

A(NOTHER) QUEST FOR POWER: PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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'Every picture is an idea. One picture can evoke political and psychological significances which a hundred written pages could not convey. I therefore derive more benefit from photographs than from written papers (Tahsin Paşa, 1990, p.356).

Abdülhamid II

"The nineteenth century began by believing that what was reasonable- was true, and it wound up by believing that what it saw a photograph of, was true. "(Ivins, 1953,p.94)

William M. Ivins, Jr.,

Between the invention of photography in 1839 and the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, there is a period when photography found more practical and documentary applications. Sultan Abdulhamid II, who reigned from 1876 to 1909, took a strong interest in photography even before his accession, and grasped the possible uses to which photography could be put. Abdulhamid II succeeded in putting into place the technology and bureaucratic structures to amass an extensive body of official photographs. The official photographic record includes compilations of photographs that document the activities of the government or of entities supported by the government, the sultan, and other official bodies.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was a modernizer. His photograph donations to the British Museum and Library of Congress could be accepted as –state of art-propaganda' reflecting the possibilities of technology and the visual image. Illustrating sites from around the empire, such as schools, hospitals as well as military training and exercises, modern buildings, the grand palaces and possessions of the sultan, and monuments of the classical, Byzantine, and Ottoman pasts, albums claim a place for the Ottoman sultan as the leader of a progressive, imperial power embracing modernity. The photographs give viewers an excellent sense of the modernizing projects the Empire focused upon during its final decades, as well as the way that Abdulhamid II wanted Europeans and Americans to see his empire.

The invention of photograph was partly possible in 1826 and this invention which would completely affect the next century, has been announced to the public and scientific environment by French Academy of Sciences in 1839. During this announcement, the usage of photograph and its potential benefits are emphasized. By pointing out the opportunities provided by the photograph in taking the copies of some objects, particularly the faster and easier method of obtaining the drawings which were needed to be made by “an army of painters” in archaeology field, was shared with the world (Freund, 2006, p. 28).

Since its invention, the photograph has drawn attention of the artists and public and has swiftly taken part in the daily life. This comprehensive recognisability is in close relation with the approach type of the social environment to the matter in 19th century. Being a tool which is prone to meet the needs and desires of the bourgeoisie (Freund, 2006, p.7-19) whose number and political power has increased in Europe where the industry has developed in 19th century and

having the qualification to reply the dignity economic benefits of them, the photograph can be shown as an important reason for this.

Photography was primarily adopted by the executive social class. The businessmen, bankers, factory owners, politicians, men of letters, scientists and persons in the intellectual environment of Paris gave place to photograph in their lives leading to the rapid access of the photograph (Freund, 2006, p. 21-32). Besides “middle bourgeoisie” found the response of the concern of representing itself which suits the ideological and economic conditions in photography one of the most important reasons of this is that the photograph had the qualifications for replying the expectation of bourgeois life against a low price. This not only determined the development and qualifications of the photography but also affected the development of the portrait art and this was efficient for the photography to be adopted by the lower classes. Photograph took the place of the portrait picture which was based on resembling and imitating the Emperor and the portrait pictures which constituted % 95 of the photography production in 1850, reached to an important market value.

Shortly after its invention, many artists who learned the technique of the photography have spread worldwide for taking photographs. The first photograph applications have been actualized through members of different professions like the European travellers, archaeologists, geographers and anthropologists whose economical wealth ever-increases and who were ambitious for re-exploring the world visually. These travellers have taken photographs of everything – from architecture to daily life- of the mystic world, especially Ottoman Empire, China and Japan due to the recovery of the travelling conditions as the result of the development in steamboat technology and have formed photo albums from these photographs (Özdal,2013,p.66). However these photographs have dominancy in archaeology, architecture and topography (Özdal, 2013, p.67). In photographing the “Mystic East”, the places in the Middle East geography of Ottoman Empire which are defined as “Holy Lands”, have not been disregarded (Atasoy, 2007, p. 18).

