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From *Serbestiyet* to *Hürriyet*: Ottoman Statesmen and the Question of Freedom during the Late Enlightenment

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The historian al-Jabartī notes that Bonaparte's decree in Arabic to the Egyptian public in 1798 began with a preamble mentioning "the Republic of France, built upon the principles of liberty (*ḥurrıyya*) and equality (*taswıyya*)."[1] Such sporadic references in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Arabic and Turkish sources have often been highlighted as the earliest signs of an era that was marked by a sudden and traumatic discovery of European thought by Ottoman learned men.[2] Modern scholarship devoted very little attention to the peculiar trajectories of such important vocabulary in the context of Islamic and Ottoman history, and tended to consider nineteenth-century intellectuals who reasoned through these terms as simply interpreters of the ideas of the Enlightenment. This approach largely reduced the nineteenth-century intellectual history of Muslim societies to a process of domestication of European ideas by stripping the traditional vocabulary of its cultural content and anachronistically attributing modern meanings to it. The paradigm-setting works of Bernard Lewis and Niyazi Berkes, for example, turned westernization into the

* Note: All unattributed translations are mine.

1 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *Maẓhar al-Taqdīs bi-Dhahāb Dawla al-Faransīs*, ed. ʿAbd al-Rāziq ʿĪsā and ʿImād Aḥmad Hilāl, Cairo, al-ʿArabī li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 1998, pp. 103-108; For Eng. see Shmuel Moreh, ed. and transl., *al-Jabartī's chronicle of the first seven months of the French occupation of Egypt: Muḥarram-Rajab 1213, 15 June-December 1798: Tārīkh Muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1975, p. 40; al-Jabartī's contemporary, Niqula al-Turk*, recorded the same document by citing only *ḥurrıyya*. See Nakoula el-Turk, *Histoire de l'Expédition des Français en Égypte*, ed. and transl. Desgranges Ainé, Paris, l'Imprimerie Royale, 1839, Fr. 21, Ar. 18.

2 For Bernard Lewis, *ḥurrıyya* first appeared in al-Jabartī's *Maẓhar al-Taqdīs*. See Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 111; Daniel Newman, however, credits al-Ṭahṭāwī for using it first in 1834. See Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in Paris by an Egyptian Cleric* (*1826-31*), intr. and transl., Daniel L. Newman, London, Saqi, 2004, pp. 195-196.

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prime signifier of late Ottoman history,[3] which Şerif Mardin, unconvinced by this reductionism, sought to understand Ottoman thought within a broader context of intellectual currents in both Europe and the Ottoman Empire.[4] But by confining his inquiry to a structural analysis of Ottoman social experience, Mardin pointed to Turkish exceptionalism, indicating that such staples of European modernization as equality and freedom, albeit different, were not foreign to pre-modern Ottomans.[5]

This study, however, is not about the question of freedom in Ottoman or broader Muslim thought but about how Ottoman learned men around the turn of the nineteenth century engaged with this question through conventional and European political vocabulary. For this undertaking Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt still provides an intriguing starting point. Bonaparte had no intention of spreading the Revolution abroad or of galvanizing the Egyptians in the name of liberty and equality, and the word *ḥurriyya* was certainly not *liberté* in the way it may have been understood by his large contingent of scholars. Besides prescribing order and submission, the main purpose of this propagandistic decree was to legitimize French rule by invoking principles of legitimacy upheld in Egyptian society. So confounding and yet nuanced was this call that al-Jabartī had to write a long commentary decoding what messages were conveyed to different sections of the public. Written in terms acceptable also to Jewish and Coptic-Christian communities, it mainly invoked Islam and Ottoman rule. In the decree, Bonaparte claimed to be the *Serasker*, or commander-in-chief, the highest military title conferred by the Ottoman sultan. The French were Muslims, having arrived in Egypt to defend the Ottoman sultanate and "liberate (*khalās*) their (the Egyptians') religion and rights (*ḥaq*) from the hands of oppressors," namely, the Mamluks, who were accused of disobeying the Ottoman sultan and oppressing their subjects. As far as al-Jabartī understood it, the *ḥurriyya* in the document meant that "they (the French) are not slaves like the Mamluks."[6] The most diligent observer of Bonaparte's invasion had not yet an informed idea about *liberté* but seems to have acutely

3 Among others, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961 and Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal, McGill University Press, 1964.

4 Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962.

5 Mardin, "Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective," in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin eds., *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, Berlin, W. de Gruyter, 1988, pp. 22-35.

6 Al-Jabartī, *al-Jabartī's Chronicle of the French Occupation*, transl. Shmuel Moreh, Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 1993, p. 28.

grasped what the French intended to convey by the term *ḥurriyya*. As reflected in Edward Lane's landmark *Arabic-English Lexicon*, compiled in Egypt during the first half of the nineteenth century, the three most common meanings of *ḥurriyya* given in classic Arabic dictionaries were the states of being freeborn, generous, and noble.[7] Because of their immediate or historical slave origins and despite their power and privileges, the Mamluks, also collectively known as the Circassians, had never been perceived as noble, at least in the moral sense of the term, in a predominantly free Arab society. Thus the use of *ḥurriyya* was itself an anti-Mamluk statement, a rhetorical device to delegitimize their resistance against the French.

At around the time when al-Jabartī was acquainting himself with French thought in Egypt, a number of Ottoman ambassadors were reporting their eyewitness accounts of European politics and culture to the Ottoman court in the form of travelogues and diplomatic dispatches. Particularly curious about France, these ambassadors struggled to make sense of the Revolution and its aftermath. None of these statesmen spoke European languages, so they were totally dependent on dragomans, interpreters who were either Ottoman non-Muslims with fluency in foreign languages or Europeans who knew Turkish. If grasping current events and the talk of the day was difficult, conveying them to an Ottoman audience was even more problematic. But Atıf Efendi, the Ottoman head of foreign affairs (*Reisü'l-küttab*) in the year of Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition, seems suspiciously at ease in his report on the French Revolution and its effects. In contempt and dread, he stated that the rabble who led the uprising propagated "so-called equality (*müsavat*) and freedom (*serbestiyet*) for the attainment of ultimate worldly happiness."[8] Derived from the same Arabic root, *müsavat* was a near synonym of *taswiyya* but was more commonly used in Persian and Turkish political writings. *Serbestiyet*, however, was a Turkish neologism created from a Persian adjective (*serbest*) cast in Arabic form.[9] Atıf Efendi was neither the first nor the only one to use *serbestiyet*, which had already added new meanings into its semantic field invoking freedom. Yet it was *hürriyet* that came to be the standard term by which the Ottoman intelligentsia would eventually discuss freedom only half a century later, in both Arabic and Turkish languages.

7 Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Book 1 Part 2, London, Williams and Norgate, 1865, p. 538.

8 Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, Istanbul, Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1309 [1891], pp. 311-319.

9 Bernard Lewis, "Serbestiyet," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 41 (1985) pp. 47-52.

So why then did Ottoman statesmen choose *serbestiyet* among a number of other likely candidates, and, more importantly, why did subsequent Ottoman intellectuals increasingly dislike this term and replace it with *hürriyet*? A cursory examination of dictionaries on Ottoman Turkish shows that *serbestiyet* or *hürriyet* were by no means the only terms related to the broader concept of freedom. Even when *hürriyet* had become the standard term for freedom, James Redhouse's *Turkish Lexicon* (1861), for example, still highlighted about a dozen words corresponding to freedom and liberty: "*Hürriyet*, *azadelik*, *ıtk*, *serbestiyet*, *beraet*, *imtiyaz*, *muafiyet*, *gedüklülük*, *ihtiyar*, *irade*, *muhtarlık*, *halas*, *istiklal*."[10] From the seventeenth century onwards, European lexicographers recorded a rich repository of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish terms drawn from different strands of Ottoman thought ranging from jurisprudence to Sufism. Although a comprehensive survey of historical dictionaries and semantic analysis of all Ottoman Turkish vocabulary on freedom is beyond the scope of this study, a few examples will help illustrate the history of linguistic endeavors to juxtapose specific conceptions of freedom in European contexts with those of the Ottoman.

