE KULLANILAN İFADELER IŞIĞINDA II. ABDÜLHAMİT DÖNEMİ SİYASİ SEMBOLİZMİNE DAİR BİR İNCELEME

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Öz

Fransız Devrimi'nin etkilerinden en önemlisi olan ulus isyanları neticesinde, 19. yüzyılda, o güne kadar varlığını Tanrıdan aldığı güçle sürdüren monarşilerin varlığı tehdit edilir hale gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, söz konusu yüzyılda kimi monarklar, varlıklarını toplum nezdinde daha da güçlendirecek siyasal sembolizm araçlarına başvurmışlardır. Bu çalışmada, İngiltere, Rusya gibi monarşilerde de görülen bu tutumun izleri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son padişahlarından olan II. Abdülhamit'in, üç kıtayı kapsayan hükümler alanı çerçevesinde irdelenecektir. Çalışmanın kaynağı, dönemin önde gelen yayın organlarından olan Malumat gazetesinin 1898-1901 yıllarını kapsayacak şekilde incelendiği, arşiv bilgileridir. Bu arşiv kaynaklarında, II. Abdülhamit'in Pan-İslamcılık politikası başta olmak üzere, hilafet gibi kavramlarla da desteklenmiş olan siyasal görünürlüğüne dair veriler derlenmiş ve bu bağlamda, Malumat'ın 40 farklı gazete sayısında, II. Abdülhamit'in Osmanlı coğrafyasında inşa etmiş olduğu siyasal sembolizmin çeşitli izlerine rastlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, elde edilen bu bilgiler; söylem dili kapsamında sembolizm, sancak & arma gibi görsel araçlar kapsamında sembolizm ve resmi törenler çerçevesinde hayat bulan sembolizm olarak üç temel başlık altında ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal sembolizm, Monarşi, II. Abdülhamit, Sembolizm, Basın.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SYMBOLISM OF THE PERIOD OF ABDULHAMID II IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXPRESSIONS USED IN THE MALUMAT NEWSPAPER BETWEEN 1898-1901

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Abstract

As a result of the national rebellions, which were the most important effects of the French Revolution, the existence of monarchies that had continued their existence with the power they received from God until that day, came under threat in the 19th century. In this context, some monarchs in the said century resorted to political symbolism tools that would further strengthen their existence in the eyes of society. In this study, the traces of this attitude, which was also seen in monarchies such as England and Russia, will be examined within the framework of the sovereignty area of Abdulhamid II, one of the last sultans of the Ottoman Empire, covering three continents. The source of the study is the archive information of the Malumat newspaper, one of the leading publications of the period, which was examined in a way that covers the years 1898-1901. In these archive sources, data on the political visibility of Abdülhamit II, supported by concepts such as the caliphate, especially the Pan-Islamist policy, were compiled and in this context, various traces of the political symbolism constructed by Abdülhamit II in the Ottoman geography were encountered in 40 different newspaper issues of Malumat. In this context, these information obtained will be discussed under three main headings: symbolism within the context of discourse language, symbolism within the context of visual tools such as flags and coats of arms, and symbolism coming to life within the framework of official ceremonies.

Keywords: Political symbolism, Monarchy, Abdulhamid II, Symbolism, Press.

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1. Introduction

Symbols, which exist in every area of human life, represent complex forms with their simple stances. While a national flag represents the place of that nation in international politics, a religious symbol describes the beliefs of that religion in a holistic sense. In political science, symbols have been used at every stage to carry ideological ideas, a manager's message and many other political elements. Thus, politicians have found the opportunity to manage the way people in their target audience see the world through the images created (Gill, 2018: 429). When it comes to political symbolism, it is about how various symbols affect political identities and preferences (Theiler, 2017: 633). In this context, political symbolism, which is intertwined with many fields in political science, is a subject that includes many variables such as the ideology of the politician who uses these symbols, the society in which the symbols are used, and the geography in which this society lives. In this complex and multifaceted form, when political symbolism for each era, community, event, and the conditions of the period are considered, it provides important information about the field in question.

The Enlightenment period, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution that took place in Europe from the 16th century onwards, brought about the introduction of a new political system to the entire world, especially to Western states. The existence of monarchies that ruled different peoples happily for centuries was questioned with the introduction of concepts such as nation, homeland and democracy into human life, and in this context monarchs used the opportunities of their time to solidify their existence over their people. Based on this purpose, the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, as well as other monarchs of the period such as Queen Victoria of England, King Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas of Russia, used state ceremonies in a way that would reinforce their existence on a symbolic level and also sought to strengthen their political sovereignty around the image of the sacred ruler who was constantly commemorated through various rituals (Hobsbawm, 2006: 122). Victoria, who was the ruler of England in the late 1860s, although she rarely appeared in public (The Royal Household, 2025), was instrumental in Britain being known as the empire on which the sun never sets when her term ended. She continued to build her political image both in Britain and in leading colonies such as India in a way that would ensure the permanence of her existence as queen during the rapidly ongoing colonization activities. This was achieved through expressions such as the Long Live Queen, which were part of the imperial culture, coins bearing her image and the inclusion of Victorian expressions in new service buildings such as stations, courthouses, and

churches built by engineers from England in the colonies. The Victoria Terminus Railway Station in Mumbai, India (Unesco, 2025) and the Victoria Memorial Building in Calcutta (Levene, Britannica, 2025) are some of the most famous examples of this political symbolism, which is also called Victorian style architecture.