The hypothesis of the study in which we aim to present the justifications of the usage of the photographic documents in Ottoman bureaucracy, is that the Ottoman regime had benefited from the photography as managerial proof and propaganda tool and this has been actualized in a very short period of time after the invention of the photography. In our study, it is presented that photography in Ottoman Empire consisting of many different religious and ethnical groups, has turned in to an additional documentation supporting the written documents, a new record type and even an international propaganda tool with the inducement of Sultan Abdulhamid II and the managing classes have benefited from the photography with the purpose of evidences as to be reference to the managerial transactions.

Acceptance of photography in the Ottoman Empire

Louis Daguerre's invention of 1829 was first announced in the Ottoman Empire on October 28,1839 in the newspaper Takvim-i Vekayi and was followed by a wave of photographers racing to document the Ottoman Empire and the significant Near Eastern sites under its dominion(Greene, 2011,p. 4). 1845 the Italian painter Carlo Naya had opened one of the first Istanbul-based studios in Pera and offered lessons and sales of photographic equipment (Greene, 2011,p.9). The photographs of Sultan Abdülaziz were taken by Abdullah Freres (Brothers) (Waley, 1991, p.119). Their contributions to the formation of the photography collection known as “Yıldız Palace Albums” which was supported by Abdulhamid II. The photographs taken by Römmler&Jonas company in the beginning of 1890s and the documentation of the vivid life at the streets of Istanbul show that the Ottoman Empire was aware of the photography art as from an early time and Ottoman Empire benefited from the photography functionally for documenting the communal living and heritage.

In 1839, the photographs which were taken by Fesquet, one of the painter from French painters group (Vorace Vernet, Charles Marie Bouton and Frédéric Goupil Fesquet) who departed from Marseille port to mystic "East" (The travel route included the cities of; Beirut, Syria, Damascus, Alexandria, Cairo, Sinai, Palestine, Tyre, Saido, Deir El Kamar, Baalbeck, Nazareth and Izmir) for taking photographs and reached Izmit on February 4, 1840, have been put on the records as the first photographs of Anatolian lands. The routes of the photographers like M. Kompa, Lerebours, Nerval, Carlo Naya, Prangey who set off for performing photography art, has been turned to İstanbul, the hearth of the mystic East and they performed their arts and professions here (Çolak, 2011, p.57). Crimean War between 1853-1856, created a new field of profession such as war photography (Mutlu, 2007) and the travel of many Western photographers to İstanbul. For this and other similar reasons, İstanbul had been visited by approximately many artists till the end of 19th century and some of them have opened photography shops in big centres within the boundaries of Ottoman Empire like Jerusalem, Beirut, Cairo, Alexandria and İstanbul.

These travelling photographers turned their attention firstly to the environment and then to the people of this environment as long as they discovered the geography of Ottoman Empire. The presence of pople in the composition, caused the formation of the portrait photography art applications and formed a strong ground for the establishment of the photography studios at Pera, İstanbul.

Chemist Rabach who came to İstanbul in 1856, opened a professional photography studio and took Abdullah Brothers as his apprentices. Then the works of Abdullah Brothers who took over the photography studio from Rabach, were appreciated by the Palace and thus the photography expanded and developed in Ottoman world, particularly in İstanbul (Çolak, 2011, p. 57). Greeks and Armenians took the primary raw among different ethnical and religious communal groups who deal with this art. Besides at the photography studio of Abdullah Brothers, many young people were trained within a relationship of master-apprentice. The studio which was opened by Rahmizâde Bahaeddin Bey in 1890 at İstanbul, was put in the records as the first photography atelier opened by a Muslim Ottoman citizen with his own initiative (Özendes,1995, p. 18).

Rapid adaptation of photography art in Ottoman society is majorly caused by the support of the regime and its potential to meet the needs and desires of the dominant classes in society. Due to the extensive popularity of portrait photography among the middle class population, photography found a market in Ottoman society.

