THE OTTOMANS AND NEO-OTTOMANISM EHUD TOLEDANO
THE FOUR PILLARS OF OTTOMAN IDENTITY ŞENER AKTÜRK
THE EMERGENCE OF OTTOMAN STUDIES IN THE US DOĞAN GÜRPINAR
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VS FREEDOM OF RELIGION ERGUN ÖZBUDUN

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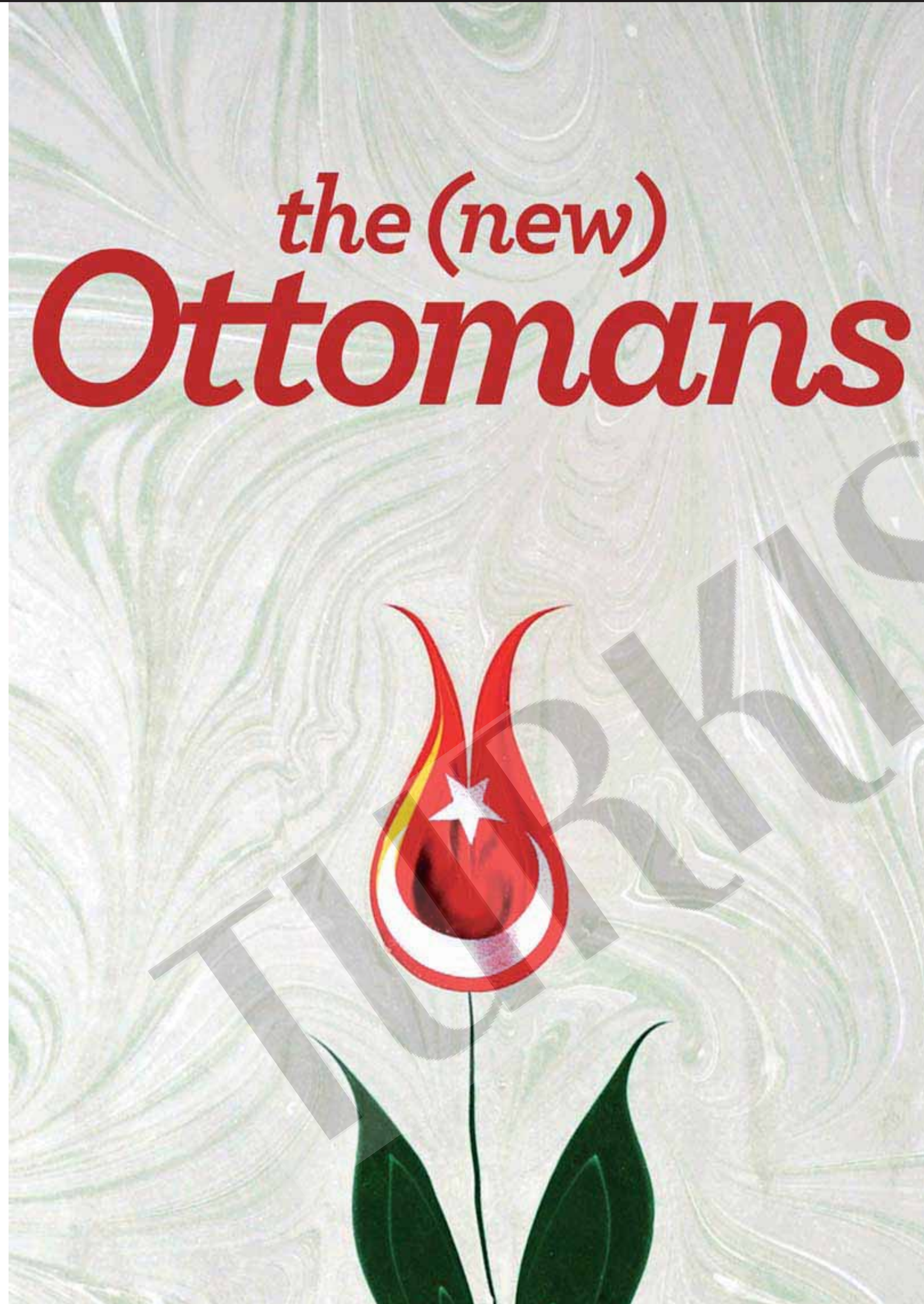