In addition, the monarchs of this period attached great importance to the representation of the king/queen in ceremonies and used official ceremonies as an important area of propaganda. The official ceremonies of Abdulhamid II, that are the subject of this article and in which his visual/verbal presence was constantly dominant, or Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897 (The London Gazette, 1898: No, 26947) can be given as examples of such grand celebrations. Another example of these magnificent areas of political symbolism is the celebrations of the third century, designed with great magnificence by the Romanov Dynasty in Russia in 1913 (Presidential Library of Russia, 2025). Tsar Nicholas II, who aimed to establish a strong bond with his people, aimed to give permanence to his political image in his country around the image of a "people's tsar epic". Based on this idea, he built an atmosphere in which only he was at the center during ceremonies and other symbols of the state were kept in the background (Figes, 2014: 6-9). When the period of Abdulhamid II is examined in the Ottoman Empire, which was undoubtedly one of the states most affected by this transformation, it will be seen that the sultan similarly constructed a political symbolism of his own. The most important reason for this was that the Sultan, who did not prefer to leave the palace, had to somehow symbolize his presence in the minds of the people of his empire, which encompassed three continents. Indeed, it will be seen that the language that the Sultan constructed in this context, who sought ways to establish direct connections with his people within the complex political conditions of the period, was reflected in the newspapers, which were the publishing technology of the period.

In this context, it is known that not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in other monarchies of the period, the press was used to create political public opinion on various issues and to create an ideology in the minds of the people. In similar years, the British monarchy, which made colonialism a state policy and continued its expansionist activities within the scope of the Eastern Question, transformed this issue into an issue that aroused social interest through the press in order to receive support from its own people on this issue (The Times, 1876: 10). During this process, the Emperor of the Ottoman State, Abdulhamid II, with the influence of the difficult diplomatic conditions of the country and the caliphate he was the patron of, tried to implement the policy of keeping all nations under the Ottoman roof in the strictest manner, focusing on the policy of Islamic unity. In this context, the publications of the period are sources that

should be examined in terms of showing first-hand the image of Abdulhamid II in the minds of the society, both within the scope of the symbolic language that Abdulhamid II tried to construct and the equivalent of this language among the people. In this study, the data in the Malumat newspaper, which was an important publication during the reign of Abdulhamid II, will be compiled within a certain period of time, and the political symbolism with which the sultan was created will be tried to be conveyed within a certain framework.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study, which examines both the sultan-centered political symbolism created by the palace during the reign of Abdülhamit and the response of this symbolism among the people, was created based on the “provincial letters” published between 1894-1904 in nearly five hundred different issues of Malumat, one of the leading publications of the period. These letters, which include information directly from reporters and the people about the Ottoman provinces, from public works to education, from social life to bureaucracy, are quite significant historical documents in terms of understanding the reality of the period. In this context, the issues of this newspaper published in Ottoman Turkish were scanned and the data obtained as a result of examining nearly a thousand different letters sent from different provinces of the Empire between 1898 and 1901 were classified. In order to reveal how Abdulhamid II, who resided in his palace most of his time, was created in the Ottoman geography with a symbolic language and how he kept his political image alive, these data were examined in three classes as discourse language, visual symbols and images in official ceremonies. In this article, which is based entirely on concrete archive information, not all the data obtained during the scanning, but only certain ones were included. Thus, it was tried to reveal in the clearest and most evidence-based way what kind of imaginary world the sultan established as a monarch and how this was responded to by his people.

3. THE PERIOD OF ABDULHAMID II AND POLITICAL SYMBOLISM

After the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution in Europe, the modern political system established in the West had its reflections in other states, and existing empires had to adapt to the new political understanding evolving around the world in various contexts. During this period, the administrative power of monarchies that had maintained an unshakable authority over their people for centuries became shaky, and after the state accepted the socio-economic development of the West for the first time during the reign of Selim III in the Ottoman Empire, a new reform process began from the reign of Mahmud II (Beydilli, 2003: 354). After the first innovative

policies, approximately 50 years later, Abdulhamid II ascended to the throne and during his reign, Western-centered modernization became widespread in many levels of state and social life. In this context, although he did not go beyond the Yıldız Palace within the scope of his own political policy (Afyoncu, 2018), this subjective policy of Abdulhamid II, who created a unique political symbolism language in the vast lands of the Ottoman Empire, is worth examining as a privileged example of the political influence built on the people in the monarchies of the period.

Indeed, in other monarchies of the period, the possibilities of political symbolism were also used, and for example, in England and Germany in similar years, magnificent ceremonies attended by the queen or the king were used to strengthen political representation in the eyes of the people (Hobsbawm, 2006: 1-2). In the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Abdulhamid II, for the first time in history, the idea of making the sultan visible everywhere in the state became quite prominent and the state's authority was strengthened in this way. Indeed, the tradition of putting the sultan's portrait in government offices, one of the most important tools of political symbolism, first began with Mahmud II, who was a pioneer in the modernization of the state, when he hung his portrait in his new clothes in government offices after the clothing revolution he carried out (Portraits from the Empire, 2005: 16). The time when the modernization movement, which continued at a great pace against the possibility of the collapse of the state, was applied more widely to every corner of the Empire (Sakaoğlu, 2002: 529) was during the reign of the 34th Sultan, Abdulhamid II (Quataert, 2004: 891). The importance that the sultan, like other monarchs of the period, gave to having his political representation in every corner of the Ottoman lands can be followed in the leading publications of the period.

