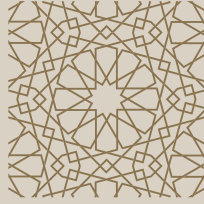


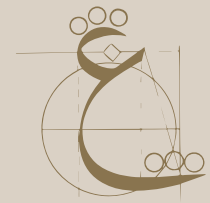
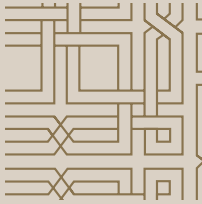


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II



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evvelin kimesne bilmeye”*

Kadim is that no one knows what came before.

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Kadim • Sakarya Üniversitesi

Esentepe Kampüsü, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, A Blok, Ofis: 110,
Serdivan/Sakarya (Türkiye) 54050

Telefon | Phone • 00 90 264 295 60 15

İnternet Adresi | Webpage • dergipark.org.tr/kadim • kadim.sakarya.edu.tr

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Report on OSARK 2025: Researchers Assembled for an Ottoman Mediterranean

OSARK 2025 RAPORU:
OSMANLI AKDENİZİ
ETRAFINDA BULUŞAN
ARAŞTIRMACILAR



GIORGIO ENNAS*

ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of the Fourth International Congress on Ottoman Studies (OSARK), held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice from 17 to 19 October 2025. Organized by scholars affiliated with Sakarya University and hosted by the Department of Asian and North African Studies, the congress gathered international scholars from Türkiye and across Europe interested in discussing the main and innovative fields in Ottoman studies. Centered on the theme "The Ottoman Mediterranean," the event featured 27 panels addressing topics such as law, diplomacy, digital humanities, trade networks, mobility, identity, and cultural exchange. OSARK 2025 fostered interdisciplinary dialogue and strengthened international scholarly collaboration in Ottoman historical research.

Keywords: OSARK, Uluslararası Kongre, Akademik İş Birliği, Osmanlı Çalışmaları, Osmanlı Akdenizi.



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* Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Utrecht, Department of History and Art History, History of International, Relations, g.ennas@uu.nl, ORCID: [0000-0001-8948-9823](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8948-9823).

In recent years, studies on the Ottoman Empire and its role in the Mediterranean have attracted considerable interest from Turkish and non-Turkish historians. The Ottoman case has proved to be of great interest to historians working in fields such as the history of diplomacy, international relations, medicine, economy, society, and consular and border studies.¹ In particular, the Mediterranean - as an “internal” sea, but open to global networks and exchanges - continues to attract, inspire and give rise to significant publications and projects capable of reshaping a wide range of research fields.² The fourth meeting of OSARK, the International Congress on Ottoman Studies founded by members of Sakarya University, was held at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Italy, on 17-19 October 2025.³ The congress was hosted by the Department of Asian and North African Studies and realized with the financial support of a wide range of partners. These included academic and research institutions such as the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Yunus Emre Institute, and OSAMER (Sakarya University Center for Ottoman Studies), as well as representatives of Turkish industry, notably İKBAL (Turkish Delight) and Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi.

Following the model adopted in previous editions, the 2025 congress continued to serve as a multilingual space for exchange and networking among researchers from Türkiye and across the world, fostering new and innovative directions in Ottoman studies while emphasizing the importance of new perspectives and pioneering approaches within international academia. In particular, it was an opportunity for Italian and Turkish academia to meet and strengthen ties over a cup of Turkish coffee or *çay*. Highlighting the renewed importance of the history of the Ottoman Empire today, more than ever for understanding new developments in international relations, the congress this time focused on “The Ottoman Mediterranean”. In this way, the organizers aimed to explore the various interactions that developed in the Black, Red and Mediterranean seas after the foundation of the Ottoman state, emphasizing, through an interdisciplinary approach, the role of the Mediterranean as a crossroad of conflict, trade, and exchange, as well as a space of coexistence. Consequently, considerable emphasis was placed on relations between the Italian peninsula, Istanbul, and the numerous provinces of the Empire.

The Congress began on the morning of 17 October with the prestigious inaugural lectures of Nevin Özkan (Ankara University) with *Considerazioni sulle relazioni turco-italiane riflesse nella letteratura italiana* (Considerations on Turkish-Italian relations mirrored in Italian