Acceptance of Photography by the Ottoman Bureaucracy

Ottoman bureaucracy was aware of the photography art in its early periods; photography was adopted rapidly due to its contributions to the bureaucratic application and needs. Photographs and photo records were supported by Ottoman sultans like Abdülaziz, Murad V and Abdulhamid II with the justification of using them in the administrative transactions as documentation.

Sultan Abdulhamid II had a special attention to photograph as a record type and had albums with great resource value prepared by taking inventories of the Empire during his reign (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 184). The most important subjects of these photos were portraits of Mystic East, interesting streets, archaeological sites, magnificent Islamic architecture, cemeteries and bazaars (Özendes,1995, p.10) Even the collection which is known as "Yıldız Palace Albums", is sufficient for showing that Abdulhamid II had carried out a dense documentation work related with Ottoman geography. During his reign, photography was used as administrative documentation as well as the propaganda tool.

The idea of using the photography as a managing instrument had opened the way for its use in Ottoman bureaucracy. Sultan Abdülaziz was the first to benefit from the photos in this regard.

Sultan Abdulhamid II had a special attention to the photography. It is known that the photography had been used in documenting the bureaucratic transactions during his reign. The photographs of high value particularly for the historians in present day, had been used in identity determination or more precisely as managerial and legal evidences and had been reflected on the documents that have the qualification of identity card in the form of mugshot. Thus photograph has taken part among the traditional recorders like paper in Ottoman bureaucracy as a new document type (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 184).

Sultan Abdulhamid II who had already understood the importance of the photography long before his reign, had successfully provided integration of the photography which he ordered to be taken with the bureaucratic structure. Abdülhamid II was an extraordinary figure and can be seen from many different viewpoints (Waley, 1991, p.110) By giving the task of taking photographs; he had provided albums that certify the activities of the government and other official institutions by having the photographers take the pictures of fleet ships, military institutions, factories and employees, all buildings constructed by the state, schools, students, mosques, ports, police stations, military training and practices, constructions and openings of the hospitals and charity institutions, politicians visiting the country, ethnographic environment, natural beauties, all civilizations in this geography, particularly the monuments of classical Byzantine and Ottoman period. In this study which is referred as "Yıldız Palace Albums", a collection of 911 albums with 36.535 photographs have occurred (Atasoy, 2007, p. 8). The collection originally in the Yıldız Palace but currently at the Istanbul University Library, contains over eight hundred albums of ten to eighty photographs each. (Atasoy, 1988,v)

Employment of Photographers in Public Institutions and Establishing Photography Studios

The use of the photography as a bureaucratic instrument for the purpose of "evidence" and "identity determination" has revealed the need of new personnel with photographer position and the need of establishing the photography ateliers in Ottoman official institutions. Therefore first in courthouse, gendarmerie and many other official institutions, a new staff have started to be employed in "photographer" position. During the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, a camera was purchased to take photos for journals on determination and pursuit of the criminals (1868), first photographs were taken by a paid painter, then as the first time in Ottoman empire an Ottoman officer had been given the task of learning photography and taking pictures of the courthouse and gendarmerie administration in 1893 (BOA, DH.MKT., n. 2023/71).

Sultan Abdulhamid II established a photography atelier in Yıldız Palace (Çolak, 2012, p. 58) and then started to establish photographer staff positions in provinces. However, there were problems in providing technical equipment and finding photographer in every city and district which caused breakdowns (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 184, 187-189). Besides these, establishing a photography studio for the public prisons in Istanbul was discussed and employing photographers were demanded for Beyoğlu and Üsküdar prisons (Çolak, 2012, p. 62). Each stage and each development of Turkey-Greece war in 1897 was tried to be documented by photographers. If the quality of photographs was not sufficient, a more professional team would be in charge of re-taking them (Çolak, 2012, p. 63).