In this period, when newspapers, which were the most effective media tools of the era, played an important role in the spread of political symbolism, the *Malumat* newspaper, which had a wide readership with its subscription system spread throughout the empire, stands out as a publication organ that should be investigated with the data it contained about the Sultan. First published in 1894 by Mehmet Fuat and Artin Asaduryan, 48 issues of the newspaper were published, and names such as Hüseyin Daniş, Tevfik Fikret, İsmail Safa, and Süleyman Nazif wrote articles and poems (Özen, Kuzucu, 2017: 117-38). Later, the newspaper was taken over by Mehmet Tahir, whom Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz stated that “Abdulhamid had secretly raised” (Tokgöz, 1930: 81), and began to be published in two different formats in Istanbul, daily and weekly (*Kaloğulları*, 2008). In terms of content, it became a publication organ that included articles focused on providing information on social life, medical information, news for women, music, education and many other subjects, and published articles from every

corner of the Ottoman geography. Unlike other magazines of the period, the newspaper also featured plenty of sharing of photographs and pictures, and visuals were prepared by the famous photographers of the period, Abdullah Efendi and Painter Vefiyadis, and the appeal to a wide readership was continued visually by adding explanations in three languages, Turkish, Arabic and French, under the photographs (Özen, Kuzucu, 2017).

The newspaper content included various current news from both the Ottoman Empire and the world, and also included evaluations of local and foreign literature, thus contributing to the development of new types of writing. One of the leading writers in this period of the newspaper was Ahmet Rasim, who wrote The City Letters (Şehir Mektupları), in which he described daily life in Istanbul (Aktaş, 1989: 117-9). In fact, in addition to these letters, the main research material of this article, the Provincial Letters (Taşra Mektupları), which included letters sent by civil and bureaucratic citizens from all over the Ottoman geography outside of Istanbul, were also published at the same time. In addition, the discussions that initiated the Servet-i Fünûn period, which enabled Turkish literature to gain a European quality in terms of content and technique, were continued in Malumat and Servet-i Fünûn newspapers. In the Malumat newspaper, which was published for approximately ten years during the reign of Abdülhamid II, it is seen that letters from various regions of the Empire were included, especially in the four-year period between 1898-1901. In these letters, as a continuation of the traditional and honorific style of expression used for the sultan, Abdülhamid II was both remembered with a special font and within the framework of a definition specific to him. Other important information included in the letters and the subject of this article are the political symbolism that Abdülhamid II tried to create in the Ottoman geography due to the political atmosphere of the period and similar to other contemporary monarchs, and clues about how the sultan existed in the public mind.

3.1. Symbolism of Abdulhamid II in the Context of the Language of Discourse

When the political policy of Abdulhamid II is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is the priority he gave to the understanding of Islamic unity in state politics. The sultan, who held the title of not only the ruler of the people in the Empire but also the caliph of the entire Islamic world, wanted to use this title as a positive carrier for the survival of the state in a period when national rebellions were increasing and with this understanding, he tried to design a political attitude that would include all Muslims. This approach, which emerged after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (Yapp & Shaw, 2025), became the most important political policy of the state during the reign of Abdulhamid II and especially the divisive activities carried out by the European states on the Ottoman Empire within the scope of the Eastern Question, the sultan tried to protect the integrity of the state by holding on to this policy.

When examining the statements in the *Malumat* newspaper in the context of the political symbolism of the period of Abdulhamid II, this is of course the first thing that stands out, but in the letters written by newspaper reporters and the public, it is seen that this title of the Sultan is frequently mentioned and with great praise. His being the deputy of the Prophet is explained in a letter sent from Jeddah (*Malumat*, No: 570; The original expression is: “The sultan who is the just representative of his beloved”), while in an article written from Balıkesir, his being a famous caliph is emphasized (*Malumat*, No: 1482; The original expression is: “the great caliph”). Added to these, the statements that Abdulhamid II led millions of Muslims with this position and the Ottomans were honored with this, are seen in a letter from Erzincan (*Malumat*, No: 756).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(*Malumat*, No. 756, July 1, 1899)

“Dünyada sâye-i Rabb-i lem-yezel olan, makâm-ı hilâfet-ittisâm-ı vücûd-ı bihbûd-ı şehriyârîleriyle tezyin eden, milyonlarca mümin ve muvahhidi zîr-i himâye-i adâletinde yaşatan böyle bir halife-i a’zam ve akdesin rıza-yı hümayûnlarını tahsil etmekten büyük ne şeref tasavvur olunabilir? Bu, öyle bir şeref ki insanın dünyasını, ukbâsını ma’mur eder. Hemen hazret-i feyyâz-ı mutlak hâmi-i mülk ve millet, nâşir-i envâr-ı adl ü merhamet olan pâdişâhımız {Abdülhamit} Han-ı gâzi ve âdil efendimiz hazretlerinin rızâ-yı ulviyyet-i irtidâ-yı hümayûnlarına tevfik-i hareketle mülk ve milletin ümran ve saadetine sa’y eden vüzerâ-yı a’zamını, me’murîn-i hamiyet-ittisâmını mânen ve maddeten tevfikat-ı ilâhiyyesine mazhar eylesin. Amin”

[What greater honor can be conceived than to gain the pleasure of such a great caliph and sultan who is the help of our Lord, who is the only one in the world, who adorns himself with the rank of caliphate, who is connected to the existence of the city of the Lord, who keeps millions of believers and monotheists under his protection of justice? This is such an honor that it makes man’s world and afterlife flourish. Immediately, our Sultan {Abdulhamid}, the absolute effulgence of the protector of property and nation, the publisher of the lights of justice and mercy, may Allah grant him the pleasure of the sublime apostasy of the sultans May He grant His great minister, who works for the welfare and happiness of the state and nation, and the patriotic officers, spiritually and materially, divine favor. Amen]

In this context, in addition to the explicit use of the title of caliph, it is seen that the attributes such as piety, compassion and protection that would come with this title are also emphasized. The statements that he was an earthly caliph who was devoted to the rules of Islam are included in two separate letters from Erzincan and Mosul. In these letters, both his devotion to religion and his fairness are emphasized (*Malumat*, No: 772;

