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A Prosopographic Analysis of the Social Profiles of Late Ottoman Ambassadors and Consuls*

SON DÖNEM OSMANLI SEFİR VE ŞEHBENDERLERİNİN TOPLUMSAL TARİHİ ÜZERİNE PROSOPOGRAFİK BİR ANALİZ

AYDA BEKTAŞ**

ABSTRACT

In response to the growing demands of diplomacy within the increasingly institutionalized Ottoman diplomatic framework, a significant expansion in the number of diplomats employed by the state was observed during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Concurrent with the rapid increase in diplomatic personnel, a systematic appointment process was implemented to enhance the recruitment of qualified and knowledgeable individuals. This study aims to examine the impact of the institutionalization of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs on its ambassadors and consuls, who were the principal executive officers of the institution. Additionally, the article explores the social histories of Ottoman ambassadors and consuls by analyzing the evolution of their professional responsibilities and educational backgrounds. This study employs a prosopographic methodology to investigate the social and educational backgrounds and professional careers of Ottoman ambassadors and consuls, focusing on their personnel records archived in the Ottoman Archives. Through this analysis, the study aims to elucidate how the state's efforts to establish a centralized and institutionalized bureaucratic system, and to emphasize merit-based appointments, contributed to the formation of a distinct professional identity among Ottoman diplomats by the end of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Ottoman Diplomacy, Envoy, Consul, Prosopography.

ÖZ

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın son çeyreğinde, Osmanlı diplomatik teşkilatının kurumsallaşmasına paralel olarak diplomasi taleplerini karşılamak amacıyla devlet hizmetinde çalışan diplomat sayısında belirgin bir artış gözlemlenmiştir. Diplomatik personelin hızla artmasıyla birlikte nitelikli ve yetkili bireylerin istihdamını artırmak amacıyla sistematik bir atama süreci uygulanmaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, Osmanlı Hariciye Nezareti'nin kurumsallaşmasının, kurumun üst düzey diplomatları olan sefirler ve şehbenderler üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bununla birlikte makale, Osmanlı sefir ve şehbenderlerinin sosyal tarihlerini, eğitim kariyerlerini ve mesleki görevlerini de dikkate alarak kapsamlı bir analiz yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, Osmanlı Arşivi'nde bulunan sicill-i ahval kayıtları aracılığıyla Osmanlı sefirleri ve şehbenderlerinin sosyal ve eğitim geçmişleri ile mesleki kariyerleri prosopografik bir yöntemle incelenmektedir. Bu analiz, devletin merkezi ve kurumsallaşmış bir bürokratik sistem kurma çabalarının ve liyakate dayalı atamaların, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarına gelindiğinde Osmanlı diplomatlarının mesleki bir kimlik geliştirmelerine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Diplomasisi, Sefir, Şehbender, Prosopografi.

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INTRODUCTION

During the reign of Selim III, the Ottoman Empire experienced a significant transformation in its diplomatic practices, marked notably by the establishment of permanent embassies in Europe. A pivotal institutional shift in Ottoman foreign policy occurred in 1836 with the reorganization of the office of Reisülküttab into the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. This transition marked the beginning of a concerted effort to modernize Ottoman diplomacy by adopting Western diplomatic techniques. Subsequently, during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry underwent further restructuring. Initially comprising the Office of the Imperial Divan (Divan-ı Hümayun Kalemi) and the Translation Office of the Sublime Porte (Bab-ı Ali Tercüme Odası), the Ministry evolved to include additional units aimed at achieving professional specialization. The establishment of new departments, which incorporated an increasing number of diplomats, contributed to developing a more institutionalized structure within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry in the later years of the empire. To effectively represent the Ottoman Empire and protect the rights and interests of Ottoman nationals abroad, the Ministry deployed a substantial number of diplomats to various international missions during this period.

In the nineteenth century, the administrative structure of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry underwent substantial reforms aimed at professionalizing the institution, leading to a notable enhancement in the quality of its personnel. This period saw the integration of educated, experienced, and proficient professionals into the Foreign Ministry, reflecting the increasing significance of foreign affairs. In this context, early scholarly works investigating the state of the Ottoman Empire's foreign relations during the nineteenth century and the methods employed in conducting these relations have made valuable contributions to the field.[1] Recently, there has been a marked increase in research focusing on Ottoman diplomacy in the nineteenth century, particularly regarding the Ottoman diplomatic corps.[2] Studies that analyze individual Ottoman diplomats are especially significant for gaining insights into the attributes and competencies of these diplomats.[3]

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[1] See, Sinan Kuneralp (ed.), *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History* (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 1987); F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdullhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878-1888* (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 1996); Roderic H. Davison, *Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms* (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 1999).