The usage of photography in documentation for Ottoman Bureaucracy

Each institution benefits from its own documents for four reasons; managerial, legal, economic and research. Like every government that establishes its bureaucratic transactions on written principles, Ottoman Government also carried out its bureaucratic transactions by written records, and took its administrative, legal and economic resolutions based on documentation. The state

chroniclers benefited from these documents while writing the histories of the state and institutions. The existence of many written documents from Ottoman Empire definitely verifies these. Like the records which were benefitted from and produced by Ottoman institutions, photographs were also used as an efficient propaganda tool by Ottoman Bureaucracy at the end of 20th century-particularly in the reign of Abdulhamid II for managerial documentation, audit and taking resolution. The official photographic record includes compilations of photographs that document the activities of the government or of entities supported by the government, the sultan, and other official bodies(Micklewright, 2011,p.4). There is no question that Abdülhamid succeeded in putting into place the technology and bureaucratic structures to amass an extensive body of official photographs (Micklewright, 2011,p.11).

With the existence of the photography in daily life of Ottoman society, new approaches occurred related with the use of photographs in bureaucratic transactions and this led to application of photography in many different fields and purposes in Ottoman bureaucracy. In periods of Sultan Abdülaziz and particularly Abdulhamid II, with the support of the Sultans, photography was used in identification determination, tracing the criminals or more precisely managerial auditing, determination and documentation. Besides, photography had a function of addition or supplement to written documents (for instance; in the form of portrait photograph). Abdulhamid II used photographs for inspecting the works of public institutions in a wide range starting from the centre to the provinces. For example, since 1889, photographs of the provinces started to be taken. Accordingly, detailed photographs of the state structures like government offices, military post offices, mosques, schools, charity works and even the hospitals and prisons which were being repaired, expanded and reconstructed, were requested to be sent to Istanbul as photo albums (Çolak, 2012, p. 59-60). After the submission of such albums, it is observed that some breakdowns occurring particularly in hospitals and prisons were recovered . For instance, according to photos from Dimetoka, it was decided to audit the hospital, and later this audit was extended to cover the centre and all provinces. A decree was published for the submission of a report related with the audit of whole hospitals in Ottoman lands and their recovery solutions and these audit transactions were completed by the military doctors(Çolak, 2012, p. 62). Accordingly, besides the determination of the positive developments in the provinces with the written documents, it was observed that innovation and reform could be monitored and controlled through photography (Çolak, 2012, p. 58). In this respect, the photography was used in many fields from the enquiry to inventory taking, from following the war phases to determination of identity(Çolak, 2012, p. 58), documentation of various activities by Ottoman bureaucracy.

The studies made in Trabzon are remarkable for being a sample related with the photography studies of Ottoman provinces. The task of photographing the places in Trabzon was given to Cacoulis Brothers (Frères) who had photography studio in Trabzon (Bölükbaşı, 2006,v.1,p.22) As the result, an album related with Trabzon was prepared and 61 photographs were presented in it (even though its mentioned by Bolukbaşı as 57 photos, there were 61 photos available at album(/number 90441) in Yıldız Palace Collection). In this album, there were panoramic photographs, photographs of state buildings, mosques, tombs, dervish lodges, churches, monasteries, schools, lighthouses and even the photographs of the port map which was planned to be constructed and the plan of the new hospital to be made in Tophane (Çolak, 2012, p. 65).

The evidences show that photography was used as a documentation and information resource or even as a determination tool from the beginning of Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign (Nuhoğlu-Çolak, 2002,p.937-942). preparing photo album rapports of various public activities was widely used in period of Abdulhamid II - even though there was no official order for this format- (Çolak, 2012, p. 58).

Use of photography in identification and determination of the criminals

It is observed that portrait photographs were first used in identity documents . At the end of the 19th century, the value of photograph was realized in Ottoman bureaucracy and started being used as a significant documentation and resolution tool in “evidence” and “identification”. For instance, documents with portrait photos were issued and used during official transactions as identification (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 189). Thus, the risk of the illegal use of official documents by others was eliminated. In this period, obligatory use of photographs in certain documents started to constitute the basis of bureaucratic applications. Accordingly, since the beginning of 20th century, the obligation of having portrait photographs in documents like (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 185) passports, petitions, residency license, identities, nationality certificates and registry certificates, has been adopted.