The original expression is: “With the approval of the high imperial edict of our Master, the Sultan of Religion and the City of Justice, the glorious, powerful, and great warrior {Abdulhamid} Khan-i Sani). A reporter mentioned the sultan's superior compassion while talking about the aid provided after a disaster in Bursa (Malumat, No: 1158; The original expression is: “The grace and favor of the royal courtesans) and another reporter emphasized the sultan's unlimited aid while observing the exams of Lüleburgaz Middle School (Malumat, No: 794).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 794, August 8, 1899)

“Sevgili pâdişâhımızın uluvv-i himmeti, eb-i erham ve eşfâkımızın nâ-mahdud inâyeti, bizi günden güne tarik-i refah ve saadette hatve-endâz ı terakki ettirmektedir. Mini mini çocukların etvâr-ı mâsumânelerini ve irad olunan es'ileye latif ve tabii bir tavırla cevap verişlerini temaşa ederken cümlemizin gözleri sirişk-i meserretle dolu olarak lisanımız: Sevgili pâdişâhımızın, mehâbetlü kumandan efendimizin, tevâfûr-i ömr ü âfiyetleri, ezdiyâd-ı şekve ve şanları da'vatını tekrar ediyordu.”

[The great endeavor of our beloved sultan, the limitless favor of our compassionate and devoted companions, makes us advance day by day on the path of prosperity and happiness. While watching the innocent behavior of the tiny children and their gentle and natural response to the requests made, our eyes were filled with joy and our tongues: The life and health of our beloved sultan, our honorable commander, the prayers of his honor and glory were repeated]

Another important reflection of the perception that the sultan built on Ottoman lands is that he was described as the “sole protector” of the inhabitants of the empire. Again, these adjectives show the investment that Abdulhamid II made in the image of the sultan who would keep the state together in the face of national rebellions. In a letter written from Van and describing the military activities there, the sultan was referred to as “Our Sultan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Holy Sanctuaries, our beloved father, the Great Abdulhamid Khan Sani”, and in a piece of news from Syros, it was emphasized that Abdulhamid both protected and trained his soldiers (Malumat, No: 762). The image of the sultan protecting his people like a father is seen in another letter from Van, in the expression “long live our dear father” (Malumat, No: 538). In addition to the expressions of praise, the existence of a people who prayed for their sultan at every opportunity is also seen, and in this context, in a letter from Trabzon, it is stated that soldiers sang a song praising the sultan during entertainment (Malumat, No: 827), and in a letter sent from Erzincan, it is stated that the officer who prayed after the end of the exam period at school made the students sing the Hamidi March (Malumat, No: 1149).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:
(Malumat, No. 1149, July 29, 1900)

“Talebeden Mustafa Ağazade Rıza Efendi'nin mahâmid-i seniyye-i cenâb-ı pâdişâhiyi mutazammın kıraat ettiği nutuk ile ibtidâ eyleyen imtihan üç buçuk saat sürmüş ve hitâmını müteakip fekâhetlü Müftü Efendi tarafından bir duâ-yı belîğ ve bilâhare mini mini yavrucakları tarafından marş-ı Hamîdî kıraatiyle cümle tarafından amin (ve pâdişâhım çok yaşa) duaları ref'-i bar-gâh-ı uhdiyyet kılınmıştır.”

[The exam, which began with a speech recited by the student Mustafa Ağazade Rıza Effendi, who was a meticulous speaker of the majesty of the sultan, lasted three and a half hours and after it was over, an eloquent prayer was recited by the wise Mufti Efendi and then, with the recitation of the Hamidi march by his little children, the prayers of amen (and long live my sultan) were made by all of them, thus granting salvation to the ummah]

In these letters, it is observed that the people found solace in remembering their sultan when they were relieved from the negative situations they experienced, and it is reported that the people came to the government building and prayed for their sultan after a judicial case in Samsun (Malumat, No: 1175). In Erzincan, it can be seen that Abdulhamid's power was clearly emphasized due to the investments made in the region (Malumat, No: 772; The original expression is: “a model of grace and perfection of innocence, a sultan devoted to his religion, the just, majestic, powerful, great warrior {Abdulhamid} Khan-i Sani our lord his excellency”). It can be seen that the sultan was not forgotten in the issues related to the immigrants, which were one of the most important political issues of the period, and it is said that the Cretan immigrants, who were brought to Izmir by the state's special ferry, read prayers to the sultan that were "mandatory and became their duty" after they were settled in their houses (Malumat, No: 1518).

These long expressions of praise, which reflect the deep respect shown to Abdulhamid II as a sultan, are a continuation of the use of "elkab" in the Ottoman state tradition, which expresses respect for the sultan. It is known that, starting with Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the qualifications to be used for the sultan were specifically stated in the law code and that importance was given to this use in the language of diplomacy (Kütükoğlu, 1995: 51). How this tradition was continued for the last period of the Ottoman sultans can be observed most clearly in Takvim-i Vekayi, the official publication organ of the state. When the period from Mahmud II, the time that the modern state order and the official newspaper began to be published (Takvim-i Vekayi, No. 2, 1831), to the last sultan Mehmet Vahdeddin (Takvim-i Vekayi, No. 3284, 1918) is

considered, it is seen that various expressions of praise were used for each sultan. However, with the influence of the parliamentary system after the Constitutional Monarchy and the era of Abdulhamid II, the way in which the sultans were commemorated with long sentences of respect in the official newspaper, was reduced to the minimum level.

In the provincial letters that are the subject of this article, it is seen that the political symbolism that Abdulhamid II built and had a significant response among his people, was not limited to the expressions of praise directed only to him. Indeed, the sultan always kept his presence alive in people's minds visually and auditorily with symbols such as prayers made for him in daily life and ceremonies, the naming of the buildings he had built in every corner of the provinces with the name of Hamidi, and flags bearing his name & the prayer "Long live my sultan", as will be given as examples in this study. This situation shows that Abdulhamid II planned how he would exist in the eyes of his people with a symbolic thought as a political leader and ensured that the representation of his name remained permanent in the Ottoman lands with a wide geography.