Hieronymus Megiser's Latin-Turkish and Turkish-Latin dictionaries appended to his *Institutionum Linguae Turcicae Libri Quatuor*, one of the earliest European works on the Turkish language, published in 1612, do not have any entry on freedom-related vocabulary.[11] Giovanni Malino's 1641 *Dittionario della Lingua Italiana Tvrchesca* gives only one word for *libertà*, which is *azadlıḳ*,[12] a Turkification of the Persian word *āzādegī*. While *āzādegī* later evolved into the principal term for freedom in modern Persian, *azadlıḳ* lost its philosophical and political connotations in Turkish. Franciszek Meninski's monumental *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium* (1680), however, provides an extensive survey of terms, phrases, and idioms pertaining to freedom in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, as well as in five European languages including Latin and French. Meninski gives a nuanced and detailed account of five principal terms related to freedom. As the following highlights show, Meninski manages to provide a wide spectrum of nomenclature on freedom drawn from Ottoman and European thought in different languages. The Turkish word *ihtiyar*, for example, is defined as *electio*, *optio*, *arbitrium* in Latin; *elettione*, *arbitrio*, *libertà*, *libera volontà* in Italian; and *choix*, *arbitre*, *liberté* in French, whereas *ihtiyar-ı*

10 J. W. Redhouse, *A Lexicon, English and Turkish*, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1861, p. 348.

11 Hieronymus Megiser, *Institutionum Linguae Turcicae Libri Quatuor*, Leipzig, Selbstverl, 1612.

12 Giovanni Molino, *Dittionario della Lingua Italiana Tvrchesca*, Rome, Antonio Maria Gioiosi, 1641.

cüz'î is defined as free will (*liberum arbitrium*).[13] For *azad*, along with its equivalents in Persian (*āzāde*) and Arabic (*muʿattaq* and *ḥurr al-ʿaṣl*), Meninski gives its Latin counterparts as *liber*, *liberarus*, *libertus*, *manumissus*, *solutus*, *immunis*; and its corresponding terms in French as *libre*, *deliuré*, *mis en liberté*, *affranchi*, *exempt*. For *azadlık*, or the Persian *āzādī*, Meninski cites only the Latin *libertas*.[14] For *hürriyet* and *serbestlik* Meninski's account is conspicuously less elaborate, which may suggest that the Ottoman usages of *ihtiyar* and *azadlık* were considered more suitable for a range of freedom-related terms in European languages at the time. Yet, he provides for *hürriyet* a more precise definition than *serbest*: *libertas* and *ingenuitas* in Latin.[15] For *serbest*, along with its synonyms *muaf* and *müsellem*, Meninski gives *liber*, *sui juris*, *exemptus*, *libertus* in Latin and *affranchi*, *exempt*, *libre* in French. There is no entry for the Arabo-Persian word *serbestiyet*, but for its synonym, the Perso-Turkish *serbestlik*, he gives *exemptio* in Latin and *exemption*, *affranchissement*, *franchise*, *dispense* in French.[16] Antony Ciadirgi's 1832 abridgement of this work, titled *Dizionario Turco, Arabo e Persiano*, omits *ihtiyar* and *hürriyet* and only briefly defines *azadlık* and *serbestlik*, in full agreement with Meninski.[17]

Artin Hindoglu's short French-Turkish dictionary of 1831 looks less elaborate but more specific as it simply defines *liberté* through three synonyms—*azadlık*, *serbestiyet*, and *serbestlik*—with no mention of *ihtiyar* or *hürriyet*.[18] Similar to Hindoglu's work, Daniel Kieffer's 1837 *Dictionnaire Turc-Français* removes *ihtiyar* and *hürriyet* from the political content of freedom, as it confines the former to free will in the philosophical sense, and the latter to freedom in the sense of not being enslaved.[19] But unlike Hindoglu, Kieffer strictly distinguishes *azadlık* from *serbestiyet*. *Azadlık* is defined as "*liberté, condition d'un homme qui n'est pas esclave, qui est bien né. Ce mot n'a pas le sens de liberté politique dans le sens européen*"; whereas *serbestiyet* and *serbestlik* are defined as "1. *liberté, exemption, franchise*; 2. *liberté politique* (*dans le sens*

13 Franciszek Meninski, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae*, Vienna, 1680, pp. 94-96.

14 Meninski, *Thesaurus*, pp. 156-158.

15 Meninski, *Thesaurus*, p. 1752.

16 Meninski, *Thesaurus*, pp. 2583-2584.

17 Antony Ciadirgi, *Dizionario Turco, Arabo e Persiano*, Milano, Luigi Nervetti, 1832, p. 40, p. 754.

18 Artin Hindoglu, *Dictionnaire abrégé Français-Turc*, Vienna, F. Beck, 1831, p. 548.

19 Thomas Xavier Bianchi and Jean Daniel Kieffer, *Dictionnaire Turc-Français*, 2nd ed., vol. 1., Paris, Typ. de Mme Ve Dondey-Dupré, 1850, p. 34, p. 694.

qu'on y attache en Europe)."[20] Hindoglu and Kieffer reflect the prominence of *serbestiyet* in Ottoman usage during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when leading Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals were not yet fully acquainted with the *liberté* of the Enlightenment. Having been prepared as practical reference works, these dictionaries are not particularly attuned either to the broader Ottoman thought or to the newly brewing discourse on freedom as the Ottomans grew more exposed to European thought.

It was Alexander Handjeri's massive *Dictionnaire Français—Arabe—Persan et Turc* that provided the broadest treatment of liberté and its corresponding vocabulary in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish since Meninski.[21] With many examples from legal, political, and philosophical usages, the exceptionally long entry on *liberté*, its derivatives, and various constructs provides an essay-length treatment of the idea of freedom specifically geared towards the needs of a growing number of Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals being exposed to European thought via French. The principal term for *liberté* in Handjeri is not *hürriyet* or *serbestiyet* but *ruhsat*, where "le pouvoir d'agir ou de n'agir pas" is given as *ruhsatu'l irade* and *ruhsatu'l ihtiyar*. For *libre*, in the sense "qui a le pouvoir d'agir ou de n'agir pas," Handjeri highlights such terms as *ihtiyar* and *muhtar*. Similarly, "liberté politique, la faculté dont une nation jouit par la constitution du gouvernement, de participer à la puissance législative" is given as *ruhsat-ı mülki*. In line with previous dictionaries, *hürriyet* and *azadlık* denote an "état d'une personne de condition libre." *Serbestlik*, on the other hand, is given as the Turkish equivalent of the Arabic *ruhkṣa*, meaning freedom from constraints. It is further cited along with *istiklal*, *istibdad*, and *azadelik* as meaning "toute sorte d'indépendance des commandemens d'autrui." Handjeri does not allude to the philosophical content of *hürriyet* in Ottoman political thought but looks well aware of the theological significance of *irade* and *ihtiyar* in Islamic tradition. Each of the dozen or so terms he uses refers to a specific condition or application of freedom, and none is singled out as the governing term for freedom. Among them, *hürriyet* does not appear to be a likely candidate for this role during the second half of the nineteenth century. This requires us to look deeper into the political vocabulary of Ottoman intellectuals who engaged with European thought.

20 Bianchi and Kieffer, *Dictionnaire Turc-Français*, p. 61, p. 1019.

21 Alexandre Handjeri, *Dictionnaire Français—Arabe—Persan et Turc*, vol. 2, Moscow, l'Imprimerie de l'Université Impériale, 1841, pp. 397-400. I thank Edhem Eldem for bringing this source to my attention.

Kâtib Çelebi and İbrahim Müteferrika on European States

Besides dictionaries and dragomans, Ottoman ambassadors and intellectuals exploring Europe mostly had to rely on what was offered in works of history and geography. From the late sixteenth century onwards an increasing number of intellectuals grew more curious about European politics and society. Among them, Kâtib Çelebi, also known as Hadji Khalifa, wrote in 1654 one of the earliest digests of European states, which initiated a new genre adopted by many subsequent authors.[22] As Kâtib Çelebi revealed, what prompted him to write the treatise was the fact that Islamic sources were full of superstitions regarding Christian states, which now extended their power across the world, and therefore Muslims needed truthful information about their governments, laws, and beliefs.[23] He categorized governments of the world into three forms—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—through which he identified and examined European states.[24] By Kâtib Çelebi's time, aristocracy and democracy, extensively discussed by medieval Muslim philosophers, had long been abandoned in Ottoman political thought. Although Kâtib Çelebi was familiar with medieval political philosophy, he had no Turkish vocabulary to characterize such political systems. So, he had to build his own conceptual framework. Being a political reformer deeply concerned with the present state of government, he did this by borrowing political nomenclature from the existing administrative usage. Aristocracy was then rendered as the rule of notables (*tedbir-i ayan*), of which Venice was the prime example. The model was easily grasped by the Ottoman reader at this time, since urban notables (*ayans*) had already acquired considerable power as intermediaries between the formal authorities of the state and urban populations in Ottoman cities.[25]

Kâtib Çelebi called the Dutch (Felemenk) and British forms of democracy the rule of the elected (*tedbir-i muhtarin*). People from each district would choose and elect (*intihab ve ihtiyar*) a manager (*müdebbir*) to represent them

22 For a comparative evaluation of three such treatises see V. L. Ménage, "Three Ottoman Treatises on Europe," in C. E. Bosworth ed., *Iran and Islam*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1971, pp. 421-33.

23 Kâtib Çelebi, *İrşadü'l Hayara ila Tarihi'l Yunan ve'r Rum ve'n Nasara*, MS, Sadberk Hanım Müzesi, H.K.Y. 177/3, ff. 164b-165a.

24 This framework was adopted by Müteferrika in his 1731 treatise on reforming the Ottoman military. See İbrahim Müteferrika, *İbrahim Müteferrika ve Usûlü'l-Hikem fî Nizâmi'l-Ümem*, ed. Adil Şen, Ankara, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995, pp. 130-131.