[2] A growing number of studies, particularly in recent years, have focused on Ottoman diplomacy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a significant component of Ottoman bureaucratic and diplomatic culture, is assessed as a small sample of the Ottoman elite group in one of these books, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, authored by Doğan Gürpınar. The study demonstrates the contribution that the bureaucratic institutions of the late Ottoman Empire, together with the individuals who worked there, made to the formation of contemporary Turkish nationalism and national identity. See, Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy A Political, Social and Cultural History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014). Also, *Türk Dışişleri Teşkilatının Gelişimi: Hariciye Nezareti (Development of the Turkish Foreign Organization: Ministry of Foreign Affairs),* a work by Aydın Çakmak that focuses on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discusses the departmentalization process, the creation of the Ministry's modern structure, the departments that have been established under it over time, and the job descriptions of the staff members who work in these departments. Çakmak focuses on the historical evolution of foreign representatives of Ottoman empire in different nations from their establishment in order to highlight the foreign organization of the late Ottoman Empire. See, Aydın Çakmak, *Türk Dışişleri Teşkilatının Gelişimi: Hariciye Nezareti* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2020). Zeynep Bostan, concentrating on the institutional growth of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs in her book of *Osmanlı Hariciyesinin Modern Temelleri- II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Diplomasi (Modern Foundations of Ottoman Foreign Ministry - Diplomacy in the Era of Abdulhamid II),* demonstrates the role played by this ministry in the Ottoman Empire's modernization in numerous ways. Bostan assesses, within the context of contemporary diplomacy, how the internal and exterior structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its continuities and ruptures, mirrored the bureaucratic shift under Abdulhamid II's rule. This study focuses on the social history of the diplomats who served as ambassadors and consuls in the embassies and consulates, unlike these studies that assess the administrative framework and operation of the late Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the context of institutional transformation. See, Zeynep Bostan, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinin Modern Temelleri- II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Diplomasi* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2021); Houssine Alloul and Darina Martykánová, "Introduction: Charting New Ground in the Study of Ottoman Foreign Relations", *The International History Review* 43/5 (2021), 1018-1040.

This study seeks to advance the existing literature by examining the impact of the institutional reforms undertaken within the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the late Ottoman period on the education and professional trajectories of its diplomats, who were the primary actors of the institution. Specifically, this research investigates Ottoman diplomats' professional roles and social histories in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By providing comprehensive analyses of the social backgrounds, educational attainments, and professional careers of ambassadors and consuls, this study aims to shed light on the professional evolution of this cohort of diplomats.

While existing scholarship has addressed the Ottoman Empire's foreign policy, shaped by its economic and political interests, ideological perspectives, and the institutional structure of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, these studies have predominantly concentrated on the formation of institutional bureaucracy and the organizational aspects of the ministry.[4] However, there has been limited exploration of the diplomats, who were a crucial component of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry in the nineteenth century.[5] Specifically, these diplomats' professional transformations, experiences, and career trajectories remain underexplored. This research highlights a significant gap in the literature regarding the educational backgrounds and professional histories of late Ottoman diplomats, who underwent substantial qualitative and quantitative changes. Our study aims to address this gap by contributing to the professional history and sociology of the late Ottoman period, focusing on the social histories of its diplomats.

This study utilizes the Ottoman Foreign Ministry's personnel registry files (HR.SAİD.) from the Ottoman Archives as its primary source. A representative sample of diplomats selected from this catalog will be analyzed using a 'prosopographic method'[6] to conduct a social study of Ottoman diplomats. The research focuses on diplomats whose personnel records provide extensive details regarding their social backgrounds, educational attainments, and professional careers, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the social profile of Ottoman diplomats.[7] Specifically, the study examines the personnel registries of one hundred diplomats, including ambassadors and consuls, whose records include detailed information about their social backgrounds, education, and professional trajectories. Out of a total of one hundred and thirty-eight diplomats listed in the HR.SAİD registry as officially designated ambassadors or consuls, thirty-eight diplomats provided only minimal data, such as their names and occupations, with insufficient information on their professional or educational backgrounds. Consequently, these thirty-eight individuals were excluded from the study due to the lack of comprehensive data on their social backgrounds, educational histories, and professional careers. Instead, the research focuses on the one hundred diplomats whose records contain substantial information about their professional and educational profiles.

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[3] See, Sinan Kuneralp, "Bir Osmanlı Diplomatı Kostaki Musurus Paşa 1807-1891", *Belleten* 34/35 (1970), 422-435; Roderic H. Davison, "Halil Şerif Paşa, Ottoman Diplomat and Statesman", *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 2/2 (1981), 203-221; Jun Akiba, "Bir Osmanlı Bürokratı ve Özel Yaşamı", *Tarih ve Toplum* 33/198 (2000), 239-250; Mahmut Akpınar, *Bir Tanzimat Bürokratı ve Diplomatı Olarak Aleksandır Karatodori Paşa (1833-1906)* (Konya: Selçuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Diss., 2010); Ali Akyıldız, *Sürgün Sefir: Sadullah Paşa* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2011).