Another document with portrait photography was identity certificate. It was a printed document which had a section for adhering photography besides the name and official duty of the person (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 192-193). Residency license was one of the other documents with portrait photograph. These licences were given to the foreigners living in Ottoman lands and Ottoman citizens. Besides, passports with photographs were given to those who wanted to go abroad as immigrants- excluding the women and those under the age of 18- by the civil offices of the provinces where they were residing(Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 194). According to registry regulation dated 1914, portrait photographs of the officers were taken together with other essential documents while registering their life history certificates and these photographs were being adhered to the section in the registry books (Sarıyıldız, 2004, p. 121) thus portrait photographs gained a place in bureaucracy(Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 194-195).

The role of photographs in establishing the records of Crime and Criminals

Photograph was a tool which was used as physical evidence in recording the crimes and criminals. The first Ottoman Sultan who put this into effect was Sultan Abdülaziz. In the period of Sultan Abdülaziz, crime and criminal albums were prepared from the photographs of criminals. In 1868 he put the obligation of keeping photographs of the criminals in the records of the crimes and criminals (BOA, DH.TMIK.M., n. 12/37).

These records were helpful in preventing the criminals returning to Istanbul from their own hometowns and committing the same crime again, their recognition, easier determination and tracing. One copy of photographed criminal journals was sent by the authorized administration to big cities like Alexandria, Thessaloniki, Izmir, Beirut and Trabzon .

Abdulhamid II was one of the Ottoman Sultans who persistently and punctiliously followed the application of the usage of the photograph as the physical evidence in determination and trace of the crime and criminals (BOA, DH.MKT., n. 2045/58).

He continued and developed the new bureaucratic application for establishing and preserving the photograph records of the crimes and criminals which was started by Sultan Abdülaziz. Abdulhamid II ordered a decree dated July 4, 1888 for the submission of an album which consisted of prisoners photographs in the size of 18*13 cm with their penalties of execution and perpetual hard labour and their names and reputation, types of crime and penalty period under their pictures (BOA, DH. MKT., n. 1499/70, BOA, ZB., n. 44/27). This application which was made by establishing and preserving the photograph records of the prisoners for evidence and identification was formed into an application. This application was made by preserving the photographs of the all criminals whose conviction periods ended and this application became a general application in Ottoman geography in time (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 187). Besides,-since the first years of his reign, the photographs were taken not only of the criminals but also of distributors

selling newspapers (BOA, Dahiliye Mektubî Kalemi (DH. MKT)., n. 548/26), books and similar press by opening displays on streets, refugees taken abroad, those who go abroad as immigrants, those who are in political exile, military fugitives, those who want to be Ottoman citizen, those who are denaturalized, those who shall change their nationality with official permit and those who shall enter Ottoman lands with passports and these photograph records were taken (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 185-186). and preserved by the relevant authorities.

The photograph documents taken in full and postcard form were used in preventing the crimes like the unofficial use of the official documents by others and in determination of those who participated to the rebellion and banditry activities in Ottoman lands. The photograph documents which made the identification easier, were used for the purpose of determination and identification of those who taken part in illegal activities especially in Balkans.