25 İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic Society*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1977, pp. 27-53.

in the council (*divan*) where these chosen managers would elect ten among them to oversee public affairs.[26] Already being used in reference to the election of wardens of guilds (*kethüda*) in the seventeenth century, *intihab* and *ihtiyar* came into wider use in the eighteenth century when members of the council of notables (*meclis-i ayan*) in the provinces and town heads were chosen.[27] Kâtib Çelebi named the main governing body in a democracy a *divan*, after Ottoman councils with executive and judicial powers. He did not use the term *meclis*, which denoted consultative decision-making assemblies with no binding power in Ottoman practice. Yet *meclis* gradually replaced *divan* in later Ottoman thought as the standard term for parliament.

Kâtib Çelebi seems to have been most intrigued by the Spanish and Venetian models. For him, "the Spanish King (*padişah*) succeeds by lineage, not by election and choice (*tayin*) of people, but upon his enthronement he enters into a contract (*muahede-i akdeyn*) with the public."[28] Further, the king pledges not to act against existing laws. This mode of investiture and ruling could hardly raise objections from Kâtib Çelebi's reformist contemporaries, from Koçi Bey to Hezarfen Hüseyin, who were staunch advocates of Ottoman law as the foundational principle of government.[29] When considering potentially objectionable matters, Kâtib Çelebi expressed his admiration for the Spanish system: "although the King of Spain has sovereignty (*istila ve tasallut*) over his subjects he is not independent (*müstakil*) in his decisions and manages public affairs by relying on the consultation and decision (*meşveret ve rey*) of twelve representatives from among the dignitaries of the state and representatives of the public (*ayan-ı devlet ve vükela-i cumhur*); otherwise his rule has no power." Yet it was Venice that impressed him most: "the reason why Venice has never been taken over by others is their good government (*hüsn-i tedbir*)." This good government was established when Venice shifted to aristocracy (*tedbir-i ekâbir*) from democracy. In his detailed portrayal of government, he highlighted how councils (*divans*) were elected and how they functioned autonomously within their respective spheres of authority. For Kâtib Çelebi, this practice checked the accumulation of too much power in the hands of a single individual and created a sturdy order that could not be broken down.[30]

26 Kâtib Çelebi, *İrşadü'l Hayara*, f. 168b.

27 İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization".

28 Kâtib Çelebi, *İrşadü'l Hayara*, f. 189b.

29 Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risâlesi*, ed. Yılmaz Kurt, Ankara, Ecdâd Yayınları, 1994; Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhîsü'l-Beyân fî Kavânîn-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Sevim İlgürel, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1998.

30 Kâtib Çelebi, *İrşadü'l Hayara*, ff. 194a-195b.

Kâtib Çelebi described European states and their governing principles by almost total reliance on current Ottoman political terminology. His views as a social critic and political reformist are implicit in his project of exposing the reader to what he thought were the most successful principles underlying the governance of certain European states. He made his intention more explicit in his historical and geographical works that made use of European sources that, in addition to feeding his intellectual curiosity, provided solutions for the declining Ottoman state as he perceived it.[31] While elaborating on how *divans* functioned in Spain and Venice, for example, he elucidated how *meşveret* should properly be conducted. Likewise, when he praised the Venetians' order and cited their practice of forceful appropriation of wealth from the rich in times of exigency, to be returned when normal conditions resumed, this was a covert criticism of the arbitrary confiscation of Ottoman statesmen's property, which had turned into a frequently abused remedy to the state's financial woes.[32] In his use of European examples, Kâtib Çelebi was a very early precursor of the Young Turks, who strived to substantiate their reform projects by alluding to working institutions in Europe that they also thought existed in some form in the Ottoman past.[33]

An anonymous treatise on the current state of Europe written in 1725 shared Kâtib Çelebi's curiosity about less familiar forms of government. The author, who may well have been İbrahim Müteferrika, the co-founder of the first Ottoman press and publisher of Kâtib Çelebi's works, described political structures of Europe, including the Ottoman Empire, structures that he defined as a hierarchy descending from empires to cities. For him, the Holy Roman Empire was, in fact, a republic composed of seven herzogs (*herseks*) who would choose the emperor by consensus. Although the emperor was sovereign (*müstakil*) within his own domains, his imperial authority was limited by mutual obligations to virtually independent dukes.[34] Among the rulers of Europe, he found

31 Haji Khalifeh, *The History of the Maritime Wars of the Turks*, tranls. James Mitchel, London, Oriental Translation Fund, 1831, pp. 3-4.

32 Kâtib Çelebi's criticism was in line with the oft-quoted principles of good governance in Ottoman writings on statecraft. A late-sixteenth-century official historian, Talikizade, for example, presented the lack of confiscation as one of the unique qualities of Ottoman statecraft. Ta'liḳīzāde, *Şehnāme-i Hümāyūn*, ed. Christine Woodhead as *Ta'liḳīzāde's Şehnāme-i Hümāyūn: A History of the Ottoman Campaign into Hungary, 1593-94*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983, p. 130.

33 See, for example, Namık Kemal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Istanbul, Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1326, pp. 367-373.

34 *İcmal-i Ahval-i Avrupa* (MS, Milli Kütüphane, Yz A. 1404), ff. 4a-6b.

the Russian tsar to have the most independent authority (*istiklal*).[35] Like Kâtib Çelebi, the author is more informative about republics, a form he elaborated on through his descriptions of Venice, the Netherlands, and Poland. As a republic, Venice did not have an independent sovereign, and the state was run by the consent of its dignitaries, who were elected by the public for a fixed tenure.[36] The Dutch system, he explained, was a *Staat* (*istat*) regime, which he called a republic of agreement (*cumhur-ı müttefika*), although it was not technically a republic: in a republic, the executive power (*tenfiz-i ahkâm*) would be exercised by a group of people, whereas in a *Staat* it was delegated to a single elected person.[37] The Polish state was a kingdom-republic (*kırallık cumhur*) where there was no hereditary succession. The king had no independent authority and had to rule by consent (*rey ve ittifak*) of the dignitaries of the republic.[38]

Both Kâtib Çelebi and Müteferrika confined their digests of European governments to an informative explanation of institutions and processes with little interest in political philosophy or social ideals. Their use of Ottoman administrative vocabulary creates an impression that there was no qualitative difference between Ottoman and European systems of rule. Even democracies and republics of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as England and the Netherlands, were made legible through the prism of certain Ottoman tributary states such as Ragusa, where a republican form of government was exercised within the broader imperial system. *İhtiyar* continued to be used in Kâtib Çelebi's sense, as freedom of choice, without any expansion of its semantic range. *Serbestiyet*, however, gained new meanings and turned into the principal term for *liberté*, because Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals were first exposed to *liberté* as a strictly political concept that they conceived of through the prism of their own political praxis.

Free Prebends in Ottoman Administrative Practice

The author of *İcmal* employed the term *serbestiyet* only once, to highlight the cities in the Habsburg domains that were totally free from external encroachments. He likened their ancient liberties (*serbestiyet-i kadimeleri*) to *ocaklık*, a form of Ottoman administrative practice in areas mainly populated by Kurds and Turcomans where the traditional tribal chief was confirmed as governor

35 *İcmal*, f. 27b.
36 *İcmal*, f. 14b.
37 *İcmal*, f. 24b.
38 *İcmal*, f. 26b.

with some degree of autonomy while the land incomes were granted to external officials.[39] *Ocaklıks* were part of a special class of Ottoman administrative divisions that were granted certain privileges, among which the most common type was known as *serbest tımar*.[40] These large, free prebends, which could include villages and towns, were assigned to high-ranking officials and pious foundations. They were named free because of the fiscal, administrative, and judicial immunities they were granted. They lay outside the jurisdiction of local authorities and were managed by autonomous administrators, often with the rank of *voyvoda*, reporting directly to the beneficiary of the prebend. The residents of these entities also enjoyed considerably more freedom than ordinary subjects, as they were not liable to regular taxes, ad hoc dues, military exigencies, abuses of local governors, or prosecution from outside. At times, these privileges caused grievances among ordinary subjects, who disputed those exemptions or asked for a similar status.[41] These complaints could lead to social unrest and criticism of government, especially when the very officers managing these prebends were abusing their immunities. Numerous dispatches in Ottoman registers show that ordinary criminals often sought shelter in free prebends and could not be apprehended by local authorities. In such cases, prebend officers were frequently accused of harboring criminals and releasing them in return for bribes.[42]

But not all complaints were filed by victims of criminal acts. In most cases, local authorities or the socially upright strived to have the central government act against what they perceived to be inappropriate behavior. In one such instance, "seditious people" were reported to have engaged in playing musical instruments in neighborhoods, and producing wine to drink and sell.[43] Prebend officers were then ordered to hand over this group, which also included rebel students (*suhte*), to the local authorities for investigation. The abundance of similar documents reveals that free prebends could be used as refuges for people judged to be socially unfit or safe harbors for resistance against local authorities. This became even more common starting in the

39 *İcmal*, f. 7a; on *ocaklık*, see Halil İnalcık, "Tīmār," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden, Brill, 1954-2004.

40 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Timar," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1979.