3.2. Symbolism of Abdulhamid II in the Framework of Visual Symbols

The symbolic language that Abdulhamid II used to emphasize his sovereignty within his own empire was supported not only by verbal elements but also by visual means. Due to the complex political atmosphere of his time, the sultan, who resided in the Yıldız Palace and rarely went outside the palace, had the opportunity to have closer contact with the public by giving his name to the architectural structures he had built and ensured that these structures were recorded through photography, one of the most important technological elements of the period. Indeed, in the Yıldız Palace, which now serves as a museum, these images are presented to visitors with the expression “the most comprehensive imperial photographic archive of the period” (Republic of Türkiye, Head of Communications, 2020). Some of these structures bearing the sultan’s name are the Edirne Hamidiye Junior High School, Hamidiye Mosque (Malumat, No: 1305), the İzmir Hamidiye Industrial School, the Çankırı Hamidiye Gureba Hospital (Malumat, No: 632) and the Hamidiye Bazaar in Syria (Malumat, No: 1335).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 1335, February 4, 1901)

“Hamîdiye Çarşısı vilâyât-ı sâire-i şâhânede emsâline pek az tesâdüf olunur muntazam çarşılarıdır ve üzeri de kapalıdır. Hah şimdi çamursuz bir yer bulduk diyeceksiniz değil mi merak etmeyin efendim burasını da çarşığı süpürmek için evvela su döken herifler tıpkı sokaklara benzetiyorlar ya o canım çarşının o binlerce liralarla meydana gelen çarşının zeminini görseniz cidden teessüf etmemek elden gelmez.

Yapıldığından beri tesviye-i türâbiye yüzü görmemiş ki, hemen her tarafı setlerle inişlerle çıkışlarla toprak yığınlarıyla dolu.”

[Hamidiye Bazaar is one of the most regular bazaars that you can rarely find its equivalent in other magnificent provinces, and it is also covered. Now you will say, ‘We found a place without mud, don’t worry, sir. The guys who pour water on this place to sweep it first make it look like the streets. If you saw the ground of that lovely bazaar, which was built with thousands of liras, you would be really sorry. It has never been leveled since it was built, and almost all of it is full of mounds of soil with ramps, ups and downs]

In addition, the flags and banners hung in various areas of the empire stand out as examples of visual symbolism used to reinforce the order belonging to Abdulhamid. It is stated in the letters that paintings with the phrase “Long live my Sultan” were hung on the newly built streets and in the houses of the people, and it is stated in two separate articles that some houses in İzmit, Hamidiye Street here (Malumat, No: 821) and Manastır Hamidiye Street were decorated in this vein (Malumat, No: 819; The original expression is: “Hamidiye Street was built perfectly”). The fact that banners representing Abdulhamid’s presence were mentioned in daily life and especially in ceremonies held in schools shows the sultan’s connection with the young Ottoman society and the perception he wanted to create in their minds. In this context, it is narrated that the end-of-year ceremonies of Edirne Mekteb-i İdâdî-i Mülkîsi (Edirne Civil High School) (Malumat, No: 1146; in the letter, it is stated that the interior and exterior of the school were decorated with Ottoman banners with victory slogans) and İzmir Ödemiş Rüşdî Mektebi (İzmir High School) (Malumat, No: 776) were decorated with signs depicting Ottoman victories and reading “Long live my Sultan”. A reporter writing from Thessaloniki expressed his pleasure at the presence of the Ottoman flag in the town (Malumat, No: 783), while the presence of similar flags at the opening of a barracks in Van is described with similar descriptive expressions (Malumat, No: 551).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 551, 5 Kânun-ı Evvel 1898)

“Müteâkiban daha bu gibi nice nice âsâr-ı ümrâna Memâlik-i Vesia-yı Şâhâne’nin cilde-gâh olması duasını tekrar ile umûm tarafından üç defa: “Pâdişâhım çok yaşa” vürûd-ı icâbet-nümûdu isâl-i kabul-gâh-ı lem-yazel kılınmış, o dakikada kışlayı hümayyûn kapısı üzerine keşide edilip de temevvüc-nümâ-yı ihtişam olan râyet-i Osmânî umum gönülleri müstağrak-ı şevk ve neşat eylemiştir. Mülk ve milletin izdiyâd-ı şevket ve mehâbetine hâdim olan asdikâ-yı şahaneyi cenâb-ı mevlâ-yı müteal iki cihanda nâil-i amal buyursun.”

[Following this, the prayer for the manifestation of the Majestic Lands to attain many more monuments was repeated three times by everyone: “Long live my Sultan!” The prayer of acceptance and acceptance was made the place of eternal peace, and at that moment it was laid out on the door of the imperial barracks, and the Ottoman spirit, which was a display of splendor, filled all hearts with joy and excitement. May the Almighty God grant the magnificent servant, who served the confluence of the wealth and the nation, the achievement of his deeds in both worlds]

Attaching great importance to the concept of loyalty in his relations with his society, Abdulhamid II also benefited from the presentation of coats of arms, which had been a part of the Ottoman tradition since the reign of Mahmud II (Deringil, 2007: 43), and it is seen that he used this opportunity to symbolize his existence in the minds of his people. In this context, Abdulhamid II aimed to bind his people more to him and establish a special relationship of loyalty by presenting them with special gifts on the occasion of various events (Hanioglu, 2008:125). In this context, it is stated in the letters that the sultan's coat of arms or medal was presented to successful people, and in a news report from Erzincan, it is mentioned that the "second mecidiye medal" given to a person named Tahir Pasha (Malumat, No: 649; The original expression is: “... decorated with the second Medjidie medal for his loyalty”). Non-Muslim people were also tried to be made loyal to the sultan through this symbolic language, for example, in a news report sent from Thessaloniki, a medal was sent to be hung in the workplace of Monsieur Adolf Viks by Abdulhamid II. It is stated that a coat of arms belonging to Abdulhamid was prepared and the details of the ceremony to be held for this were explained. In the speech made by this person in Turkish, both his praise of the sultan and his emphasis on Ottoman sovereignty (Malumat, No: 626) stand before us as an important reflection of the political symbolism that was attempted to be constructed through coats of arms.