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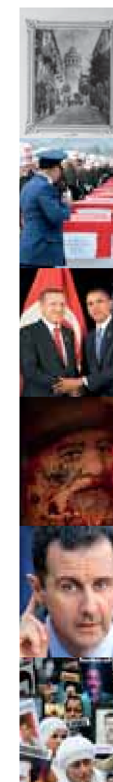

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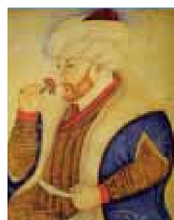

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ARTICLE VOL-3/1

Şener Aktürk

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The four pillars of Ottoman identity: religious toleration, diversity and the four millets under the 'eternal state'

ARTICLE IN BRIEF: Who were the Ottomans as a community of people? This question can be answered in two interrelated ways, corresponding to the ideal aspiration and the factual reality of Ottoman identity, respectively: Who did the Ottomans think they were? Who were the Ottomans in reality? This article aims to answer both of these questions from a comparative historical perspective, addressing the sub-communities that made up the people of the Ottoman Empire

Şener Aktürk, "The four pillars of Ottoman identity: religious toleration, diversity and the four millets under the 'eternal state,'" *Turkish Review* 3, no. 1 (2013): 14-21.

In its ideal aspiration, Ottoman identity can be described as a universal identity potentially encompassing the entire humanity in all of its ethno-racial, religious, and sectarian diversity, but within an essentially Islamic political framework. Given the factual, cultural, demographic and political reality it created on the ground, metaphorically Ottoman identity can be likened to a chair (or throne) rising on "four pillars" corresponding to the four principle *millets:* the Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Armenian and Jewish communities. These four religiously defined communities together constituted and sustained Ottoman identity as long as it lasted. The separation of these *millets* under the influence of ethno-religious nationalism over time was tantamount to the disintegration and disappearance of Ottoman identity, in which all nationalisms and nation-states -- Balkan, Arab and Turkish alike -- participated.

Ottoman self-perception: the 'eternal state' and its 'world order'

Who did the Ottomans think they were? This is perhaps the first question one needs to ask in any inquiry into questions of identity.[1] The names the Ottomans gave to their state, the titles their sultans carried, and their discourse of legitimacy all provide significant hints about their self-perception.

Ottomans thought of their political authority as being unlimited, both in time and in space. Among the many names that the Ottomans used for their state, one of them is rather famous and the most memorable "the Eternal State" *(Devlet-i Ebed Müddet).* The duty that the "eternal state" was supposed to fulfill was equally ambitious, if not somewhat familiar from the lexicon of modern-day superpowers: Achieving and preserving "world order" *(Nizam-ı Alem).*

There is no doubt that the Ottomans were aware of the Turkic -- or more precisely, nomadic ethnic Turkmen -- origins of their dynasty. However, they did not think of themselves solely as the heirs of Turkic khanates of Central Asia and, most likely, their Turkic heritage faded in comparison with the other legacies they simultaneously claimed. They also thought of themselves as the heirs of past Islamic empires. More importantly, Ottomans thought of themselves as being the only true heirs of the Roman Empire. As such, one of the official titles of the Ottoman sultan since the

The Jewish community once formed a key segment of Ottoman society. Shown here is an abandoned synagogue in Edirne, northwest Turkey. Sept. 29, 2011
PHOTO: AA, RAHMİ ÇİNOKUR

conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was "the Caesar of Rome" *(Kayser-i Rum).* He was sultan, khan, shah, caliph and Caesar at once. Consider, in this context, Süleyman the Magnificent's self-description:

> *I am Süleyman, in whose name the hutbe [Friday sermon at congregational prayers] is read in Mecca and Medina. In Baghdad I am the shah, in Byzantine realms the Caesar, and in Egypt the sultan; who sends his fleets to the seas of Europe, the Maghrib [North Africa] and India.*[2]

'Encompassing the world' with the 'cycle of justice'

Ottoman identity was in principle coterminous with all humanity. As such, Ottoman identity was a universalistic identity. Therefore, Ottomans did not hesitate to use another ambitious adjective to describe their empire: *cihanşumul,* which literally means "encompassing the world."[3] The empire by the time of Süleyman the Magnificent thought of itself as the perfect state, the culmination of centuries of human development, and the ultimate dispenser of justice around the world.