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- 1 Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Nühket Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Marc Aymes, *Ottoman Fake: An Essay on Forgers, Bureaucrats, and Philologists (18th-20th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2025); Giorgio Ennas, *Italo-Ottoman Relations in the Age of the Congress of Paris: Mirroring the ‘Other’, 1856-1871* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2025).
 - 2 For the publications, see for example Guillaume Calafat-Mathieu Grenet, *Méditerranées: Une histoire des mobilités humaines (1492-1750)* (Paris: Points, 2023); Erik Blackthorne-O’Barr-Burhan Çağlar (eds), *Levantines of the Ottoman World: Communities, Identities, and Cultures* (Istanbul: Ibn Haldun University Press, 2024). For the projects, see for example in the field of the history of medicine: SHIFA-ANA: “Healing Histories of Death and Disease in Anatolia”, accessed March 18, 2026, <https://sites.rutgers.edu/shifa-ana/>; COOPERATION, ERC - 2023 - COG, 101125306: “Fighting Pandemics from Below. Global North-South Public Health Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa, 1792-1942”, accessed March 18, 2026, <https://fighting-pandemics.sites.uu.nl/>.
 - 3 International Congress on Ottoman Studies (OSARK), “International Congress on Ottoman Studies”, accessed February 27, 2026, <https://www.osmanliarastirmalari.org/en/>. For the abstract book of the congress, see *4th International Congress on Ottoman Studies (OSARK): Abstract Book*, <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=ARHFEQAAQBAJ>. For the program booklet, see *4th International Congress on Ottoman Studies (OSARK) Program Booklet*, <https://www.osmanliarastirmalari.org/imag-es/file/2025/osark-2025-kongre-programi.pdf>.

literature), and Philip Mansel (Levantine Heritage Foundation), who presented “Why do I write about the Ottoman Empire? Dynasty, diplomacy and cities”. Both lectures addressed Italo-Turkish relations in Italian literature and the significance of studying the Ottoman Empire today. These were followed by welcome speeches from the two congress chairs: Zahit Atçıl (Boğaziçi University) and Vera Costantini (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice). On the morning of 18 October, the Congress began with the first of three panel sessions. In line with a well-established tradition, the organizing committee favored panel applications on innovative topics in Ottoman and Mediterranean studies, with panels investigating a wide range of themes and facilitating interaction among participants. There were 27 panels covering a wide range of categories in Turkish, Italian and English.

In the Mediterranean, Istanbul and Venetian halls, the Congress had 15 panels, exploring topics such as law, digital humanities, mobility, exile, captivity, identity, inventories, registers, narratives, trade networks, literature, art, bureaucracy, family, gender, society, encounters and sanitary cooperation on the shores of the Ottoman Empire, chaired by Cihan Osmanağaoğlu-Karahasanoğlu, Güner Doğan, İlhami Danış, Selim Karahasanoğlu, Bülent Arı, Yasemin Avcı, Giorgio Ennas, Mikail Acıpınar, Berat Açıl, Nevin Özkan, İdris Bostan, Tommaso Stefini, Vera Costantini and Hasan Umut. The first three panels dealt with different aspects of imperial law, covering topics such as sharia, kanun, and diplomacy; issues of mobility, captivity, and identity; and new approaches to using inventories as historical sources. The second section, comprising three panels, discussed narratives between form and content, captivity and exile, and the increasingly important use of digital humanities in Ottoman studies. The third section contained panels analyzing the topics of international sanitary cooperation, trade networks, economic relations, literature, and art in the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the fourth analyzed the use of campaign registers as sources, the rise of imperial bureaucracy, family, intellectual encounters, crises and conflicts.

On 19 October, the congress featured 12 panels chaired by Feridun Emecen, Zahit Atçıl, İsmail Hakkı Kadı, Fatma Sel Turhan, Özgür Kolçak, Chakib Benhafri, Kübra Sultan Yüzüncüyıl, Linda Darling, Christine Isom-Verhaaren, Fatih Bozkurt, and Hacer Topaktaş. The morning session focused primarily on identity and representation in historiography, cross-religious networks, institutions, and urban space. The second section investigated specific aspects of diplomacy, politics, public health, knowledge and reception practices, infrastructure, sovereignty, and economic mechanisms in the Mediterranean. In the early afternoon, the panels analyzed travelers, the role of animal husbandry, diplomacy, Ottoman geography, the teaching of Turkish, and, finally, the encounters between traders, diplomats, functionaries, and soldiers at the Dalmatian border between Venice and the Empire.

At the end of the last day, the famous Professor Maurice Aymard, from the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* in Paris commented on the early outcomes of the Congress and delivered an interesting presentation entitled “From the Mediterranean to the Temps du Monde: Fernand Braudel and the Ottoman Empire”, in which he offered a detailed overview of Ottoman relations with Western European states and the development and current state of Ottoman studies.

Overall, the 2025 edition confirmed OSARK’s role and growing importance as a key platform for fostering connections between Turkish and non-Turkish historians, as well

as for presenting innovative fields of research. The organizers curated a series of panels on traditional and pioneering topics such as diplomacy, digital humanities, and sanitary cooperation thereby facilitating dynamic exchanges among participants. Moreover, they encouraged researchers to draw on a remarkable range of new sources in different languages to further advance this highly productive field of research. The executive committee and chairs will now begin preparing the publication of the contributions in Turkish, Italian, and English across a series of edited thematic volumes, while also laying the groundwork for the next OSARK meeting.



Opening session of the 4th International Congress on Ottoman Studies (OSARK),
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 17-19 October 2025.

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