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 626, February 21, 1899)

“Bir gûnâ liyâkat ve istihkâkım olmadığı halde Osmanlıların büyük padişahı ve ihsan-ı bî-pâyânı cümle hakkında nâ-mütenâhî gazi <Sultan Abdülhamit Han-ı Sânî> Hazretleri'nin şâyân buyurulduğum eltâf-ı mâlâ-nihâye ve inâyât-ı mütevelliyelerine zamimeten bu defa arma-i hümayûnlarının dahî müdür-i umumisi bulunduğum Herzog kumpanyası ticaretgahına ta'lik edilmesine müsaade-i mekarim-âde-i hilâfet-penâhîleri erzanıyla da mazhar-ı taltif-i âli buyurulmaklığım madamü'l-hayat muceb-i minnetdâri olup bu mazhariyetten dolayı bilhassa zât-ı akdes-i hazret-i cihanbânîlerine arz-ı levâzım-ı minnetdârî ederim ve bu lütf-i celilin tebriği vesilesiyle şu resm-i bihinde hâzır bulunan zevât-ı kirâma da teşekkürler ederim.”

[Although I have no merit or entitlement, I am honored by the endless favors and benefactions of the great sultan of the Ottomans and the unparalleled warrior <Sultan Abdulhamid Khan II>, whose generosity is invaluable to me. In addition to the endless favors and generosity of his excellency, this time I have been granted the permission to transfer the imperial emblems to the Herzog company's trading office, of which I am the general manager, with the permission of the honorary titles of the caliphate and the rewards of my life. I am especially grateful to him for this honor. I gratefully present my offerings to the patrons of the world's sanctuary and I would also like to thank the honorable guests present here on the occasion of this congratulations of this noble favor]

3.3. Symbolism of Abdulhamid II in the Context of Official Ceremonies

Official ceremonial performances, which are an important feature of 19th century monarchies, served to make the monarchic order an image in the minds of every individual. Using these opportunities of political symbolism in the current century, Abdulhamid II kept his personal portrait in the minds of the people there with the prayers made to him at every ceremony. Indeed, these ceremonial stages, which were instrumental in the consolidation of the sultan's power, were discussed in the letters we examined within the framework of very different regions and ceremonies. The fact that prayers were made to the sultan and loyalty was expressed to him in different letters from many regions of the empire is important evidence of the symbolic language whose existence is tried to be revealed in this study. It is seen that during the reign of Abdulhamid II, the concept of official ceremony was incorporated into many areas of daily life; ceremonies were held in many different programs from the opening of state institutions to the appointment of new bureaucrats, from the celebration of educational activities to the Mevlevi ceremony, and his existence was virtually fixed by making long prayers to the sultan.

In the context of ceremonies related to bureaucratic events, it is narrated that the prayer “Long live the sultan” was recited during the ceremony of sending off nine hundred soldiers in Thessaloniki (Malumat, No: 1167), that a similar prayer ceremony was held during the training of the soldiers in Gelibolu (Malumat, No: 734) and during the welcoming ceremony of Amasya Governor Kemal Bey who arrived in the region in Merzifon (Malumat, No: 1505). Other incidents in which the sultan was commemorated with prayers are the opening ceremony of the Telegraph and Postal Administration branch in Kirkuk (Malumat, No: 1385), the ceremony of erecting telegraph poles in Yemen (Malumat, No: 1507) and the ceremony held for the newly built telegraph office in Bursa (Malumat, No: 771).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 1385, March 26, 1901)

“...Seyyit Hüseyin Samih Efendi taraflarından dahi bir nutk-ı beliğ irâdıyla duâyı füzûnî-i ömr ü ikbâl-i hazret-i kiti-sitânı ref-i bar-gâh-i cenâb-ı radd-i müteall kılınmış ve muzika bandosu dahi üç defa (Pâdişâhım çok yaşa) şartıyla hâzirun amin-hân olarak müteâkiban kurbanlar ve şerbetler içilerek resm-i küşâda nihâyet verilmiş ...”

[...A prayer for the long life and fortune of our great sovereign was made by Seyyid Hüseyin Samih Effendi with an eloquent speech, and the music band also sang three times with the condition of (Long live my Sultan) and the attendees said amin, and the ceremony was concluded with the sacrifices and sorbets...]

In the letters, where it is seen that events concerning daily life were also carried out in an official ceremonial atmosphere, it is narrated that ceremonies were held by reciting various prayers for the sultan at the opening of a spa in Skopje, the income of which would be donated to the Industrial School (Malumat, No: 871), at the opening of a cocoon race in Thessaloniki (Malumat, No: 577) and at a Mevlevihane ceremony in Eskişehir (Malumat, No: 1491).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 577, 31 Kânun-ı Evvel 1898)

“Ba'dehû mumâ-ileyh Torkomyan Efendi tarafından hâmi-i ilm ve ma'rifet ve muhyi-i ehl-i san'at olan şehriyâr-ı âli-tebar efendimizin ol babda ibzal buyurdıkları es-saf-ı teşvik-kârâneneden bahisle böcekçiliğin fevâid ve esbab-ı terakkisi hakkında güzel bir nutuk irâd etmesini müteâkip mahkeme-i şer'iyye ketebesinden mekremetlü Hasan Kaşif Efendi tarafından da'vat-ı mahsûsa-i hazret-i tac-dâr-ı a'zamiyi mutazammın bir dua âverde-i zebân-ı ihlas intimâ kılınarak hitâmında muzika resm-i selâmı icra etmesiyle “Pâdişâhım çok yaşa” zemzemesi umum tarafından ref-i bar-gâh-ı hüda kılınmış ve bu suretle resm-i mezkûra hüsn-i hitam verilmiştir.”