41 İlhan Şahin and Feridun Emecen, *Osmanlılarda Divân, Bürokrasi, Ahkâm: II. Bayezid Dönemine Aid 906/1501 Tarihli Ahkâm Defteri*, Istanbul, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1994, pp. 6-7.

42 See, for example, 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (*966-968-1558-1560*), Ankara, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1993, p. 549.

43 *9 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (977-978-1569-1570), ed. Orhan Paşazade, MA Thesis, Marmara University, 2006, p. 93.

seventeenth century, as the Ottoman government increasingly decentralized and the *tımar* system grew dysfunctional. As government surveys and registers became less strict, it became more and more difficult to determine whether sought-after suspects were ordinary subjects who took refuge in these prebends or actual residents. When confronted by local authorities and told to hand over suspects, prebend officers could often respond by claiming these renegades as their own subjects.[44]

Yet despite the problems free prebends caused for the Ottoman government, the practice continued until the very end. It was a convenient way to secure a safe and relatively independent source of income for the ruling elite and pious foundations. But more importantly, when the Ottoman government attempted to abolish such privileges it often faced strong resistance justified by established conventions. Individuals and groups alike could invoke "what has been in place" to negotiate their rights and privileges with authorities. In the case of free prebends, the phrase "traditional immunities (*kadim serbestiyetler*) should be respected" became a common feature of sultanic decrees issued in cases where such rights were challenged by local authorities or ordinary subjects.[45] By the eighteenth century *serbest tımars* had already acquired some fame, or rather infamy, as places where certain liberties, denied elsewhere, could be enjoyed. In 1808, the year when a compact, *Sened-i Ittifak*, was signed between the central administration and provincial magnates, a chronicler of the time tied the rise of virtually independent provincial magnates to the institution of free prebends (*serbestiyet malikâneler*) run by the pious endowments of holy sanctuaries.[46]

Anti-Machiavel and the Ottoman Campaign to Liberate Poland

Not surprisingly it was this notion of *serbestiyet* that Ottoman statesmen had in mind when they increasingly faced questions of independence, autonomy, and liberty in Eastern Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century. When political ideologies inspired by the Enlightenment were spreading to Eastern Europe, Ottoman statesmen were much less informed about their

44 *51 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, ed. Hikmet Ülker as *Sultan'ın Emir Defteri*, Istanbul, Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı 2003, p. 37.

45 *70 Numaralı Konya Şer'iyye Sicili* (*1814-1816 M./1230-1232 H.*), ed. Nuri Ünlü, MA Thesis, Fırat Üniversitesi, 2005, p. 371.

46 Said b. Halil, *Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya*, ed. Abdullah Altun as *Said b. Halil İbrahim'in 'Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya' Adlı Eseri*, PhD Thesis, Erciyes University, 2006, p. 133.

intellectual backdrop, but they looked as eager as Russia and the Habsburgs to exploit the situation for territorial and commercial gains. Yet Ottoman decision-makers were not totally uneducated in European political thought. Mustafa III (r. 1757-74) commissioned the translation into Turkish of the Prussian monarch Frederick II's *Anti-Machiavel*, of which the only surviving manuscript was preserved in the palace library.[47] At the time, Frederick II had already acquired the fame of a philosopher king, whereas the editor of the work, Voltaire, had not yet gained his notoriety among Ottoman statesmen. In this selective and interpretive rendition of the text, the anonymous translator fully endorsed Frederick II's enlightenment critique of Machiavelli by emphasizing morality, reason, and republicanism.

Regarding the author's ideas on freedom, the translator relied on four main concepts, *cumhuriyet*, *azadelik*, *serbestiyet*, and *irade-i cüz'iye*, to render *république*, *liberté*, *indépendance*, and *liberté de l'homme*. Unlike the original author, who put *république* and *liberté* to distinct uses, the translator seems to have considered the two inseparable, as he rendered each one of them with the same construct, *cumhur ve azadelik*.[48] On the other hand, he distinguished *azadelik* from *serbestiyet*, two terms often used as synonyms by his contemporaries. To translate *liberté* as collective freedom he almost exclusively used *azadelik*. He rendered *l'ancienne liberté*, however, as *serbestiyet-i kadimeleri*, a construct taken from the administrative language used in cases of *serbest timars*.[49] But when referring to individual freedom he used *serbestiyet*, often together with *irade-i cüz'iye*. Thus he translated *liberté de l'homme*, for example, as *irade-i cüz'iye ve serbestiyet-i insaniye*, which may loosely be rendered into English as man's freewill and freedom.[50] The translator's nuanced distinction between *azadelik* and *serbestiyet*, however, did not seem to have continued, as the latter came to be the standard term for *liberté* until it was replaced by *hürriyet*.

Although the completion of the translation cannot be precisely dated, Frederick II's final chapter on the morality of relations between states seems to have been well-received by Ottoman decision-makers before they went to

47 As related by Abbé Toderini, Mustafa III had Machiavelli's *Prince* translated first. But disgusted by its amorality, he then commissioned the translation of *Anti-Machiavel* to be appended to *The Prince*. See Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, p. 198.

48 For *liberté* see *L'Anti-Machiavel ou Examen du Prince de Machiavel*, The Hague, Van Duren, 1741, p. 44 and *Anti-Machiavelli Tercümesi*, ed. Nergiz Aydoğdu as *Makyavelist Düşüncenin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, PhD Thesis, Marmara University, 2008, p. 179; for *république* see *L'Anti-Machiavel* p. 49 and *Anti-Machiavelli Tercümesi*, p. 180.

49 *L'Anti-Machiavel*, p. 49; *Anti-Machiavelli Tercümesi*, p. 180.

50 *L'Anti-Machiavel*, p. 302; *Anti-Machiavelli Tercümesi*, p. 303.

war against Russia during the reign of Mustafa III. The Prussian king wrote in *L'Anti-Machiavel* that "Il y a des occasions où il faut défendre par les armes la liberté des peuples qu'on veut opprimer par injustice."[51] According to the official chronicler of the military campaign against Russia that started in 1768 and disastrously ended in 1774, Enverî Sadullah Efendi, the reason for the war was the Ottomans' desire "to liberate (*tahlis*) the Polish people from Russian aggression and restore their liberties (*şurut-ı serbestiyetleri*) as before."[52] Despite facing strong internal opposition, the Ottoman statesmen justified their decision by claiming that the Polish Republic was under Ottoman protection and was entitled to have its privileges upheld. Enverî seems to have thought of a republic as a dependency, a weaker yet commendable form of government, under the protection of a stronger empire that recognized and defended its autonomy. The chronicler further pointed out that Russia "abolished Polish liberties (*serbestiyet-i Leh*) by force and exiled the advocates of liberty in the Polish Republic."[53] This line of justification parallels Frederick II's idea of preserving the conventional liberties of a republic upon its annexation.[54]

But when during the same conflict Russia asked the retreating Ottomans to recognize Crimean *serbestiyet* as a condition for peace, they could only counter this demand by a juristic argument claiming that Islamic law did not permit having two sovereigns (*ictima-i halifeteyn*) among Muslims.[55] Yet the Ottoman campaign that began with the ostensible goal of liberating the Polish Republic ended with the Russian liberation and later annexation of Crimea. In dealing with the crisis, Ottoman statesmen used exactly the same technical terms as in the case of free prebends and developed a legal argument stating that Polish privileges based on customs and precedents should be respected. Further, at the time of the Polish crisis, free republics, as a form of government, had already been established as part of the very imperial system the Ottomans were willing to maintain. In addition to traditional tributary states, for example, the Ottoman administration in the late eighteenth century recognized a

51 *L'Anti-Machiavel*, p. 334.

52 Enverî Sadullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Enverî*, ed. Muharrem S. Çalışkan as *Enverî Sadullah Efendi ve Tarihi'nin I. Cildi'nin Metin ve Tahlili*, PhD Thesis, Marmara University, 2000, pp. 27-28.

53 Enverî, *Tarih-i Enverîm* p. 34.

54 "Il me semble qu'un Prince, qui auroit conquis une République après avoir eu des raisons justes de lui faire la guerre, pourroit se contenter de l'avoir punie, & lui rendre ensuite la liberté." See *L'Anti-Machiavel*, p. 50.