Ottoman theory of perfect government was based on the theory of "cycle of justice" *(daire-i adalet),* elaborated by Islamic jurisprudent Kınalızade Ali (1511-1584) in his magnum opus, "Ahlak-i Alai" (Supreme Morality), written in 1564. Given this self-perception, it would be an injustice not to conquer any corner of the world because people not under Ottoman rule would be deprived of living within the "cycle of justice." Unlimited expansion, then, became a moral imperative, making it incumbent upon every sultan to bring as much of humanity as possible under Ottoman government.

Many empires, including modern ones, have had messianic ideologies of expansion laden with various "civilizing missions." For this author, as a comparative political scientist of the late 19th and 20th centuries, Georg Hegel's conceptualization of Prussia as the perfect modern state or the idea of a "new world order" sustained by the US as a benevolent hegemon after the Cold War come to mind as potential modern comparisons. However, almost no such modern state or empire had the pretension or aspiration to universal sovereignty as the Ottomans, Romans, Persians and some other pre-modern empires did. Ottoman ideology went beyond similarly moralistic discourses of universal expansionism found in modern states. Unlike the Ottomans and the Romans there was no pretension, even at a utopian level, that Prussia or the US would absorb the entire world one day. Only one modern state *had* a similar aspiration at a utopian, ideological level in the 20th century and that was the Soviet Union, which saw itself as the pioneer of a socialist regime that would eventually encompass the entire world.[4] In short, Ottoman identity at its peak was in principle coterminus with all humanity. Every community in the world could be brought under Ottoman rule without changing the ideological and religious legitimacy or the administrative structure of the empire.

Imagine the world as it was generally known in the 16th century -- without the Americas, Oceania, Siberia and most of Africa. In this limited world that

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corresponds, at present, to three-quarters of Asia, one-third of Africa and Europe, the Ottoman Empire ruled Hungary and Yemen, Armenia and Algeria, Ukraine and Eritrea, and almost every land in between. For an Ottoman bureaucrat, soldier or scientist, the temptation to think of his state as a perfect one must have been very strong.

Ottoman identity went through an evolutionary expansion over the centuries. In the beginning (14th century) "Ottoman" began as the name of the sultanic household. It is nonetheless noteworthy, though certainly impossible to foresee in the 14th century, that the Ottoman dynasty also became one of the longest unbroken dynasties in world history, presenting a very rare case when one family line alone ruled throughout the history of such an empire -- unlike the Roman, Byzantine, Tsarist Russian, Austrian French or British empires, all of which had multiple different families as ruling dynasties in different periods of their history. After the imperial dynasty itself, with the building of a world empire in the 15th through 17th centuries, the hypothetical Ottoman bureaucrat referred to in the previous paragraph would be the next most likely stratum to identify and appropriate Ottoman identity as a defining feature of its self-image. In discussing 18th century Ottoman realities, Norman Itzkowitz argues that "it would be closer to the truth to characterize the Ottoman system as resting on at least three pillars corresponding to the three main career lines or opportunities in the empire -- the *kalemiyye, seyfiyye, and ilmiyye,* that is, the bureaucratic, military, and religious careers."[5] It was only in the early 19th century, with the Tanzimat reforms, that "Ottomanism" became an official ideology on a par with modern ideologies of peoplehood and actively propagated from above by the Ottoman state vis-à-vis its subjects. This latter, explicitly modern and reactive ideology and the Ottoman identity it propagated is not the primary focus of this article, but that is the shape it took by the 19th century, partly subsumed and partly refused by the making of a secular linguistic republican Turkish identity after 1923.

Cooperation between the sultan and the Greek Orthodox Church goes back to the early years of the empire. This mosaic from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in İstanbul shows Patriarch Gennadios II and Sultan Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople.

PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN (WIKIPEDIA)

Four pillars of Ottoman identity: Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Armenian and Jewish

Who were the Ottomans in reality? Did the Ottomans succeed in creating a microcosm of the world under their rule? It is indisputable that the Ottoman government tolerated and supported a population that was much more religiously diverse than any Christian-majority state in Western and Central Europe. The gap between the dazzling religious diversity of the Ottoman Empire and the daunting religious homogeneity of virtually all the Western Christian states is striking. By the year 1500, in all of Western Europe, including present-day England, France, Spain and Portugal, almost all the inhabitants were forced to be Christian, and even more narrowly, they were only allowed to be Catholic. Islam, Judaism and non-Catholic versions of Christianity were severely persecuted. In contrast, by the year 1500, the Ottoman Empire tolerated and even promoted (as in the invitation of Sephardic Jews following their expulsion from Spain) religious and sectarian diversity, such that Islam, Christianity and Judaism, in all their sectarian diversity, blossomed within the Ottoman realm. This stark comparison is what led John Locke and Voltaire, among others, to laud Ottoman policies in their treatises on religious toleration.[6]

Not a single historical Muslim community survived from the Middle Ages in what is present-day Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, England or Germany. Jews were definitively expelled from England on Nov. 1, 1290 (and would not be allowed back in until 1656). Jews were expelled from France four times: in 1010, 1182, 1306 and finally in 1394. More famously, Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. It is not far from the truth to estimate that 100 percent of France, Spain and England were Catholic Christian in the year 1500, and approximately 98-99 percent of present-day Italy (of course Italy, the nation-state, did not exist until 1870-71) was Catholic Christian with around 1-2 percent Jewish, confined to the "ghetto" -- that infamous arrangement invented in Europe for confining Jews.[7] Not a single historic Muslim community was tolerated anywhere in Western Europe in 1500.

We do not see that world-famous trope of Ottoman tolerance in any Western European city: Centuries-old churches, mosques and synagogues erected within the same city, town, or even within a single neighborhood. Even in the 19th century, the only non-Christian religious community to be tolerated in Western Europe, with frequent bouts of persecution, would be Jews. With the Holocaust during World War II, the remaining Jewish minority was also almost entirely destroyed. It is unsurprising that various scholars, many of them European Jews, grappled with precisely this question up until the present-day: Why it was that the idea of religious toleration arrived so late in Western Christendom, if it arrived at all.[8]

'Rum': The second pillar or a synonym for Ottoman identity?

Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Armenians and Jews formed the four principle pillars of Ottoman identity, indicative of its religious diversity. Perhaps the most important historical institutional "moment" for the codification of Ottoman imperial identity, as Karen Barkey argues, was the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II.[9] The young sultan declared himself the Caesar of Rome, because the city-state that he conquered claimed to be the Roman Empire, and its inhabitants, like most Orthodox Christians of Anatolia and the Balkans under Ottoman rule, self-identified and were identified by Muslims as the *Rum,* literally "the Romans." Likewise, their church was, and still is, named the "Roman" Orthodox *(Rum Ortodoks)* Church. Ottomans referred to both of their heartlands, Anatolia and the Balkans, as the "Rome" and "Roman land" *(Rum and Rumeli),* respectively. Similarly, the epithet of the world-renowned Sufi poet-philosopher Mevlana is *Rumi*, literally "the Roman," because he was an inhabitant of "Rome," as such.

The ownership and the assumption of the "Roman" *(Rum/Rumi)* title, not only by the Ottoman sultan/Caesar, but by the entire land and its people, was an indisputable historical reality that led Salih Özbaran, in his intriguing study of the 14th to 17th century Ottoman identity, to define and explicate "Roman identity" *(Rum/Rumi aidiyet)* primarily as, and constitutive of, the Ottoman identity.[10] In its ambiguous, cultural geographic usage that Özbaran brilliantly exposed, "Romans" would not just refer to the Orthodox Christians (i.e., only one of four principle *millets)*, but potentially to all the Ottomans, making this an identity almost synonymous with the Ottoman identity. As Özbaran points out, very different sources around the world, ranging from the Portuguese and West Indonesian accounts, to the Chinese, Moroccan, and East African groups, used "Roman(s)" as a name to describe the "Ottomans."[11] Ambiguity and fusion of Roman/Ottoman identities is also apparent in Cemal Kafadar's work on the construction of the early Ottoman state.[12]

In a more limited version of this term, Orthodox Christians, or the "Roman Orthodox" as they were referred to, were the second pillar in the hierarchy of Ottoman identity. They were almost as important as the first, Muslim pillar, and were essential in the Ottoman project for creating and governing a universalistic world empire. They were key allies in the fight against Western Christendom. Their ecumenical (universal) patriarch, protected and supported by the sultan, was a testimony to Ottoman ecumenism, as well as the proof of Ottomans' legitimate claim to the heritage of the Roman Empire.