Using Photographs as a Propaganda Tool

Ottoman regime used photographs not only for taking resolutions, auditing and documenting but also as a propaganda tool. Abdulhamid II was the sultan who used photographs as the propaganda tool in the best way, particularly in documenting the public activities and determining the status of Ottoman geography. Abdulhamid II ordered assigned photographers to prepare photograph records related with the main institutions and events in the empire. For instance many multi-thematic albums were issued covering the photographs of fleet ships, military institutions, factories and employees, all buildings constructed by the state, schools, students, mosques, ports, police stations, military training and practices, constructions and openings of the hospitals and charity institutions, politicians visiting the country, ethnographic environment, natural beauties, enthronement celebrations (Sarıyıldız, 2009, p. 184). Thus, Abdulhamid II, created a collection of 911 albums which were consisted of 36.535 photographs known as "Yıldız Palace Albums" (Atasoy, 2007, p. 8). Each of these albums created for determination, evidencing, displaying and propaganda. sent A set of 51 albums containing 1,819 photographs was sent to the "National Library of the United States" (Greene, 2011, p. 3) [The Library of Congress] (BOA, BEO., n. 405/30369, BOA, DH.MKT., n. 230/6) and another set of fifty-one ornately bound albums, containing in all over 1,800 photographs (albumen prints), was presented to the British Museum Library in 1893 and received in 1894 (Waley, 1991, p.110) as gifts (BOA, Y..PRK.NMH., n. 6/22).

Sultan Abdulhamid II used advertising opportunities of photographs in the highest level. By symbolizing a progressive Ottoman ruler who embraced the modernity with the albums he gifted to the other rulers and beside the libraries and museums, it is understood that he hoped to recover the bad image. The subject matter of the photographs in the Yıldız Palace Albums is as varied as their origin, including everything from Japanese scenery to "mug" shots of Ottoman criminals and newly constructed railway and police stations from all over the empire (Micklewright, 2011, p.5) Also they attended some photography exhibitions around the world, such as Chicago photography exhibition ((BOA, BEO., n. 49/3639). On the other hand, through these photographs, he presented his expectations from the observers, expecting support for the modernization he focused on during the the last years of Empire. The developing approach and themes with the dignity are the apparent qualifications of all these. For example, the photographs of the well-groomed students taken from schools (Çolak, 2012, p. 62), city planning activities and prison photographs with the smooth clothed prisoners verify that Abdulhamid II had the search for the dignity in the world of that period. The Sultan was interested in the traditional science of physiognomy (kiyafet, or feraset), according to which traits of character can be deduced from physical features. He employed this in examining photographs in order to select suitable convicts for amnesty on the occasion of his silver jubilee, and students for admission to military colleges (Waley, 1991, p.114).

Conclusion

Ottoman bureaucracy widely used photography due to its contributions to the needs and bureaucratic applications. Producing photography records in trace of crime and criminals and establishing wide collection related with the whole Ottoman geography starting from the period of Sultan Abdülaziz and including the period of Abdulhamid II, was important for accelerating, auditing, documenting, smoothing the bureaucratic applications and recovering the breakdowns. In this respect, the photography was used for following, auditing, planning, reporting and promoting many public services. Sultan Abdülaziz –and as more densely than him - Abdulhamid II and bureaucrats benefited from photography as a document, information and news resource and even as a determination tool; they evaluated the photography as an information source that made the management mechanism easier.

Abdulhamid II who was known for his strong modernization character as well as the strong control mechanism which he established country wide, benefited from the photographs for removing the misconceptions related with his country in the international field. Thus, Sultan Abdulhamid II hoped to benefit from the photography to gain respect and recover the image by symbolizing an Ottoman Empire by giving priority to main subjects like modern education, public order, technology, science, archeology, preserving cultural heritage, health, production and factories. The albums claim a place for the Ottoman sultan as the leader of a progressive, imperial power embracing modernity (Micklewright, 2011,p.5)

The photographs were evaluated by some public officers as a tool that providing them the opportunity to promote to higher positions. The public officers had the positions they desired by fulfilling the liabilities and tasks given to them in the most accurate and fastest way. This concern caused the misuse of the photographs. Besides using the photographs formed by Ottoman regime as a documentation tool, they have the function of being documentation for the present researches. Many art and city historians are benefiting from the photographs in determining existence and current situation of the cities, clothes, architectural works and public buildings. The Abdülhamid II Collection is a remarkably rich resource not only for students of Ottoman history, but also those considering photography and the global climate at the end of the Nineteenth Century (Greene, 2011,p.2). All of them point out the existence of the strong resource value of these photographs in the present day.

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