55 Enverî, *Tarih-i Enverî*, p. 351.

number of Mediterranean islands as dependent but autonomous republics, modeled after the Republic of Dubrovnik.[56]

Yet because Crimea was already an autonomous province, its *serbestiyet* implied a different status, which could not be handled by traditional instruments. During the peace negotiations, Ottoman statesmen understood Russian claims for Crimean *serbestiyet* as a form of independence leading to the establishment of a new sovereign state (*devlet-i cedid*). This new kind of *serbestiyet* was claimed to have been demanded by the Crimeans themselves, who sought the right to choose (*muhtar*) their own Khan. Startled, Ottoman negotiators quickly grasped the nature of the problem and acted to contain it by recognizing Crimean independence in return for the Ottoman ruler's recognition as caliph by the Crimeans.[57]

Having inherited the Crimean legacy, Ottoman statesmen writing during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807), grew increasingly skeptical about *serbestiyet* and, along with *cumhuriyet*, cited it as a sign of weakness and disruption. Although this allegedly reformist sultan promoted greater participation in decision-making, his reign witnessed the rise of Janissary corps and of provincial notables as virtually independent political actors. As reported by a contemporaneous chronicler of events, Said b. Halil, Ottoman statesmen feared that if the Janissaries came to discover the "secret of *serbestiyet*," catastrophic consequences might ensue, as the chronicler tied the rise of provincial magnates and large estates to the exploitation of free prebends.[58] For Said b. Halil, Austria had lost its power because it was weakened from inside through the *serbestiyets* acquired by dukes in the form of shared sovereignty (*müşterek saltanat*) and Poland declined after its adoption of *cumhuriyet*.[59]

The French Revolution and Its Aftermath

If the Crimean crisis taught the Ottoman statesmen that *serbestiyet* could lead to independence and territorial loss, the primary lesson of the French Revolution was that it could bring down a dynasty and destroy the traditional order. The villains of these circumstances were "contemporary philosophers

56 Said b. Halil, *Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya*, pp. 212-214.

57 By inserting into the treaty that Crimea was to be both *serbest* and *müstakil* (sovereign), Ottoman officials hoped to secure its independence from Russian annexation. For a discussion of terms used in the ensuing treaty, see Lewis, "Serbestiyet."

58 Said b. Halil, *Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya*, p. 133, p. 201.

59 Said b. Halil, *Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya*, pp. 117-118.

advocating *serbestiyet*," because ideas were already noted to be spreading among the Greek communities (*Yunan Cumhurları*) in Rumelia during Russo-Ottoman negotiations about Crimea.[60] Among others, Ottoman ambassadors seem to have developed a particularly powerful mix of familiarity with and animosity towards Voltaire and Rousseau. When Ebubekir Ratıb visited a library during his mission to the Habsburg Court in 1791, he inquired whether the library possessed works of these philosophers while speaking about their ideas.[61] He was curious because the Ottoman government suspected that French revolutionaries were commissioning the translation of such works into Greek, Armenian, and Turkish, in order to propagate "the benefits of *serbestiyet* and *cumhuriyet*."[62]

For Ottoman observers of revolutionary France the kind of *serbestiyet* that defined the ideology of the Revolution was defiance of authority and religion. According to Atıf Efendi, who wrote a report on the Revolution and its ideology, the purpose of such irreligionists (*dehri*) as Voltaire and Rousseau was to defy rulers and abolish all religions.[63] Ottoman observers of the French Revolution and the ensuing republic chose to render *révolution* and *république* into Turkish as *ihtilal* and *fetret*, respectively.[64] In Ottoman thought *ihtilal* referred to a change in the constitution of a state leading to corruption and disorder, a concept that had pervaded reformist thinking among political authors since the mid-sixteenth century. *Fetret* referred to interregna, which in Ottoman experience often culminated in civil wars. Atıf Efendi and his contemporaries simply perceived the Revolution as the work of riffraff, rabble, bandits, rebels, and the like. The corresponding Turkish terms *eşkiya*, *buğat*, *başıbozuk*, and *sergerde* were highly charged words traditionally used in Ottoman administrative and legal language in reference to criminals and outcasts who defied authority and disturbed public order. Seen from Istanbul, freedom in revolutionary France was no less than anarchy.

This negative perception of the French Revolution dominated the Ottoman understanding of freedom and republic until rank-and-file Ottoman intellectuals started to read in European languages a few decades later. In the meantime, they were deeply concerned with the potential dangers that the Enlightenment philosophers' ideas posed to the integrity of the Ottoman

60 Said b. Halil, *Tarih-i Sefer-i Rusya*, p. 68.

61 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Nemçe Sefaretnamesi*, ed. Abdullah Uçman, Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1999, p. 41.

62 Enver Ziya Karal, *Halet Efendi'nin Paris Büyükelçiliği (1802-6)*, Istanbul, Kenan Basımevi, 1940, p. 56.

63 Ahmed Atıf Efendi, *Layiha*, in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih*, vol. 6, pp. 306-311.

64 See, for example, Ahmed Atıf, *Layiha*, pp. 306-11.

Empire. Two Ottoman ambassadors, visiting France while Bonaparte was the emperor, displayed this attitude when they sounded overly critical in their portrayal of French society. Unlike Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, who was content with pointing to cultural differences between the French and the Ottomans in his travelogue of 1721, these ambassadors adopted a distinctly moralistic view of the French and equated individual liberties, such as the public visibility of women, with outright immorality. Based on his observations from 1803 to 1806, Halet Efendi noted that, because the French had eliminated the king and nobles, the rabble who took over government failed to form even a republic.[65] His successor, Abdurrahman Muhib, who was in France from 1806 to 1811, was struck by contrasts he noted between Ottoman and French societies. He was pleasantly surprised, however, by a lack of individual freedoms in the Napoleonic system, which he perceived as a sign of order after the period of anarchy (*fetret*). Although he found such modern institutions as travel restrictions, the police curfews, and social restraints personally discomforting, he considered them efficient means of proper state control and order.[66]

Ebubekir Ratıb on Habsburg Order

Ottoman statesmen who felt threatened by France found more affinity with the Habsburgs. To counter the destructive wave of the French Revolution they hoped to find a cure in the example of their former archrival. That led Ebubekir Ratıb to write an account of Habsburg institutions and culture, a tour de force more penetrating than anything written before by an Ottoman. Unlike his travelogue of his mission from 1791 to 1793, Ebubekir Ratıb wrote his report with a clear reform agenda. It seems it was well-received by the reformist statesmen and taken as a guidebook during Selim III's restructuring of Ottoman institutions, which came to be known as the New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*). While examining Habsburg government and society, Ebubekir Ratıb crafted a tacit criticism of corresponding Ottoman institutions and practices. In Vienna and its environs, what impressed him most was the military aristocracy, which he regarded as the backbone of all contemporary European states. In visiting the military academy, he noted with praise that only the children of nobles were admitted to the institution and that the lowborn were banned from entrance because only the former were proven to have complete loyalty to state and

65 Karal, *Halet Efendi'nin*, p. 35.

66 Abdurrahîm Muhib Efendi, *Küçük Sefaretname*, ed. İbrahim Küreli as *Abdurrahîm Muhib Efendi'nin Fransa Sefâretnâmesi*, MA Thesis, Istanbul University, 1992, pp. 61-75.

society while excelling in protecting the realm.[67] Further, in striking contrast to the Ottomans, the Habsburgs used this noble military to prevent the rise of provincial magnates (*derebeği*, *mütegallibe*) in European states. In the case of France, the reason why the lowborn took over the government was that the nobles did not react until bandits formed a greater power.[68] Ebubekir Ratıb envisioned that by extending the Habsburgs' military model to the entire Ottoman ruling structure, a government of nobles would be able to counter the immediate danger and disorder posed by the Janissaries and provincial magnates, a familiar idea at times voiced by former political reformers as well.

But Ebubekir Ratıb also underlined another quality of this military aristocracy that had received little attention from other Ottoman visitors to European societies: the religious liberties granted by the Habsburg monarchy. The Ottoman ruling establishment, including the military, except for provincial cavalry and auxiliaries, was the exclusive reserve of Muslims, and conversion to Islam was a condition of being admitted to the Janissary corps. Ebubekir Ratıb recounted that the Habsburgs, knowing that fear of God makes better officers, promoted faith but did not discriminate between different religions, sects, races, and nations. While startled to see Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics serving under the same administration, he lamented that even the Greeks, who were excluded from the ruling establishment in the Ottoman Empire, could serve under the Habsburgs.[69]

On the freedom of individuals in Habsburg society, however, Ebubekir Ratıb was rather sarcastic: "They say that they are free (*serbest*) but I cannot understand what it means. However, I would at times tease them for the fact that their women enjoyed by far more freedom" than the men.[70] He witnessed more restraints on individual liberties in the Habsburg realms than in the Ottoman lands, recounting a number of practices that were freely exercised at home but were either outlawed or regulated by the Habsburgs.[71] But instead of being bothered by the lack of certain freedoms, he was favorably impressed by the rule of law, which he thought curbed liberties but created equality and order. Yet he also noted that the Habsburgs' impartial application of the law bestowed universal rights that would otherwise have been impossible.

67 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Büyük Layiha*, ed. V. Sema Arıkan as *Nizam-ı Cedit'in Kaynaklarından Ebubekir Ratıb Efendi'nin "Büyük Layiha" sı*, PhD Thesis, Istanbul University, 1996, p. 80, p. 114.

68 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Büyük Layiha*, p. 416.

69 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Büyük Layiha*, p. 85.

70 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Büyük Layiha*, p. 327.

71 Ebubekir Ratıb, *Büyük Layiha*, pp. 411-2.

Separating the law from religion, for example, enabled the Habsburgs to disregard differences, such as the dress code, that marked people of different faiths. Although frightened by French attitudes toward religion, he praised Habsburg secularism. For him, the Habsburgs could no more be regarded as the People of the Book because they did not apply religion in courts.