[Then by Torkomyan Efendi; mentioning the encouragement and advice that our Lord, the patron of knowledge and wisdom and the creator of the arts, gave in that regard; gave a beautiful speech about the advantages and causes of progress of insect farming, the special prayers of the Sultan were read by the honorable Hasan Kaşif Efendi from the court of religious affairs, and at the end, the musical greeting was performed, and the "Long live my Sultan" speech was read by everyone, and in this way, the above-mentioned official ceremony was given a good ending]

One of the most important events that emphasized the existence of the sultan was, of course, military activities and ceremonies. In these military activities, where the

understanding of the sultan as the sole protector of the state was emphasized, for example, in a letter from Van, it is stated that all soldiers said the prayers "Long live the great Abdulhamid Khan, long live our beloved father" (Malumat, No: 538), and again in a speech made by a commander in the region against minorities (Malumat, No: 541; The original expression is: "Ahmed Enveri Bey advanced and said: My comrades in arms. I had heard in Thessaloniki that the members of the Livili tribe were brave and loyal to the state. You have proven your heroism and loyalty in action. Our glorious sultan, the supreme commander and our master of the world, our beloved father, the great His Holiness Abdulhamid Khan-i Sani, is pleased with you. Since you have pleased our great caliph, do not doubt that God Almighty is pleased with you"), it is seen that an effort was made to strengthen the authority over the people with a discourse focused on the "caliphate".

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:

(Malumat, No. 541, 25 November 1898)

"Bu duâyı müteakip alay-ı mezkûr kumandanı izzetlü Ahmed Enverî Beyefendi ilerleyerek: Silah arkadaşlarım. Livili aşireti efrâdının civan-mert ve sâdık-ı devlet olduğunu Selanik'te işitmiştim. Kahramanlığınızı ve sadâkatinizi fi'len ispat ettiniz şevketlü pâdişâhımız başkumandan-ı akdes ve efham efendimiz sevgili pederimiz büyük Abdülhamit Han-ı Sânî Hazretleri sizden memnundur. Mâdem ki halîfe-i azam efendimizi memnun ettiniz. Hiç şüphe etmeyin Cenâb-ı Hak da sizden hoşnut olmuştur. Artık hanelerinize gidiniz. Ana babalarınıza zevce ve evlatlarınıza kavuşunuz."

[Following this prayer, the commander of the aforementioned regiment, the honorable Ahmed Enveri Bey, advanced and said: My comrades in arms. I had heard in Thessaloniki that the members of the Livili tribe were brave and loyal to the state. You have practically proven your heroism and loyalty. Our glorious sultan, the holy commander-in-chief and our master of the world, our beloved father, his holiness the great Abdulhamid Khan Sani, is pleased with you. Since you have pleased our great caliph, do not doubt that God Almighty is also pleased with you. Now go to your homes. Reunite with your parents, wives and children]

In addition to military ceremonies, another of the most important events in which Abdulhamid II consolidated his power was the enthronement celebrations, which commemorated the anniversary of the sultan's accession to the throne. The sultan gave more importance to these celebrations than previous sultans (Özcan, 1993: 113), and especially the 25th anniversary of his accession to the throne was celebrated with a great festive concept throughout the empire. In the memoirs of Ali Said Efendi, one of the Sultan's servants, these celebrations are described as a joyous occasion of the period (Said, 1994: 54). Indeed, in the letters, it is seen that the writers describe the

sultan with the expression "Our Lord, our guardian blessing" while describing these celebrations and that they renew their gratitude for his existence by timing the ceremonies to be held in the region to this date (Malumat, No: 477). In a letter from Aleppo, a ceremony attended by soldiers in their official uniforms is mentioned and the pleasure felt by everyone at the ceremony to live in the time of such a sultan is conveyed. It is also stated that the sultan's presence was supported with visual symbols, and banners and paintings reading "Long live my sultan" were hung in both official institutions and in areas such as pharmacies, minority neighborhoods and Mevlevi lodges (Malumat, No: 474).

The original statement in Ottoman Turkish in the letter is given below:
(Malumat, No. 474, 25 September 19, 1898)

“Kışlaya merbût olup karşı cihette bulunan bahçede envâî renkte çanak maytaplarıyla havâî fişekleri iş'âl ve havanlar endahtıyla îlân-ı şâdumânî edilmiştir. Hükûmet Konağı ve Telgrafhane: Şehrin kaleye yakın olan ve geceleri تنها bulunan mahaldeki hükûmet konağının ön tarafındaki bir mukallak kanâdil ve fevânis ile tenvir ve flama ve sancaklar ile techiz ve tanzim edilmişti. Kale-yi Hümâyûn: Kale-yi Hümâyûn'un burçları ile dâhilindeki ebniyenin sakfı ve kalede bulunan kulenin cihât-ı erba'ası binlerce kanâdil ve fevânis ile tenvîr olunduğu gibi endah edilen havâî fişekleriyle top fişekleri etrafa nur saçıyor derecesinde bir letâfet bahşediyordu.”