Constantinople was the seat of the Muslim Caliphate and the universal Roman Orthodox Patriarchate, indicating the alliance of two faiths, one more dominant, the other more subservient, which together propelled the Ottoman grand strategy geared towards global supremacy. Under the protection of the Ottoman dynasty, Orthodox Christianity led by the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople successfully avoided being absorbed by Catholicism, and became an ally in the grand strategy of the Ottoman Empire. Very soon after the conquest of Constantinople, but certainly by the early 16th century, all the major Orthodox Christian populations of the world, concentrated in the Balkans, Middle East, North Africa, Black Sea basin, Anatolia and the Caucasus, with the notable exception of the Russian Orthodox, came under Ottoman rule. Both demographically and religiously, (Roman) Orthodox Christianity was under Ottoman rule.

In short, after the Muslim *millet* (religious community), Orthodox Christians, the so-called "Roman" *(Rum) millet* recognized in 1454, the year after the conquest of Constantinople, were the second most important pillar of Ottoman identity, demographically, politically and symbolically.

Armenians: the third pillar

Armenians were the third *millet* in the hierarchy of Ottoman identity, both chronologically and demographically. They were added to the *millet* system in 1461, seven years after the Orthodox *millet*, whereas "the Jewish *millet*

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remained without a declared definite status for a while, although it was unofficially recognized around the same time as the other two."[13] Armenians had been living under states governed by Turkic-Muslim dynasties for much longer than Orthodox Christians and Jews, since the Turkic warriors entered Anatolia via Persia, and the first Christian people that came under their rule were most likely the Armenians. Although not under Turkic rule, Jews lived under Muslim rule from the very beginning of Islam, including in the first Islamic city-state of Medina

Although Armenians and Sephardic (Iberian/ Spanish) Jews are not "Muslims" in a religious sense, with respect to all the other features of their culture, they should be considered as having been part of the "Islamic civilization" for more than a thousand years.[14] Starting in the late 19th and early 20th century, Armenian and Jewish nationalist movements, culminating in the founding of Armenian and Jewish nation-states, succeeded in radically altering this state of affairs by creating a new (nationalist) Armenian and a new (nationalist) Jewish identity, which is not only detached from but in many cases even hostile toward Islamic civilization. Those late modern developments can be seen as being integral to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which was tantamount to the collapse of the four pillars of Ottoman identity one by one.

The fourth pillar: Sephardic Jews and 'Judeo-Islamic civilization'

Jews were the fourth *millet* in the quadrangle of Ottoman identity, both demographically and chronologically. Sultan Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, appointed Moses Capsali as the chief rabbi of the Ottoman Jews. However, the great influx of Jews to the Ottoman Empire occurred at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror's successor, Sultan Bayezid II, who invited Jews expelled from Spain 1492 to settle in Ottoman territories. These Jews settled in major cities of Western Anatolia and the Balkans, including most importantly in Thessalonica, which came to be known as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans."[15]

"Judeo-Islamic civilization," as it may be termed, continued in the Ottoman Empire after the collapse of the Muslim emirate of Granada and the mass expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain. As David Wasserstein convincingly argued most recently, in many ways the emergence of Islam saved the Jews from near-extinction due to a mixture of persecution and absorption by a very fiery and evangelical Christianity, which unleashed the political power of states that became officially Christian against non-Christian minorities, including the Jews.[16] By 1492, then, under the rule of Bayezid II, the Ottoman identity was, in a sense, "perfected" with the addition of the Jews as the fourth pillar.

To avoid any misunderstanding or myth-making about the nature of interfaith coexistence in Ottoman society, an unambiguous word of caution is necessary here: There was no interfaith utopia or "Golden Age" in which Jews, Christians and Muslims were treated or considered the same or equal in the Ottoman Empire, like the myths produced by some about Muslim Andalusia, which Mark Cohen, among others, has rather convincingly deconstructed.[17] Jews were not treated the same or equal to Muslims. There was a hierarchy with Muslims at the top, followed by Roman Orthodox, Armenians and Jews, in descending order. From the point of view of modern democracies with a commitment to full equality and principled anti-discrimination policies, the second-class status of Jews and Christians in Ottoman society is unacceptable. However, to avoid any misunderstanding or counter-myth-making, one has to emphasize that in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, when the empire was on the rise, Ottomans offered the least degrading and most respectable treatment to their Jewish subjects of any state in Western or Eastern Europe, or perhaps even in the world.

Protestants as the fifth pillar?