Sadık Rıfat and His Conceptualization of Freedom as the Founding Virtue of Civilization

Unlike earlier ambassadors who reported in times of intense ideological clashes and political rifts, Sadık Rıfat, during his sojourn in post-Napoleonic Vienna from 1837 to 1839, portrays a coherent Europe, which included the Ottoman Empire, as reflected in his close friendship with Metternich. Earlier ambassadors, including Ebubekir Ratıb, felt that Europe and the Ottoman Empire were essentially different entities. That perception, also shared by their hosts, turned their social relations into deliberate political acts, preventing them from developing friendship. Their socialization was largely confined to information gathering, while their conversations often became a contest about superiority and image-building. In Metternich, Sadık Rıfat found a European who considered the Ottoman Empire as a family member, a view the ambassador enthusiastically embraced.

Ottoman statesmen never doubted that their empire geographically belonged in Europe. But Sadık Rıfat was among the first Ottomans who felt they shared European ideals as well. Metternich was a staunch advocate of admitting the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe as proclaimed at the Congress of Vienna. From 1815 to 1856, admission into the Concert became the red apple of Ottoman diplomacy. For increasingly insecure Ottoman statesmen, the Concert simply meant an insurance policy to guarantee the Empire's territorial integrity. But as revealed in one of Sadık Rıfat's letters, recounting a conversation with Metternich, it became clear to some that the precondition of admission into the Concert and of benefiting from its territorial guarantees was to act in accordance with what the European powers considered to constitute civilization.[72] The balance of power, as originally conceived at the Congress, gradually turned into a civilizational alliance, as viewed by the European public opinion, and more so by the Ottomans themselves.

72 Bekir Günay, *Mehmed Sâdık Rıfat Paşa'nın Hayatı, Eserleri ve Görüşleri*, MA Thesis, Istanbul University, 1992, p. 191.

Sadık Rıfat's embassy years in Vienna coincided with the rising debate over the Ottoman Empire's status with respect to "civilization," which became the pivotal theme of the Eastern Question.[73] Freedom, or lack of it, was among the principal questions fiercely debated by intellectuals ranging from David Urquhart to Richard Cobden. Although published only posthumously, in 1858, Sadık Rıfat's writings, unlike earlier ambassadorial reports, show that he formulated his thoughts in the context of this wider European discourse. In his view, being part of this perceived concert of civilized nations was a panacea to the problem of *serbestiyet*, which had become endemic since the Greek Rebellion of the 1820s. Mehmed Ali's rebellion in Egypt in the 1830s was increasingly perceived in Europe as a struggle for independence and freedom, while the Ottomans viewed it as a claim for *serbestiyet* and *müstakillik*, by which Sadık Rıfat meant self-determination and independence, respectively. Inspired by Metternich, he gathered from the international politics of his time that as long as the Ottoman Empire adhered to the precepts of current civilization, such movements of *serbestiyet* would fail to garner support from the European powers and thus remain morally unjustified.

This holistic view of civilization not only distinguished Sadık Rıfat from his predecessors but also led him to initiate a new era in Ottoman thought. Former ambassadors, though more essentialist in their generalizations, saw in Europe individual institutions, customs, and ideas. Despite their elite education, they were bureaucrats with little ability to move beyond naked observation and rough comparison. Even the most attuned among them, Ebubekir Ratıb, had focused on state and government and was thus interested in freedom and liberties only to the extent of their political significance. In pursuit of good government, they focused on law, order, and equality as instruments of efficient rule. Sadık Rıfat, however, was a self-taught intellectual with a good grasp of European thought, competent enough to impress Metternich and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. He displayed more passion than his predecessors for reform, but he was much more captivated by the idea of it than by its mechanics. He explored the meaning and formation of what he perceived as civilization. While good government, for example, was an end in itself for Ebubekir Ratıb, Sadık Rıfat saw it only as an instrument, a prerequisite of civilization, which he perceived as the ultimate goal. For Ebubekir Ratıb, government was good when the state was powerful and its power depended on its granting freedom to subjects when deemed appropriate. For Sadık Rıfat, however,

73 David Ross, transl. and ed., *Opinions of the European Press on the Eastern Question: Translated and Extracted from Turkish, German, French and English Papers and Reviews*, London, Ridgway, 1836.

government could become good only by recognizing the rights of individuals. As he repeatedly emphasized, government existed for the sake of the public, not vice versa.[74]

Sadık Rıfat thus perceived freedom as the foundation of civilization. But this freedom was *hürriyet*, not *serbestiyet*, a qualitatively different conception. He used *serbest* or *serbestiyet* when speaking of free speech, free press, free trade, self-determination, independence, and the like in the sense of acquired or granted rights and privileges. By *hürriyet*, he referred to a fundamental value that prescribes obligations for the state and grants rights to the public. For him, life, property, and honor could be secured only completely when *hürriyet* was upheld by state and society. It was also a condition that a community could only attain by moral merit.[75] Almost a decade before Sadık Rıfat, an Ottoman scholar from Egypt, al-Tahtawi, had expounded similar views of freedom during his stay in Paris from 1826 to 1831. He considered *ḥurriyya* a foundational value among the French, which he thought corresponded to "justice and equity" in his own society.[76] In his later writings, along with Sadık Rıfat and the Young Ottomans, he too elaborated on *ḥurriyya* as the basis of civilization.[77]

Sadık Rıfat's choice of *hürriyet* was by no means accidental. His reconceptualization of the term reflects the cultural backdrop in Ottoman and Islamic thought as well as contemporary political realities and intellectual trends. In Islamic ethical theory, especially by Peripatetics, *hürriyet* had been treated as a virtue since medieval times. According to Franz Rosenthal, for Muslim ethicists freedom stood for all the qualities that characterized a moral man.[78] Isfahani, in the early eleventh century, thought of *ḥurriyya* as inclusive of all other commendable traits.[79] He further gave two distinct meanings of the term in his dictionary of the Quran: "the one referring to the person who is not subject to any authority, and the other to the person who is not dominated by such ugly qualities as greed and the desire for worldly possessions."[80] For Isfahani's contemporary al-Mubashir, it meant that "man serves the good and cultivates

74 Günay, *Mehmed Sâdık*, p. 289.

75 Günay, *Mehmed Sâdık*, p. 295.

76 al-Ṭahṭawī, *An Imam in Paris*, pp. 205-206.

77 al-Ṭahṭāwī, *Kitāb al-Murshid al-ʾAmīn li al-Banān wa al-Banīn*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra in *al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila li Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī*, 4 vols., Beirut, al-Muassasa al-ʿArabiyya li Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1973-80, vol. 11, pp. 473-476.

78 Franz Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1960, p. 89.

79 Mustafa Çağrıcı, "Hürriyet," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18 Istanbul, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988-2013.

80 Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept*, p. 24.

it constantly."[81] Medieval ethicists such as Ibn Miskawayh, al-Ṭūsī, Davvani, and Amasi took it as a branch of a cardinal virtue, usually continence (*iffa*).[82] Ottoman discussion of *hürriyet* in ethical literature largely continued to treat it within the context of the morality of earning and spending, and, at times, simply equated it to liberality.[83] As formulated by Kınalızade, the most widely read Ottoman ethicist, *hürriyet* meant one's capability to earn and spend in commendable ways.[84] Aristotle's distant student, Esad Efendi of Ioiannina, who translated Johannes Cottunius' *Commentarii lucidissimi in octo Libros Aristotelis de physico auditu* in the early eighteenth century, still cited *ḥurriyya* as one of the branches of continence.[85]

For Sufis, *hürriyet* signified one's condition vis-à-vis the Creator and the created. In mainstream Sufism, it denoted independence from any influence that may compromise one's devotion to God; complete freedom would be attained when one's submission to, and union with, God was complete. But unlike mainstream Sufis, who equated *hürriyet* with exclusive service *to* God, dissenting mystics reportedly thought of it as freedom *from* God's service. For them, once union with God was attained, one was no longer bound with God's service, thus becoming free from both the temptations of the material world and the requirements of religion.[86] For Rosenthal, it was this mystical understanding of *hürriyet* that became popular in broader Islamic thought.[87] It is no coincidence that Jurjani, in his *Book of Definitions*, provided only Sufi conceptions of the term.[88]

81 Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept*, p. 81.

82 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, transl. Constantine K. Zurayk, Beirut, Centennial Publications, 1968, p. 18; Nāṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, transl. G. M. Wickens, London, George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1964, pp. 81-83; Amasi, Ahmed b. Hüsameddin. *Kitab-ı Mir'atü'l-Müluk*, MS, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 1890, f. 22a.

83 Taşköprîzâde Ahmed Efendi, *Şerhu'l-Ahlâki'l-Adudiyye*, ed. Elzem İçöz and Müstakim Arıcı, Istanbul, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2014, pp. 82-83.

84 Kınalızade, vol. I, p. 60.

85 Esad Efendi, *al-Tā'līm al-Thālith*, MS, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıb Paşa 824, f. 4b; On Esad Efendi and his translation see Harun Küçük, "Natural Philosophy and Politics in the Eighteenth Century: Esad of Ioannina and Greek Aristotelianism at the Ottoman Court," *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 41 (2013) pp. 125-158.

86 Abu Naṣr ʿAbdallah b. ʿAlí al-Sarráj al-Ṭúsí, *The Kitáb al-Luma' fi 'L-Taṣawwuf*, ed. and transl. Reznold A. Nicholson, Leiden, Brill and London, Luzac & Co., 1914, Eng. p. 113, Ar. pp. 420-421.

87 Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, p. 25.

88 Ali al-Ğurğānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*, Beirut, Librairie du Liban, 1985, pp. 90-91.

Qushayri, an eleventh century author and one of the most authoritative early masters of Sufism, devoted a whole chapter to the Sufi conception of *ḥurriyya* in his *Epistle on Sufism*, arguably the most widely read Sufi manual. After informing that "the Sufi masters have discoursed profusely on freedom," he observed in his own time that "when the folk (*qawm*) speak of freedom they imply that one is not bound by any mundane attachments or fleeting things of this world nor those of the Hereafter." Qushayri then defined the term as follows: "Freedom means that the servant of God does not allow himself to be enslaved by [other] creatures, nor is he subject to the power of originated things (mukawwanat). The sign of its soundness is that his heart is no longer capable of distinguishing different things to such an extent that everything he sees looks equal to him."[89]

A typical exposition of this understanding in Ottoman times could be found in *Letâif'ul-İ'lâm*, a fifteenth-century work on Sufi terminology, which distinguished between base freedom (*hürriyetü'l-âmme*), one's liberation from the constraints of animal desires, and noble freedom (*hürriyetü'l-hâssa*), one's independence from the attraction of the will.[90] Abdullah-ı Ilahi, a founding figure in spreading the Naqshibandiyya order in Ottoman lands in the second half of the fifteenth century, defined the term as "instituting what is demanded by servitude to God" where "one cannot be free (*hür*) unless one becomes free for God and free from anything but God."[91] In the sixteenth century, a Sufi-minded author of a political treatise defined *hürriyet* as the abandoning of worldly pleasures in favor of God's service.[92] *Vankulı Lugati*, the first printed dictionary in the Ottoman Empire, defined *ḥurriyya* as "setting one free" (*taḥrīr*) or making one's child fully devoted to God's service and freeing him from all worldly engagements.[93]

Inspired by such medieval mystics as Qushayri and Ibn ʿArabī, Sufi-minded Ottomans elaborated on *hürriyet* as the highest rank one could attain in the path of spiritual perfection. In his discussion of why human beings were inherently prone to seeking status, authority, and domination, the sixteenth-

89 Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿIlm al-Taṣawwuf*, transl. Alexander D. Knysh as *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, Reading, UK, Garnet Publishing, 2007, XXIV, pp. 229-232.

90 Ercan Alkan, *Letâif'ul-İ'lâm fî İşâreti Ehli'l-İlhâm Adlı Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü ve Mütercimi Mechul Tercümesi*, MA Thesis, Marmara University, 2002, p. 285.

91 Abdurrezzak Tek, *Nakşiliğin Osmanlı Topraklarına Gelişi: Molla Abdullah Ilâhî*, Bursa, Emin Yayınları, 2012, p. 512.

92 Dizdār, Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbdullāh, *Sulūk al-Mulūk*, MS, Topkapı Sarayı, Ahmed 1605, f. 46a.

93 Muhammed b. Mustafa el-Vani, *Lugat-i Vankulı*, Üsküdar, Darü't-Tıbaa el-Cedide el-Mamure, 1218 [1804], pp. 303-304.

century Ottoman scholar Taşköprülüzade stated that because the spirit was part of God's soul it always displayed Godly attributes. Otherwise, no one would have sought rulership and domination over others. For him, the three most distinctive qualities of God for a human being to attain and display were power (*kudret*), knowledge (*ilm*), and freedom (*hürriyet*).[94] Bursevi, an eighteenth-century Ottoman mystic, turned *hürriyet* into one of the principal concepts of his Sufi teaching. With a spiritual conception of the caliphate, he posited that to become God's true deputy on earth (*halife*) one needed to dissociate oneself from all worldly attachments and endow oneself with the divine qualities derived from union with God.[95] Mustafa Rasim, a contemporary of Sadık Rıfat, defined *hürriyet* in his *Glossary of Perfect Man* as "freedom from servitude to others, and bondage to anything but God, as well as desires triggered by passion."[96] It is no coincidence that Ottoman Sufis, especially Halvetis, adopted antinomian attitudes to secure their individual and collective autonomy by frequently rebelling against political authority, defying the formal confines of religion, and seeking immunity from social norms.

Before Sadık Rıfat, Ottoman ethicists did not stress the political connotations of *hürriyet*. Following the strain of moral philosophy, they subjugated the political to the moral and treated political freedom and individual liberties within the context of ethics and spiritualism. Al-Ghazālī's views on political power as the greatest threat to individual freedom were widely shared.[97] His most devout Ottoman student, Taşköprülüzade, further elaborated on such views in his encyclopedia.[98] Yet it was al-Fārābī who influenced the Ottomans most on the question of political freedom, despite the fact that Ottoman ethicists displayed less interest in political philosophy than in the moral quality of

94 Ahmed b. Muṣṭafā Ṭāşköprīzāde, *Miftāḥ al-Saāda wa Miṣbāḥ al-Siyāda fī Mawḍūʿāt al-ʿUlūm*, 3 vols., eds. K. K. Bakrī and ʿA. Abū al-Nūr, Cairo; Dār al-Kutub al-Khadīʿa, 1968, vol. III, p. 382.

95 İsmail Hakkı Bursevî, *Tuhfe-i Hasekiye*, ed. Muammer Cengiz, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevî'nin Tuhfe-i Hasekiye'sinin Birinci Bölümü*, MA Thesis, Marmara University, 2007, p. 143; Bursevî, *Kitâb-ı Kebîr*, ed. Nuran Döner, *Tasavvuf Kültüründe Vâridât Geleneği ve Bursevî'nin Kitâb-ı Kebîr'i*, MA Thesis: Uludağ University, 2000, p. 152; Bursevî, *Kenz-i Mahfî*, ed. Engin Söğüt, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli*, Marmara University, 2007, p. 175; Bursevî, *Vesîletü'l-Merâm*, ed. Nizamettin Burak, *İ. H. Bursevî'nin Vesîletü'l-Merâm'ı*, Dokuz Eylül University, 2006, p. 136.

96 Seyyid Mustafa Râsim Efendi, ed. İhsan Kara, *Tasavvuf Istılâları Literatürü ve Seyyid Mustafa Râsim Efendi'nin Istılâhat-ı İnsân-ı Kâmil'i*, PhD Thesis, Marmara University, 2003, p. 204.

97 For al-Ghazālī's views, see Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, p. 105.

98 Ṭāşköprīzāde, *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda*, pp. 380-385.

political association. Al-Fārābī's *Virtuous City*, for example, was received with enthusiasm, as the Ottomans who knew the text claimed to have achieved the utopian ideal it espoused.[99] His less popular work, *Political Regime*, discussed the merits and demerits of different forms of association.[100] Kınalızade, who revived al-Fārābī's political philosophy in the Ottoman period, reduced the philosopher's exploration of political associations to a simple dichotomy of virtuous and errant cities. By adapting al-Fārābī's theory to practical considerations of his time, he further divided errant cities into those inhabited by the disbelievers and those containing the heretics, the former referring to European states and the latter to the Shiite Safavids.[101]

As most of his extant works circulated in Istanbul libraries, al-Fārābī's conception of *hürriyet* was not lost on Ottoman intellectuals. In his discussion of political associations, al-Fārābī thought of *ḥurriyya* as the defining principle of the democratic city (*al-madīna al-jamaʿiyya*), where people, both the base and the noble, gather to form a community to enjoy freedom with no restraint.[102] His later follower al-Ṭūsī, who introduced al-Fārābī into the Persian tradition and became even more popular among Ottoman intellectuals, called this democratic association "the city of freedom" (*madīna-i horriyat*).[103] Along the lines of Tūsī, Taşköprülüzade, in his commentary on the thirteenth century scholar al-Iji's *Ethics*, elaborated on the city of freedom as follows:

> The city of freedom is called the city of demos (*madina al-jamāʿa*). Its citizens are all free. There is no distinction among them except for those having more freedom. Their leader is the one who has the utmost freedom and limits his sustenance to the level of sufficiency. In this community there is no leadership in the true meaning of the term. Its people are divided into groups in terms of intentions and ideas while each group having its own leader. This city is so desired to dwell in, and its prosperity increases in a short period of time.[104]

This association was given a slightly different designation by a Sufi author of a political treatise, *Muhyi-i Gülşeni*, who called it "the association of freedom"

99 Kınalızade, vol. II, p. 105.

100 Ṭāşköprīzāde, *Mawsūʿa Muṣṭalaḥāt Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda wa Miṣbāḥ al-Siyāda fī Mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*, eds. R. al-ʿAjam and ʿA. Daḥrūj, Beirut, Maktaba Lubnān Nāshirūn, 1998, p. 254.

