



## THE OTTOMAN TURKISH STUDIES FROM THE PAST TO PROSPERITY

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Professional paper

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Received: 09.5.2018

Accepted: 20.7.2018

### ABSTRACT

*The article focuses on the progressive worldwide growing interest for the Ottoman studies through last decades, first caused by the changing of the attitude towards the national history and tradition in the same Republic of Turkey.*

**Key words:** Ottoman Turkish Studies, Ottoman language, Culture, Tradition

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### VALUE OF TRADITION

As it is well known Ottoman Empire, founded by one Turkish tribe and ruled by only one dynasty through all its life, lasted almost six and half century and was one of the most powerful states in the history of mankind.

The abolition of the monarchy and the Caliphate and the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 marked not only the end of a theocratic dynastic creation, but also the collapse of its intangible assets, on the ground. Thanks to the efforts and vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, began the construction of a new, authentic Turkish building based on the return of the Turkish people to their own authenticity.

However, these changes have caused complete different attitude toward cultural life and particularly large gap in the sphere of language, especially its written forms.

„Comrades, we are adopting new letters to write in our beautiful language. The new letters will mark the value of our sound, beautiful and rich speech. We are forced to free ourselves from the incomprehensible signs that have kept our spirit in our fingers for centuries;“ emphasized Atatürk on July 9 in 1928, announcing the introduction of a Latin script adapted to the needs of the Turkish language (Svetovski, 1938). Two years later, on the opening page of the New Turkish dictionary, was published famous short speech of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, pronounced on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1930, and taken as the motto of the Turkish Language Reformatory School:

„*Milli* his ile dil arasındaki bağ çok kuvetlidir. Dilin milli ve zengin olması *milli hisin inkişafında* başlıca *müessirdir*. Türk dili, dillerin en zenginlerindedir, yeter ki bu dil, *şuur*la işlensin. Ülkesinin, yüksek *istiklâl*ını korumasını bilen Türk *milleti*, dilini de yabancı diller boyunduruğundan kurtarmalıdır“ (Türkçe Sözlük, 1988).

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„The connection between the national (*milli*) feeling and the language is very strong (*kuvett*), and the development (*inkışaf*) of the national (*milli*) feeling is of particular consequence (*müessir*) that the language is national and rich. Turkish is one of the richest, and needs to be explored explicitly (*şuurla*). The Turkish people (*millet*) who can defend their bright independence (*istiklâl*) should also free their language from the yoke of foreign languages.“ (Türkçe Sözlük, 1988)

In it, there are seven words that we have especially marked in both original and translated texts to make a clearer insight. Since then, none of the abovementioned words of Arabic etymology that entered the Turkish language during the Ottoman phase of its development has been eliminated from use, although there are four existing Turkish equivalents:

- inkişaf > gelişme
- istiklal > bağımsızlık
- şuurli > bilinçli
- müessir > etkili.

More than eighty years after the historical statement by Kemal Atatürk, the creator of a modern Turkish state and a stubborn supporter of cleaning Turkish language from other, and especially Arab and Persian lexical deposits, would certainly be deeply disappointed by the fact that his words did not lose much in the freshness. As can be seen, in addition to the Ottoman Corps, which will most likely remain forever in the Turkish language as a permanent foreign lexical heritage, as their removal would create irreparable lexical voids, certain old words and concepts of different origins have profoundly grown into lingual tissue and become its organic part. For this reason, they have remained in use until our days, despite the existence of adequate replacements (Čolić, 1999).

However, there is another, more important issue. As the testimony of this long-lasting period, we are faced now days by approximately almost 30 million of official documents and the grate number of other written papers, belonging to the corpus of historical and literature books.

The work on translation and publication of Ottoman documents in Europe has long tradition, almost since the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Ottoman Empire the official beginning was marked by the Council of the Ottoman History (Târîh-i Osmânî Encümeni) started to work on February 9, 1910 and several months latter began the publishing of Ottoman Historical magazine (Târîh-i Osmânî Encümeni Mecmuası), published for the first time in the same year, with the aim to prepare materials for Ottoman history.

But, despite its long academic tradition, increased interest in the Ottoman studies has only occurred in the last few decades and it is nowadays visible in the full measure, in the most respectable universities all over the world, offering various possibilities and programs from basic learning and summer courses to the post-doctoral studies and researches.

It is quiet enough just to look for websites and to see how many institutions and associations are dedicated to the Ottoman Turkish Studies. Beginning From the Republic of Turkey itself, there are now more than hundred different universities all over the world from The United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, France, Netherlands, Norway etc. with departments and centers of near of /Near/ Eastern languages and civilization.

These centers have emphasized roles in temporary time, as it is mentioned in the program of Centre for Ottoman Studies at the University of London: The Centre's activities are particularly focused on understanding how the Ottoman past is experienced and used in contemporary contexts. The post-Ottoman focus of the Centre is further emphasised by an exceptionally cross-disciplinary profile of its Members. (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/ottoman-studies/>)

The reaffirmation of the Ottoman studies can be shortly illustrated just by the basic facts about the only one respectful international organization, as it is The Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association – OTSA.

Previously founded as Turkish Studies Association – TSA, in 1971, and afterwards in 2014 „members changed the name of the association to the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association to best reflect the diversity of research interests and expertise among members in the association.“ (<https://otsa.binghamton.edu>). More than one century from the appearance of this first Ottoman periodical published in the Republic of Turkey we have now several international professional magazines and periodicals as it is Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association. (<https://www.jstor.org/publisher/iupress>)

One of the new activities is organizing of summer language programs for Ottoman language, as it was practice heretofore only for modern Turkish language.

As for our region, thanks to the pioneer efforts of professor Fehim Bajraktarevic, the beginning of Ottoman studies at the Belgrade University, as the first Oriental institution not only in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but also in Balkan penisnula, dates from 1926. Later on, in former Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, the crucial moment was the foundation of Oriental institute in Sarajevo in 1950.

In the coming years and decades the collecting and publishing of Turkish historical sources for the history of the Yugoslav people, was set as the primary task of this scientific institution. Through the passing years and decades significant number of works and papers focused on the many important questions concerning our past are the testimony of great achievements at this field.

We should also mention that the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo has long tradition of oriental studies, where the Ottoman studies are the part of Turkish curriculum, as it is the case in Belgrade and Zenica. As far as we are informed, the Ottoman studies are also present at the University in Zagreb, especially by the Ottoman diplomatic and paleography at the History Department.

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