Other religious communities were also extended protection, and as such, included within the Ottoman identity in later years, but none of them became demographically or politically as important as the Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Armenians and Jews. Nonetheless, Ottoman support for Protestantism deserves special attention, because of both its symbolic and its geopolitical significance. The Ottoman Empire was boldly supportive of Protestantism from the very beginning. This support was effective, with very concrete results that are with us even today in the religious geography of East-Central Europe. Most Hungarians became Protestant with the Protestant Reformation, but a very successful policy of counterreformation supported by the Austrian Habsburgs reconverted most Hungarians back to Catholicism. The most notable exception is to be found in Eastern Hungary, which was under Ottoman rule. So strong was Protestantism, and in particular Calvinism, in Ottoman Hungary that the Ottoman Hungarian city of Debrecen, the second largest city of present-day Hungary, came to be

The Easter procession of the Greek patriarch in Ottoman Jerusalem, 1910

PHOTO: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (REF. LC-DIG-PPMSCA-10677)

known as the "Calvinist Rome."[18] Likewise, Protestantism became hegemonic among the Transylvanian Germans[19] in the Ottoman Hungarian province of "Erdel." Sultan Osman II ("Young Osman") wanted to bring Protestantism fully under Ottoman protection just as Orthodox Christianity had been since 1453.

The Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 (the "Battle of Vienna") was instigated by Hungarian Protestants seeking help from the Ottomans against Catholic Austrian Habsburg oppression, as discussed at length elsewhere.[20] Ottomans undertook the Siege of Vienna in 1683 because Imre Thököly, the Protestant Hungarian king, asked the Ottomans to help him in his fight against Catholic Habsburg oppression. The failed Siege of Vienna and the 16-year-long war (1683-1699) that ensued was most emblematic of the Muslim-Protestant-Orthodox alliance that the Ottomans forged against the Catholic alliance Austrian Habsburgs spearheaded, with crucial assistance from the Catholic and Muslim Tatar forces under the leadership of the Polish king, Jan Sobieski. In the end, the Ottoman alliance lost this colossal war, which was a disastrous outcome for the Muslims, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Jews of Central Europe, and reinforced the hegemony of Catholicism. It is a huge distortion and misrepresentation of history to present the Siege of Vienna as a clash between Islam and Christianity; it was primarily a geopolitical and strategic clash between two imperial systems. But if one has to describe the Siege of Vienna and the war that ensued in religious terms, it is more accurate to describe it as a clash between the alliance of Islam, Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity and Judaism[21] against Catholicism.

Ottoman identity: Islamic but not Muslim

The role of Islam in maintaining Ottoman toleration of religious diversity is hotly debated.[22] As highlighted above, it is true that there were very important geopolitical and strategic motivations for Ottomans to nurture religious diversity, and to enlist the support of every religious community, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, who had grievances against Roman Catholicism headed by the pope in Rome, allied with the Habsburgs. However, let us not forget that Ottomans also had crucial Catholic allies that they consistently cooperated with, such as Poland against the Habsburgs and Russia (with the notable exception of the Siege of Vienna and the Hotin war), France against the Papal-Habsburg encirclement, and anti-Habsburg Catholic Hungarian nobleman, among others.

Nonetheless, even without this geopolitical motivation, Islam alone already provided the legal, philosophical, and discursive framework that supported religious diversity and toleration of non-Muslims. Even the first Muslim city-state of Medina included Jews, and already in its first century, the Islamic empire included and tolerated very large Christian populations. In the Ottoman Empire, the most significant non-Muslim populations that were tolerated included Orthodox Christians, Armenians, Jews and Protestants, as summarized above. For example, the religious demography of Ottoman Thessalonica, İzmit and Beirut, located in the Balkan, Anatolian and Arab Middle Eastern provinces of the empire, respectively, show the prominent role of Orthodox Christians, Armenians, Jews and Catholics in Ottoman cities. In all of Western and Central Europe under Catholic Christian rule, one cannot find a single example of city like Thessalonica, İzmit, or Beirut, where such large groups of Jews, Muslims and Christians lived side by side (see Tables 1, 2 and 3).

However, the Ottomans were not exceptional when compared to other Islamic states. In Iberia and Sicily,

Muslim emirates tolerated Catholics and Jews, and in the Indian subcontinent, the Muslim Mughal Empire tolerated Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and others. Islamic toleration of religious diversity was a global, more or less systematic, phenomenon, and unlike the prevailing opinion in English-language publications, it was not even limited to tolerating Christians and Jews, because in many cases even adherents of non-Abrahamic faiths (such as Hindus) were tolerated. The Ottoman Empire, like the equally tolerant and perhaps even more diverse Mughal Empire, was Islamic in its framework, which did not contradict, but rather complemented, the fact that it was *not* fully Muslim in a demographic sense. Therefore, in conclusion, the Ottoman identity was definitely "Islamic but not Muslim," a religiously diverse identity made coherent through Islamic jurisprudence, and one that proved to be geopolitically prudent.