101 Kınalızade, vol. II, p. 105.

102 Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Aiyāsa al-Madaniyya: al-Mulaqqab bi-Mabādiʾ al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. Fawzī Mitrī Najjār, Beirut, al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kāthūlīkīya, 1964, pp. 99-101.

103 Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, p. 223.

104 Taşköprîzâde, *Şerhu'l-Ahlâki'l-Adudiyye*, pp. 228-229.

(*ictima-i hürriyet*), one of the six errant forms of human societies.[105] For both al-Fārābī and al-Ṭūsī, *ḥurriyya* meant one's total freedom to pursue "all kinds of wishes and ways of life" in complete equality, in such a way that "no one has a better claim than anyone else to a position of authority." That makes this "the most admirable and happy city," which "everybody loves and loves to reside in."[106] What distinguished the democratic city from ignorant cities was that both virtues and vices could be exercised equally. The main deficiency of this city was that it did not allow virtuous men to rule it because there was no hierarchy between the ruler and the ruled, and that the latter only followed the wishes of the former if they chose to. Yet, in comparison, al-Fārābī considered the democratic city easier to transform into a virtuous city.

But prior to Sadık Rıfat, Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen were better acquainted with Ibn Khaldūn's view on society than with al-Fārābī's. Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical theory explaining the rise and fall of states had already been adopted as a convenient framework to discuss the current state of the Ottoman Empire since the mid-seventeenth century.[107] By the nineteenth century, however, Ottoman statesmen, with first-hand knowledge of Europe, grew increasingly unsatisfied with Ibn Khaldūn's idea of *khadāra*, which not only represented the final stage of social evolution and cultural florescence but also was characterized by extravagance and weakness.[108] Although it became the standard term for civilization in Arabic, a few Ottoman intellectuals, including Sadık Rıfat, found that *khadāra* did not fully correspond to what they came to see as civilization in Europe.[109] Instead, Sadık Rıfat preferred another Arabic word, *medeniyet*, which was already in use in Turkish. Long before him, Ibrahim Müteferrika, the co-founder of the first Ottoman press, for example, used the term in reference to civic life in juxtaposition to nature.[110] Although al-Fārābī never used the term as such, it was clearly inspired by his idea of the virtuous city. Sadık Rıfat conceived of civilization, as al-Fārābī and his Ottoman followers did of the virtuous city, as a noble goal, in contrast to *khadāra*, which was for Ibn Khaldūn a stage in the teleological cycles of social evolution.

105 Muhyî-i Gülşenî, *Sîret-i Murâd-ı Cihân*, ed. Abdullah Arı, MA Thesis, Celal Bayar University, 2010, p. 141.

106 Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, p. 224.

107 Cornell H. Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and Ibn Khaldunism in Sixteenth century Ottoman Letters." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18 (1983) pp. 198-220.

108 For Ottoman views on *khadāra* see Tuncay Baykara, "'Nizam,' 'Tanzimat' ve 'Medeniyet' Kavramları Üzerine," in *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, Milli Kütüphane Başkanlığı, 1991, pp. 61-65.

109 For Azmi Efendi's use of the term see Nergiz Aydoğdu, *Makyavelist Düşüncenin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, PhD Thesis, Marmara University, 2008, p. 25.

110 İbrahim Müteferrika, p. 132.

Sadık Rıfat's conception of civilization was a moral order of society. In fact, his short treatise on ethics, which was translated into Ladino, put forward the moral code for the individual required by current civilization.[111] He considered civilization as a virtuous association where freedom constituted the principal virtue of individuals that made up the civilized community. This view of civilization led him to perceive freedom in Europe not as *serbestiyet* but *hürriyet*. Kınalızade and other Ottoman ethicists before Sadık Rıfat had already discussed the moral code of political association, which they called civic virtues (*fezail-i medeni*).[112] But it was Sadık Rıfat who turned *hürriyet* into civilization's paramount virtue. Such an understanding of freedom enabled the Young Turks of the Tanzimat era to turn *hürriyet* into the lynchpin of their grand project of transforming Ottoman society.

Hürriyet as such was certainly related to but not a synonym for *serbestiyet*. Until the Polish and Crimean crises, Ottoman diplomatic language was still based on its imperial vernacular. These crises, however, forced the Ottomans to converse through a new diplomatic language that was increasingly secularized in the sense that its nomenclature was gradually detached from specific traditions that produced it and reconstructed as part of a broader discourse shaped by Enlightenment thought.[113] In that context, *serbestiyet* appeared as one of the first secular concepts that originated from the Ottoman vernacular and gained international currency in correspondence with the term *liberté*. From an Ottoman perspective, it was devoid of philosophical content and was a common idiom to negotiate conflicting interests among the Ottoman imperial establishment, the imperial aspirations of rising European powers, and spreading independence movements. The Ottomans were initially acquainted with *liberté* as a strictly political term during the international crises of the late eighteenth century, at a time when it was closely associated with independence movements. That is why the Ottoman elite thought of *liberté* as *serbestiyet*, a term that existed in Ottoman usage referring to independence, autonomy, and immunity. By characterizing the Polish quest for autonomy

111 Isaac Jerusalmi, *From Ottoman Turkish to Ladino: the case of Mehmet Rifat Pasha's Risâle-i Ahlâk and Judge Yehezkel Gabbay's Buen Dotrino: Enlarged Original Texts in Ottoman Turkish and Rashi Scripts, with Face to Face Transliterations, Glossaries and an Introduction*, Cincinnati, Ladino Books, 1990.

112 Kınalızade, vol. I, p. 92.

113 A telling example of this secularization is the invention of the term "Near East" and its adoption in diplomatic discourse. See Huseyin Yilmaz, "The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century" in *Is There a Middle East: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, eds. Michael Bonine, Abbas Amanat and Michael Casper, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 11-35.

as *serbestiyet*, the Ottomans attempted to impose their imperial ideals on the wider diplomatic space in Europe. However, the traumatic collapse of the Polish campaign that resulted in the independence of Crimea, as well as the accelerating independence movements sparked by the French Revolution, led the Ottomans to attribute an exclusively negative meaning to the term. After the Crimean crisis, the semantic content of *serbestiyet* was increasingly shaped by the Ottoman sense of threat to its imperial integrity and ideals. In return, it shaped and served well the Ottoman perception of *liberté* as a pejorative term in reference to lawlessness, chaos, anarchy, and political fragmentation.

Serbestiyet originated from Ottoman administrative practice, having no roots in classical literary traditions. *Hürriyet*, on the other hand, had a long history in Islamic philosophy, jurisprudence, and Sufism. As much as *serbestiyet* was conceived to be a response to political encounters between the Ottomans and various European powers, *hürriyet* gained prominence as a conduit to the Ottomans' intellectual engagement with Europe, a conciliatory term that symbolized a major turn in Ottoman perceptions of Europe in the aftermath of Napoleonic invasions. At least until the advent of a new generation of intellectuals who were well-versed in European languages in the Tanzimat era, the prevailing tendency among the Ottomans was to perceive European thought through the prism of Ottoman culture. Ottoman statesmen who used term *serbestiyet* were neither equipped nor interested in European thought as an intellectual pursuit.

The Congress of Vienna, however, radically transformed the Ottoman Empire's relations with Europe with at least two major consequences. First, the Ottomans now found Europe not as a mere continent in which they were historically based but as a newly forming cultural and political entity. Second, public opinion, both at home and abroad, exerted itself as a new terrain for which Ottoman diplomacy was ill-prepared. In Europe, the discourse on civilization began to pervade the newly forming language of diplomacy, which categorically placed the Ottomans outside the sphere of civilization in absolute terms drawn from modern science, philosophy, and historical analysis. Imperial and juristic vocabulary through which the Ottomans historically conceived and negotiated their relations with European powers gradually lost its currency. As they acquainted themselves with the European discourse on civilization, the Ottoman elite did not oppose the popular notions of civilization, only their exclusion from it. Ottoman diplomacy in this new era was based on the premise that the Ottomans were part of the union of civilized nations, then commonly referred as the Concert of Europe.[114] The strong correlation

114 Yilmaz, "The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire".

between civilization and *liberté* forced the Ottomans to reinvent their own concept of freedom. In the process, *serbestiyet* was largely reduced to a technical term to signify certain rights and liberties, whether granted or acquired, such as free-trade agreements. Despite its native origin, *serbestiyet* connoted a foreign novelty and often reminded the Ottomans of a series of traumatic failures in foreign policy. Thus *liberté* as *serbestiyet* was firmly ensconced in Ottoman thought as a destructive idea. *Hürriyet*, on the other hand, with no blameworthy record in historical memory, offered the Ottoman elite more intellectual content to work through their own notions of freedom as part of civilization. From Sadık Rıfat onwards, *hürriyet* became not only a common term through which the Ottomans conceived and redefined *liberté* but also the principle idiom through which they negotiated and conversed with the European discourse on civilization. It became not only the foundation of an ideology of dissent and reform at home but also a motto for an existential pursuit for survival within the perceived sphere of broader civilization.