[In the garden connected to the barracks and on the opposite side, fireworks of various colors were displayed and the happiness was announced with the sound of mortars. Government Building and Telegraph Office: A special building in front of the government building, which is close to the castle of the city and is quiet at night, was equipped and arranged with flags and banners and illumination with canards and lights. Imperial Castle: The bastions of the Imperial Castle and the cover of the building inside it and the four sides of the tower in the castle were illuminated with thousands of canards and lights, as well as the fireworks and cannon shells that were displayed were giving such elegance that they were scattering light around]

In a report from Bolu, the reporter stated that “loyal people from all classes” were present at the celebrations attended by thousands of people, emphasized that there were also students of different religions at the ceremony, and both mentioned the adornment of the surroundings and conveyed that everyone was praying “Long live the sultan” (Malumat, No: 826; The original expression is: “loyal servants of the sultan”). In the letter sent from Syros, it was stated that a ceremony was held in which state officials, soldiers and spiritual leaders of different nations attended in their official dresses, and that the military band sang the Hamidi march and prayers were said (Malumat, No: 828). In 1901, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the sultan's

accession to the throne, these celebrations increased even more, and the portrait that proved the existence of the sultan was once again represented throughout the empire. Indeed, only II. Not only Abdulhamid, but also other monarchs of the period tried to represent their sovereignty in the best way on similar days; for example, the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria of England in 1897 was celebrated with great celebrations (Cannadine, 2001:109), while the 6-century rule of the monarchy in Austria was celebrated with unparalleled splendor (Hobsbawm, 2006: 150).

This period, which was an important opportunity for the sultan to consolidate his presence in the empire spread over three continents, was used quite well, as can be understood from the letters coming from many regions. On the one hand, the sultan organized a magnificent celebration in his own palace, attended by ambassadors in their official uniforms (Osmanoğlu, 2013: 85), while on the other hand, it is stated that many preparations were made in many regions of the empire. The preparations made by the artillery major for the celebrations to be held in Samsun (Malumat, No: 1534), the use of the army barracks for these preparations in Syros, and the fact that the municipality building built by the governor in Edirne would be opened on this special day and that construction was accelerated for this reason (Malumat, No: 1538) are only a few of the magnificent preparations in question. According to the reports of the reporters describing these ceremonies, military order was applied and at each celebration, while verbal prayers expressing gratitude for the presence of the sultan were made, the symbolic presence of Abdulhamid II was visually represented at a high level with flags and banners bearing the inscriptions "Long live my sultan".

4. CONCLUSION

After examining more than a thousand letters in the Malumat newspaper, reflections of the political symbolism of Abdulhamid II were identified in 40 different newspaper issues. This data was presented under three headings. When the symbolism of Abdulhamid II was examined within the framework of the discourse language, it was seen that the Ottoman society living in different continents commemorated their sultans with concepts such as "protector of religion and compassionate father". This emphasis on the concept of caliphate in social life can be considered closely related to the importance the sultan gave to the policy of Islamic unity. This data is included in letters from regions such as Jeddah, Balıkesir, Mosul, Erzincan, Siroz, and Van. The commemoration forms in question were used in ceremonies that encompassed life, such as school openings, sending soldiers off, and the settlement of immigrants. In the symbolism constructed within the framework of visual symbols, it was seen that different areas were used. On the one hand, by giving names including the name Hamidiye to the buildings that were built, a general symbolic presence was drawn in

the eyes of the people, on the other hand, by presenting a special coat of arms to the people, the sultan tried to establish a special bond with his people. In connection with this, it is possible to say based on the incidents in the letters that the non-Muslim people were not forgotten and that Abdulhamid II pursued a policy that encompassed all nations and religions.

The symbolism constructed within the framework of official ceremonies was created through activities such as hanging banners containing prayers to the sultan and saying special prayers for the sultan. Indeed, in letters from regions such as Thessaloniki, Üsküp and Merzifon, these ceremonies are depicted in detail, and the deep devotion to the sultan is clearly emphasized. In addition to military ceremonies, it has been observed that great importance was given to the enthronement celebrations representing the accession to the throne of Abdulhamid II, and these celebrations are described in detail in letters from different regions such as Syros, Aleppo and Bolu. As a result, when approached from a holistic perspective, it is seen that the political symbolism during the reign of Abdulhamid II is reflected in two aspects in the letters sent from various provinces and different continents. The first of these aspects is the political symbolism carried out by the state in order to keep the existence of the sultan alive in the minds of the people. Examples of these include the symbolic language created through banners containing prayers to the sultan in official ceremonies, the naming of the buildings with the name Hamidiye, and the presentation of coats of arms to certain individuals as gifts from the sultan. The other aspect is the reflections of this language on the people. These can be stated as the people's references to the sultans with titles such as father and protector, and the recitation of prayers to the sultan in official ceremonies and informal meetings. Both the symbolism created by the state and the response it found in the people, as presented in this article, clearly show that despite being a sultan residing in his palace, Abdulhamid II established a political symbolism that would keep himself alive in the eyes of his people in the vast Ottoman geography with various verbal and visual symbolic tools such as banners, prayers, and coats of arms.

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No: 26947/1563. 14 March 1898. "Celebration of her majesty's diamond jubilee, 1897". Lord Chamberlain's Office.

The Times:

18 May 1876, col. C, p. 10. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe on the Eastern Question.

APPENDIX-1

With the Provincial Letter (Taşra Mektubu) on the first page, Malumat Newspaper, No. 530, November 14, 1898:



APPENDIX -2

With the Provincial Letter (Taşra Mektubu) on the first page, *Malumat Newspaper*, No. 609, February 1, 1898:

[illegible]

APPENDIX -3

Examples of a Provincial Letter (Taşra Mektubu) and a City Letter (Şehir Mektubu) in the same issue of the *Malumat* newspaper:

