

ADAPTATION AS AN ORIGINAL GENRE IN THE OTTOMAN ECONOMIC THOUGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

*When Nassau William Senior visited the Ottoman Empire in the 1850's as a celebrity, among the Ottomans holding office with whom he conversed was Ahmed Vefik Pasha (1823-1891). From Senior's record of their conversations, we understand that he was well-versed in political economy so much so as to challenge some of Senior's dogmatically liberal convictions. Ahmed Vefik Pasha had graduated from a lycée in Paris where his father was posted as an ambassador. As such he had learnt French very well. He had also developed a deep interest in French literature during his sojourn in France. Upon his return to Istanbul he joined the famous Translation Office. This office was founded during the Tanzimat era in order to raise professional interpreters for the Ottoman statesmen and diplomats. However being placed at the crossroads of intercultural exchange, it exerted a much wider influence. Ahmed Vefik Pasha spent some of his time in the office by pursuing a deeper interest in intercultural literary transmission. Ultimately he became well known for his adaptations of Molière's 16 plays as well as translations of Voltaire and Victor Hugo. His Molière adaptations are now considered as among the first Ottoman-Turkish plays. Musahipzade Celal (1868-1959) of the following generation was also employed in the Translation Office where he developed an interest in Molière by reading Ahmed Vefik Pasha's adaptations. After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 he started writing plays of his own. He is now considered as the most prolific playwright of a period extending from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic. In many ways he was the heir to the tradition set off by Ahmed Vefik Pasha. The words 'translation' and 'adaptation' are deliberately used above. Whereas Ahmed Vefik Pasha remained loyal to Voltaire and Hugo's words in his translations, when it came to Molière, he opted for the virtual re-writing of the plays for stage with essentially Ottoman characters. In the distinction between translation and adaptation, we identify an important tool for a reassessment of the record of Ottoman economic thought during the nineteenth century. If adaptation is an extreme instance of translation that transgresses the legitimate boundary of transliteration, then much of nineteenth-century Ottoman economic thought falls into this category. In the Ottoman Empire, until the nineteenth century, economic thought found its place in either in the "mirrors for princes" or in the reports of administrators searching for reforms. In the nineteenth century, as the world market became more and more integrated, the economic analysis started to constitute the background of official reports searching ways and methods of economic development. Naturally, newspapers provided new space not only for economic news but also for economic analysis while courses on political economy gradually acquired their independent and respectable status in the high school and university curriculum. In such a context, as liberal economic and social reforms in way of constituting a market society flourished after 1840s, during the Tanzimat, intellectuals and administrators started to publish or translate books on political economy. First, the popular book of Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité de l'économie politique* (1803), was translated and published in 1852. Then, especially after the introduction of political economy courses in the higher education, books written on the basis of major texts of political economy (Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, Pellegrino Rossi, Otto Hübner, Friedrich List, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, etc.) were published: Sakızlı Ohannes Paşa's *Mebadi-i İlm-i Servet-i Milet* (Causes and Science of National Wealth, 1881), Ahmed Mithat's *Ekonomi Politik* (Political Economy, 1880), Münif Paşa's *İlm-i Servet* (Science of Wealth, 1885), Musa Akyiğitzade's *İktisad yahud, İlm-i Servet* (Economics or Science of Wealth, 1897), Mehmed Cavid's *İlm-i İktisad* (Science of Economics,*

1897). These books included free translations from original texts much in the spirit of Ahmed Vefik Pasha's adaptations of Molière. At a time when and especially in a cultural context where, knowledge was still considered a public good beyond the scope of private property, above authors did not care for citations and quotations and oftentimes did not feel obliged to either disclose their sources of departure or remain loyal to the word of the original texts. This attitude provided further room for improvisations of various sorts. Transpositions of concepts and discussions into the Ottoman context allowed room for much maneuver and shift of emphases. Such books created quite a genre in its own right in the development of Ottoman economic literature that we may as well classify as 'adaptation'. This paper aims therefore to analyze the development of adaptation as a genre in the nineteenth-century Ottoman economic literature. To do so, we plan first to discuss the emergence of 'adaptation' literature in the context of the evolution of economic thought in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Secondly, we will analyze the procedure of adaptation by comparing original and freely translated texts and by discussing the specific ways in which arguments were subject to transposition from the European to the Ottoman context.