It is worth emphasizing once again that the Ottoman identity was hierarchically ordered with Muslims at the top, followed by Roman Orthodox, Armenians, and Jews, respectively. These are the four principle religious communities described here as the four pillars, although there were also others. Moreover, as Benjamin Braude emphasized and documented, Ottoman officials often did not literally use the word *millet* to refer to any *millet* other than the Muslims.[23] Late Ottoman administrators and modern historians of the Ottomans adopted these terms (*millet* and *millet* system) in describing the historical and contemporary multireligious social reality they encountered. Because of the inherently hierarchical and differential ordering of the religious communities, different words and adjectives were used with reference to Muslims and non-Muslims' official records, as Bruce Masters documented in his study of Christians and Jews in the Arabic-speaking lands of the Ottoman Empire.[24] Such hierarchical usage of words in differentiating between Muslims and non-Muslims was supposed to preserve the boundaries between the religiously defined *millets*, and although they all had a common identity as Ottoman subjects, certainly prevented the emergence of homogenous and uniform "we" feeling in the same sense as the modern nation-states aspire to and often succeed in creating.

Religious breakdown of the population of Ottoman Thessalonica (1881)

	Population	Percentage of total
Roman Orthodox	36,985	35.72
Jewish	34,523	33.3
Muslim	29,486	28.4
Bulgarian Orthodox	1,117	1.08
Catholic	471	0.45
Armenian	149	0.14
Foreign citizens	810	0.78
Total	103,544	100

Source: Compiled from Kemal Karpat, Ottoman Population, 1830-1914 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985), 134-5.

Religious breakdown of the population of Ottoman İzmit (1881)

	Population	Percentage of total
Muslim	19,248	48.38
Armenian	15,903	39.97
Roman Orthodox	3,576	8.99
Protestant	715	1.80
Jewish	162	0.40
Catholic	133	0.33
Foreign Citizen	105	0.26
Total	39,789	100

Source: Compiled from Kemal Karpat, Ottoman Population, 1830-1914 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985), 128-9.

Religious breakdown of the population of Ottoman Beirut (1881)

	Population	Percentage of total
Muslim	22,662	43.31
Catholic	14,505	27.72
Roman Orthodox	13,294	25.41
Jewish	1,197	2.29
Protestant	342	0.65
Latin	242	0.42
Armenian	86	0.16
Total	52,328	100

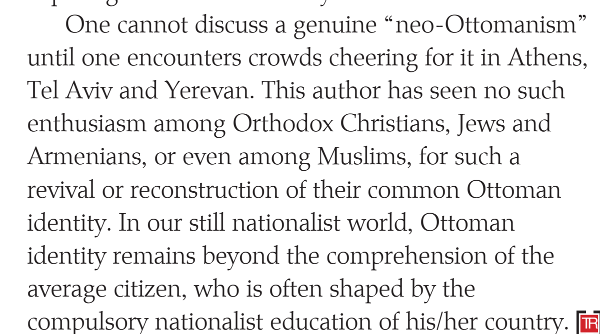
Source: Compiled from Kemal Karpat, Ottoman Population, 1830-1914 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985), 128-9.

Ottoman heritage and multiculturalism today: neo-Ottoman dreams, nationalist realities

Both Islam as a religion and the memory of the Ottoman Empire were mostly used in a very positive way to support and advance the cause of multiculturalism in Turkey from the 1950s, in particular during the last decade under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AK

Party) governments, as this author has discussed in great detail elsewhere.[25] However, despite ubiquitous praise of Ottoman tolerance and multiculturalism in Turkey, unfortunately the Ottomans are still perceived through a Turkish nationalist prism today, as reflected in numerous popular movies, TV series and novels on the Ottomans. For example, sultans hardly ever speak any language other than Turkish in movies, whereas in reality almost all the sultans spoke several languages, and often very fluently. Also, all the wives -- and hence the mothers -- of the sultans since Mehmed II, and almost all the Grand Viziers, were converts of Christian origin, another politically motivated policy that made the Ottomans perhaps the most thoroughly Christo-Islamic dynasty in world history.

