

IMPACTS OF WESTERNIZATION ON TURKISH PAINTING¹
OSMAN HAMDI BEY- VASILİY VERESHCHAGIN

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Abstract

In 18th and 19th century the political and the cultural interactions between Ottomans and Russians considerably improved. In order to prevent the decedance of the Empire Ottomans started to have a close look to Europe for the scientific improvements. This so called “Westernizing Movements” at this period also caused to grow an interest in Ottomans in Western countries. They started to send artists and scientists with the ambassadors, as a natural result of these interactions. The European culture and art began to influence especially the Otoman court art. During the Tanzimat period, the Western influences became more noticable. Painting exhibitions started to be held. The first fine art school opened in Istanbul. The art students went to the Western academies to study painting. Osman Hamdi Bey was the most ambitious student among them. While he was studying in Paris at Jerome’s studio, he met Russian painter Vereshchagin. Both painters were influenced by Orientalist movement. It is possible to see the mystical atmosphere and the documentary value in their paintings.

Key words: Osman Hamdi, Vasiliy Vereshchagin, orientalism, westernizing, Ottoman, Russian

TÜRK RESİM SANATINDA BATILILAŞMA ETKİLERİ OSMAN HAMDI BEY- VASILİY
VERESHCHAGIN

Özet

18. ve 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlılar ve Ruslar arasındaki kültürel ve siyasi ilişkiler önemli ölçüde geliştirilir, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu bilimsel konularda Avrupa’yı gözlemleyerek kendi gelişim yolunu bu gözlemler çerçevesinde belirlemeye başlar. Osmanlıların Batı toplumlarına ilgi gösterip kendisini geliştirme çalışmaları ‘Batılılaşma Hareketleri’ olarak adlandırılır. Bu çalışmaların doğal bir sonucu olarak sanatçılar, büyükelçiler ve bilim adamları arasında da etkileşimler yaşanır. Avrupanın kültür ve sanat konusundaki çalışmaları Osmanlı sanatını büyük ölçüde etkiler ve bu etki Tanzimat döneminde daha da yoğunlaşarak, bu dönemde pekçok resim sergisi ve İstanbul’da ilk güzel sanatlar okulu açılır..Bu okulda okuyan öğrenciler kendilerini geliştirmek amacıyla batı ülkelerine, batı akademilerine giderler. Bu öğrenciler içinde en iddaalı ve başarılı öğrencilerden biri de Osman Hamdi Bey olur. Osman Hamdi Bey Paris’te Jerome Studio da okurken Rus ressam Vereshchagin ile tanışır. Çalışmamızın konusunu oryantalist akımdan etkilenen bu iki ressamın etkileşimi oluşturacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Osman Hamdi Bey, Vereshchagin, Oryantalizm, Batılılaşma, Osmanlı, Rus.

1. Introduction

Besides political relationships between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, important developments have occurred in the arts and culture in 18th and 19th centuries. During the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the period called “Westernization Movement” started with the desire to benefit from the knowledge and technical advancements of the West with the purpose of preventing the fall of the empire and strengthening it. The first objective of westernization was to make the military reforms, which will strengthen the country, and prevent its fall rather than benefiting from the experience of the West in terms of culture and arts. For that reason, the beginning of western impacts in the Ottoman arts was a result of natural progress.

2. Impacts of Westernization

During Ahmet III’s reign, Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi was sent to Paris as an ambassador in 1720. His *Sefaretname (The Book of Embassy)* in which he told his experiences and

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impressions in France was highly appreciated in the court. Especially his writings about manors, courts and gardens were implemented in the civil architecture.³

Western impact on the cultural structure of the Ottoman Empire started in the 18th century. In the beginning of that century, İbrahim Müteferrika established the first printing house in 1727 and the state support provided to him was the first significant step taken in terms of Westernization.

In mid-18th century, western impact has developed in the field of architecture and decoration which is related to architecture in the cultural life of the Ottoman Empire. In that period, the interest of the Westerners in the Ottoman Empire has increased and ambassadors brought along scientists and painters to İstanbul. Westerners also published books by examining the state and social structure of the Empire. As a result of tight relations developed in time, European culture and art started to become effective in the Ottoman society, especially around the court.

The first of the scheduled Westernization movements in the Ottoman Empire was that Humbaracı Ahmet Paşa was appointed to train the Ottoman Empire according to European techniques in the Sultan Mahmut I's reign (1730-1754).

During the reign of Sultan Mustafa II (1757-1774), Chamber of Geometry, which was the beginning of Imperial Naval Engineering School, was opened in 1773. Astronomy and medicine books were brought from Paris and some of them were translated into Turkish.

In the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid I (1774-1789), Grand Vizier Halil Hamit Paşa brought a number of foreign teachers to the Imperial Naval Engineering School and reopened the artillery school which was closed by the Sultan. As a result of the pressure on France by Russia and Austria which do not want that Ottoman Empire gains strength with the innovation movements, French experts returned to their country.

When Selim III (1789-1807) ascended the throne, he started the reform movements again in a scheduled way. Choiseul Goffier, who was the French Ambassador in Turkey between 1784 and 1792, brought a number of painters to the capital such as Hilair, Fauvel and Kauffer. Thus the ambassadors' habit to bring along painters continued in the 18th century. Among the painters who came to İstanbul in the second half of the 18th century, Antoine de Favray, Jean Baptiste Leprince, Richard Dalton, Amedée Van Loo yanısıra Mercati, Luciari, Tonioli, Brugnière, Carbognano, Roset and Castellan depicted İstanbul in their works and they introduced the Ottoman to perspective in painting.

In the late 18th century, painting became the second field in which western impacts were seen following the architecture and decoration related to architecture. Inclusion of paintings and maps in the books published after 1797 is a quite significant stage in this field.

While Sultan Selim III was making use of the embassy committees in İstanbul, he requested that the ambassadors sent to Europe learn the culture, arts and language of the countries they went. The Sultan had a special interest in the Western painting. Engraving of Selim III made by an artist named Lemmon was included at the beginning of the painter and architect Melling's album which consisted of İstanbul paintings. Painting was also included in curriculums at this period. Sultan Selim III's order to Constantine of Kapıdağ to draw the paintings of Ottoman Sultans was an indicator of significant changes in the Ottoman Court.

Mahmut II (1808-1839), who spent his youth observing the innovation movements of his uncle, Selim III, was also interested in arts. His reign is full of Russia, France, England and Austria's plans to divide the Empire and civil rebellions. While he was dealing with these incidents on one hand, Mahmut II continued westernization movements decidedly. In 1826, he closed the Guild of Janissaries and prioritized education. He founded Military School of Medicine, Military College and Ministries, he introduced western style of clothing to the society and he had his painting hung in state agencies.

Foreign painters who came to the country during Mahmut II's reign have reflected the daily life of the Ottoman as well as İstanbul in their engravings. Among the western painters who came in this period, artists such as Préauls, Henry Aston Barker, Frans Hegi, Thomas Allom, William Henry

³ G. Renda, **Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı 1700-1850**, Ankara, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1977, s.17.

Barlett stood out and they paved the way for the Ottomans to learn and embrace perspective in painting.

Ferik İbrahim and Ferik Tevfik Paşa, who were sent to Europe during Mahmut II's reign for education in painting, were the first artists who learned western painting techniques. These painters who painted in western style gave importance to pattern and perspective and struggled to imitate the nature. Mahmut II made use of painting when necessary and he had a badge made with his painting on top of it. In 1838, he sent his painting to Mehmet Ali Paşa who was the Governor of Egypt in that time.⁴

When Abdülmecid enacted Hatt-I Humayun in 1839, Tanzimat Period started in the Ottoman Empire and western impact has increased compared to previous periods. British painter Sir David Wilkie made a painting of Abdülmecid during his stay in İstanbul (Germaner and İnankur, p. 1989, 89-90), French Félix Ziem and British artists Camille Rogier, Mac Bean and J. Schranz painted İstanbul landscapes and İtalian painting Presiozi reflected the daily life.⁵

Another practice which was initiated during Abdülmecid's reign (1839-1861) was that portraits of Ottoman Sultans were sent to Ottoman embassies and European rulers. The painter named Oreker organized an exhibition of landscapes at the court for the Sultan and it passed into Ottoman history as the first exhibition.⁶

Abdülaziz (1861-1876), who had a different education than Sultan Abdülmecid, protected arts and have plays staged in the theatre across the Dolmabahçe Palace. Abdülaziz's interest in theatre started the theatre décor studies which in fact consisted of various paintings. First theatre décor was designed by foreign artists and the most famous artist among those is Italian Merlo.⁷

During Abdülaziz's only European trip in 1867, "International Paris Exhibition" was opened and it was one of the significant developments that İstanbul images captured by Abdullah Brothers were awarded honourable mention in addition to the authentic and antique items in the Ottoman Empire pavilion. On his way back, Abdülaziz visited Wien and saw the pieces in the Belvedere Palace which was a museum on that date. After he returned from Europe, he had his sculpture on horseback made by sculptor C. F. Fuller in 1871.

Among the artists who were invited to the court during Abdülaziz's reign were Abdullah Brothers, Ayvazovskiy, Guillemet and Ahmet Ali Bey (Şeker Ahmet Paşa). Opening of Archeology School and first private Academy, first painting exhibitions, participation in Wien Exhibition in 1873, printing pictured newspapers and including articles on philosophy and arts which can be deemed significant for those years are significant incidents which took place during Abdülaziz's reign.⁸

The most significant aspect of Sultan Abdülaziz was that he also painted. Although his works were mostly sketches, his son Şehzade Abdülmecid made large scale oil paintings.

After the Imperial School of Military Engineering and Military College which helped in training of first Turkish painters with technical courses, a school named "Menşe-i Muallimin Sınıfı" was opened in 1864 in which students who graduated from the Military College have attended to become teachers. Courses were practical and theoretical in the painting department of this school which could be considered on the university level. Darüşşafaka High School was founded in 1873 and this institution also prioritized education in painting. Among the painters who were trained at this school were Şefik, Vidinli Osman Nuri, Kasımpaşalı Hilmi, Ahmet Ragıp, Salih Molla Aşki, Necip, Fatihli Mustafa, Giritli Hüseyin Şevki, Hüseyin Lofçalı Ahmet as well as the artists whom we know from their works such as Fahri Kaptan, Eyüplü Cemal, Cihangirli Mustafa, Hasköylü Ahmet İhsan, Ahmet İhsan, Ahmet Bedri and Ahmet Ziya. The common aspect in the paintings of the painters of

⁴G. Renda, 1977, a.g.e., s.28-44, M. Cezar, **Müzeci ve Ressam Osman Hamdi Bey**, İstanbul, Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, 1995, s.28-44.

⁵ M. Cezar, 1995, a.g.e., s.121-122.

⁶ A.e., s.125-126.

⁷ R. A. Sevengil, **Saray Tiyatrosu**, İstanbul, Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1962, s.19., M.Cezar, 1995, s.144-146.

⁸ M. Cezar, a.g.e., s.147-154.

that era is that similar landscapes were painted with notable side lines and constant light without any interpretation and without reflecting the personality of the artist. This is because those painters used the method of painting from photographs.⁹

Mekteb-I Osmani was founded in 1860 as an elementary school with a teaching staff mostly comprised of French teachers with the purpose that the young people graduated from the military high schools who are sent to Paris for education are enabled to follow their courses and they are disciplined, but it was closed in 1874. Among the artists who were educated in Mekteb-I Osmani and Paris were Ahmet Ali Bey (Şeker Ahmet Paşa), Osman Hamdi Bey and Süleyman Seyyid.¹⁰

In 1873, Şeker Ahmet Paşa organized his first public exhibition in the university building in Çemberlitaş. In 1874, French artist Guillemet opened a private "Painting and Pattern Academy" in Beyoğlu and thus the first step was taken towards painting education outside military school.

Some of the artists in İstanbul were members of "Elifba Club" and their first exhibition in Tarabya Greek Girls' School in 1880 was open to public. Their second exhibition was in Tepebaşı Municipality Garden in 1881. Participation was higher in the second exhibition.

After the Russo-Turkish War, Sanayi-i Nefise Mekteb-i Ali was opened in 1883 and Osman Hamdi was appointed as the Principal. Teachers at the school were mostly foreign and teacher of charcoal drawing class was Warnia of Poland while teacher of oil painting class was Valery of Italia. Most of the students were Greek and Armenian, but there were also young Turks among them.¹¹

Late 19th century, Pera has become the most important arts centre in İstanbul. Guillemet's exhibition in 1875, Guillemet's exhibition with his students in 1876, exhibition of Osman Hamdi, Süleyman Seyyid, Civanyan et al. in 1881 and Gérôme, Ayvazovskiy, Van Dyck, Rembrandt exhibition again in 1881, Sarkis Diranyan and Abdullah Brothers' exhibition in 1883 and Baron A.de Fay Splenyi's Collection in 1887 were all opened in Pera. These exhibitions were followed by Zonaro in 1892, Prieur-Bardin and Gülmez Brothers' photographs in and Schiffi and Maison Chavin exhibitions in 1893, Zonaro and Civanyan exhibitions in the same year, Svoboda and Cite Sheikh in 1894 and Agopyan, Mardighyan's exhibition and a mixed exhibition in 1896 and Şeker Ahmet Paşa exhibition and Prieur-Bardin exhibition in 1897.

Last exhibitions of the 19th century were the exhibitions of Adolphe Beaume-Leduc in 1898 and the exhibitions opened in various venues by Şeker Ahmet Paşa, Emilio Della Sudda-Maison Comendinger, Prieur-Bardin, Viskonti et Stefano and Svoboda. Exhibitions were opened in this region by Theodoroff in 1899 and Şeker Ahmet Paşa in 1900.¹²

3. Art Education of Osman Hamdi Bey



Osman Hamdi Bey

⁹ G. İrepoğlu, **Feyhamam Duran**, İstanbul, Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, 1986, s.18.

¹⁰ G. Renda, T.Erol, **Başlangıçtan Bugüne Rus Resim Sanatı**, C I, İstanbul, Tıglat Yayınevi, s.114.

¹¹ G. İrepoğlu, **a.g.e.**, s.18-20.

¹² Aksüğür Duben, **1873-1908 Pera Ressamları Katoloğu**, İstanbul, Beymen Yayınevi, 1990, s.y.

Westernization movements of the Ottoman Empire in the field of arts were reinforced with the artists who were sent to European countries since the beginning. Among the Ottoman painters who were sent abroad for education, Osman Hamdi Bey stands out.

Although he went to Paris in 1860 for a different purpose such as law education, Osman Hamdi's interest in fine arts resulted in dropping out of law school and starting painting courses at Paris School of Fine Arts. In that period, other than the official school which gave fine arts education in Paris, there were workshops with Academy status. Osman Hamdi Bey worked in the private workshops which belonged to Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) and Gustave Boulanger (1824-1888). Especially the courses he got in Gérôme's workshop have a significant place in the Russian-Ottoman arts interaction as explained below.

During Osman Hamdi's education of 12 years in Paris, other two young Turks who will contribute in the development of Ottoman painting in the future were also there. These young Turks who came to Paris in 1862 were Ahmet Ali Efendi (Şeker Ahmet Paşa) and Süleyman Seyyid. Gérôme and Gustave Boulanger were teachers of Ahmet Ali Efendi as well.



Jean-Léon Gérôme

While the Ottoman Empire tried to reflect the western perceptions are reflected in painting art by sending artists to Europe, especially Paris on one hand, painting courses included in the curriculums of the Engineering School and Military College in İstanbul, the Capital of the Empire on the other hand. Although they tried to improve portraits by hanging portraits of the Sultans in the state agencies, it is striking that the first oil painting pieces of the painters mostly consist of landscapes.¹³

While these developments were taking place in İstanbul, the broadness of the study area of Osman Hamdi Bey, who was educated in Paris, could not be overlooked. Osman Hamdi painted portraits, landscapes, still life paintings and especially compositions with figures. As well as charcoal portraits and pattern works, most of his works are compositions with figures and portraits. While talking about his place in Turkish painting art, his compositions with figures are prioritized the most.

¹³ M. Cezar, **Sanatta Batıya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi**, İstanbul, Ekav Sanat Merkezi, 1971, s.25, S. Germaner, Z. İnankur, **Oryantalizm ve Türkiye**, İstanbul, 1989, s.300-311.

4. Art Education of Vasilii Vereshchagin



Vereshchagin

During Osman Hamdi's education in Paris with the purpose of bringing western painting styles to the painting circles in the Ottoman Empire, famous Russian painter Vereshchagin was also in that city. As a result of Vereshchagin's working with Osman Hamdi in the same workshops in the same period, emergence of some common grounds in the paintings of these two artists is significant in that it opens a new page in the Russian-Ottoman painting interaction.

This process, which started when Vereshchagin (1842-1904) completed his compulsory painting education in the Academy and continued his education in Paris using the inheritance from his grandfather, continued with the artist's enrolment in Paris Academy in 1864 and participated in the painting studies in the workshops of Alexandre Bida (1864) and Jean-Léon Gérôme'un (1864-66) in the same years.

The artist decided to leave Paris and go to Caucasia in March 1865. He explained the reason for that as follows: "Paris was like a dungeon to me, I need to be integrated with people to paint freely". During his short stay in Caucasia, he visited various regions and he reflected his impressions about the life of people in his paintings in the following years.

After a short visit to St Petersburg in Autumn 1865, the artist returned to Paris and continued his education. Vereshchagin brought the sketches he made during his trip in Caucasia to Paris and he made various paintings with the inspiration he got from these sketches. These paintings in which he reflected the exotic atmosphere of the eastern people, which is not known in Europe, were honoured in the arts circles of Paris, especially with the complimentary words of Gérôme.

While continuing his education in Paris Academy in winter 1865-66, Vereshchagin maintained his work on paintings continuously. This heavy work of the artist ended when he completed his education in Paris in spring 1866 and returned to Russia.¹⁴

When he was appointed to observe and depict the military operations in Turkmenistan in 1867-69, he reflected the daily lives of the people on the canvas as well as military manoeuvres and life in the army. These pieces which the artist named as "Turkmenistan Series" were completed in Munich and introduced to the European and Russian arts circles with exhibitions in London in 1873 and St. Petersburg in spring 1874.

5. Conclusion

It can be seen that the artist was influenced by his teacher in two paintings in "Turkmenistan Series"; "Tamerlan's Gate" (1872-73) in which he depicted two soldier in authentic military costumes at the Tamerlan's Gate and "Mosque Gate" (1873) which is almost an ethnographic piece of work with

¹⁴ A. Lebedev, A. Solodolnikov, **Vasilii Vasilevič Vereščagin**, Leningrad, Hudojnik RSFSR, 1987, S.38-39.

the people standing in front of the mosque gate in local costumes. The apparent conclusion in that context is significant in terms of Russian-Ottoman painting art interaction. As stated above, Vereshchagin was trained at the Gérome's workshop along with Osman Hamdi Bey who was one of the significant cornerstones in Turkish painting and museology. The experience obtained as a result of this education can be clearly observed in the common points which become apparent in the works by two artists. The success of both artists in reflecting the mystical atmosphere of the East, the brightness of the daylight, the craftsmanship in reflecting the local architectural structures on the canvas are the common points of Vereshchagin and Osman Hamdi Bey. Osman Hamdi Bey's paintings such as "Sultan Leaving the Mosque" (1887) and "Imams Talking in front of Mosque Gates" (no date) are concrete examples of this relationship. The most significant aspects of Osman Hamdi Bey's paintings are that the objects consist of Turkish architecture and art pieces and they are reflected in the paintings with delicacy and an intense desire. Similarly, Vereshchagin's depicting the monuments and daily life and clothes of local people he saw in Caucasia and Turkmenistan with delicacy and his style when reflecting his interest in the mystical atmosphere of the East are similar to Osman Hamdi Bey. The documentary aspects of the paintings by both artists today is another factor which approximates these two artists.



Osman Hamdi & Vereshchagin

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