However, Turkish perception of Ottoman identity today is mediated through a thoroughly nationalist lens, even using "Turks" and "Ottomans" interchangeably, and almost never presenting the indispensability of Orthodox Christians, Armenians and Jews to Ottoman identity, as bureaucrats, viziers, soldiers, composers, architects and scientists, among others. The same is true, perhaps even more so, with other successor states of the Ottoman Empire: Armenia, Greece (the "Hellenic Republic"), Israel (the "Jewish state"), Serbia and other post-Ottoman Balkan and Middle Eastern states, in their official history curricula, also depict the Ottomans through a nationalist lens as a "foreign" state and identity, instead of describing it as a Judeo-Christo-Islamic identity, in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews participated. Even post-Ottoman states with nominally Muslim majority populations such as Albania, Syria and Iraq promote a view of history that is very anti-Ottoman, depicting the Ottoman identity as the "other."



One cannot discuss a genuine "neo-Ottomanism" until one encounters crowds cheering for it in Athens, Tel Aviv and Yerevan. This author has seen no such enthusiasm among Orthodox Christians, Jews and Armenians, or even among Muslims, for such a revival or reconstruction of their common Ottoman identity. In our still nationalist world, Ottoman identity remains beyond the comprehension of the average citizen, who is often shaped by the compulsory nationalist education of his/her country.

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ENDNOTES

1. In contrast, in official Turkish historiography since the 1930s, it is claimed that Turkish history begins in Central Asia with states such as those of the Asiatic Huns, continuing through pre-Islamic Asiatic and Turkic Islamic dynasties such as the Ghaznevids, Seljuks, Mughals and Ottomans, culminating in the Republic of Turkey.
2. Quoted in Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir, eds., *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 5; from Halil Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600,* trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (New York: Praeger, 1973), 41.
3. Nora Fisher Onar, "Echoes of a Universalism Lost: Rival Representations of the Ottomans in Today's Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45 no. 2 (2009): 229-241.
4. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
5. Norman Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities," first published in *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962); 73-94, reprinted in Tezcan and Barbir, *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World,* xxv.
6. Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 109.
7. Şener Aktürk, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Dini Çeşitlilik: Farklı Olan Neydi?," *Doğu Batı* no. 51 (2009-2010): 133-158.
8. Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
9. Barkey, *Empire of Difference,* 131.
10. Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği: 14-17. Yüzyıllarda Rum/Rumi Aidiyet ve İmgeleri* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004).
11. Ibid., 25.
12. Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
13. Barkey, *Empire of Difference,* 131.
14. I believe the late Marshall Hodgson of the University of Chicago made a similar statement to this effect. The closest I could find in his magnum opus is the following statement: "Many non-Muslims -- Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc. -- must be recognized not only as living socially within the sphere of the Muslim culture; they must be recognized as integral and contributory participants in it, engaging actively in many of its cultural dialogues." Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Volume One* (Chicago: university of Chicago Press, 1974), 90. Hodgson's statement as such is not as specific as the one formulated here in asserting that (regardless of whether Hodgson wrote or uttered such a statement), Armenians and Sephardic Jews, at least until the 20th century, should be considered part of the Islamic civilization.
15. Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (New York: Vintage, 2004).
16. David Wasserstein, "How Islam Saved the Jews," public lecture at SOAS, University of London, May 14, 2012, available at http://www.soas.ac.uk/religions/events/jordan-lectures-in-comparative-religion/14may2012-opening-lecture-how-islam-saved-the-jews.html.
17. Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
18. Debrecen was also the site of the Kossuth rebellion for Hungarian independence in 1849, also supported by the Ottomans, however symbolically by then due to Ottoman weakness. Nonetheless, Kossuth rebellion shows that the alliance between Protestants, Hungarian nationalists, and the Ottomans continued well into the 19th century.
19. *Siebenbürger Sachsen* in German.
20. Aktürk, "September 11, 1683."
21. For example, Leopold I expelled Jews from Vienna in 1669/70. He was still Habsburg emperor during the Siege of Vienna.
22. Barkey, *Empire of Difference,* 104.
23. Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 70.
24. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32. They used different Arabic words in recording the patronymics of Muslim and non-Muslim men (but not in the patronymics of women) and different words in referring to dead Muslims and dead non-Muslims.
25. Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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