[4] See, Erhan Ezici, *Hariciye Teşkilatı: Türk Kamu Yönetiminde Bir Modernleşme Modeli* (Ankara: Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dis., 2020); Çakmak, *Türk Dışişleri Teşkilatının Gelişimi*; Bostan, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinin Modern Temelleri.*

[5] See, Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Abdülhamit Kırmızı, "II. Abdülhamid'in Hıristiyan Memurları", *Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve Dönemi*, ed. F. Gün - H. İ. Erbay (İstanbul: TBMM Milli Saraylar, 2017), 654-664.

[6] A prosopographic study's primary characteristic is that its subjects are examined collectively rather than individually. Using this approach, a group with specific traits and attributes is assembled to offer integrity for the entire group. This approach aims to create a synthesis by addressing the shared traits of the group under investigation. For a thorough explanation of prosopography, which is the process of examining of a group of people's lives collectively, see Koenread Verboven - Myriam Carlier - Jan Dumolyn, "A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography", *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook,* ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (England: Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2007), 35-69.

[7] For a prosopographic cataloging of late Ottoman civil servants, see Sinan Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali, 1839-1922: Prosopografik Rehber* (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 1999). Although there is no prosopography of late Ottoman diplomats, in

Additionally, a considerable number of personnel files within the Interior Ministry's catalog (DH.SAİDd.) in the Ottoman Archives pertain to individuals who initially served as civil servants at the Ottoman center and later assumed positions as ambassadors or consuls in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. The exact number of such individuals remains undetermined. Our study, however, is constrained to the HR.SAİD catalog due to the limitations of the DH.SAİDd. Files, which do not provide sufficient information regarding the professional trajectories of these individuals prior to their appointments as ambassadors or consuls. Consequently, we have focused exclusively on the HR.SAİD catalog to ensure a comprehensive examination of the diplomats' professional and educational backgrounds.

The *sicill-i ahval* (personnel records) registers, introduced in 1879 during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, were a product of the era's efforts toward institutionalization and bureaucratization.[8] These records were designed to assess state officials' socio-cultural status and optimize their deployment within the administrative service according to their qualifications.[9] The practice of documenting the biographies of civil officers continued until 1914, reflecting an ongoing commitment to the systematic evaluation and management of state personnel.[10]

Recent scholarship has increasingly utilized *sicill-i ahval* records, renowned for their rich and detailed content, as primary sources for academic research.[11] Building on these works, the present article will further examine diplomats' social origins and histories, familial circumstances, socioeconomic statuses, educational attainments, and professional careers by analyzing

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fact, group studies of people who worked as diplomats in other nineteenth-century states have been conducted using this method. For example, for a study that analyses the careers of French diplomats reshaped between tradition and modernity on the eve of the Second World War and reveals the newly shaped profile of diplomats in France, see Isabella Dasque, *Les Diplomates de la République* (Sorbonne: Sorbonne University Press, 2020). Also, group studies of important occupational groups in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire have been conducted using this method. For instance, 257 Ottoman musicians prosopographical analyzes were conducted by Onur Öner. See, Onur Öner, "Understanding Social Change: Demographic Analyses of Musicians in Late Ottoman Istanbul", *Middle Eastern Studies* 57/2 (2021), 227-248.

[8] For a comprehensive understanding about the *sicill-i ahval* registries, see Mübahat Kütükoğlu, "Sicill-i Ahvâl Defterleri'ni Tamamlayan Arşiv Kayıtları", *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 12 (1988), 141-157; Gülden Sarıyıldız, *Sicill-i Ahvâl Komisyonunun Kuruluşu ve İşlevi, 1879-1909* (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2004); Gülden Sarıyıldız, "Sicill-i Ahvâl Defterleri", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Accessed January 2, 2024).

[9] See, Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) (Presidency State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, Department of Ottoman Archives, Istanbul) (henceforth BOA), İrade Dahiliye (İ.DH), 780/63473, 12 Safer 1296 (5 February 1879).

[10] According to the Ottoman Archives Guide, the total number of *sicill-i ahval* files is 51,698. See, Yusuf İhsan Genç - Mustafa Küçük - Raşit Gündoğdu - Sinan Satar - İbrahim Karaca - Hacı Osman Yıldırım - Nazım Yılmaz (eds.), *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (İstanbul: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2010), 286-287.

[11] For some of the important studies written using the registry files, which provide us with comprehensive information about the people who took part in the Ottoman bureaucracy, see Abdülhamit Kırmızı, *Abdülhamid'in Valileri/ Osmanlı Vilayet İdaresi 1895-1908* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınevi, 2017); Erhan Bektaş, *Religious Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2023).

the data in their personnel registry files. This study will investigate how various social and institutional factors influenced the career trajectories of diplomats, leveraging the comprehensive information provided in these registers.

This study considers key factors such as the social origins, backgrounds, religions, social and economic conditions, education, and professional trajectories of Ottoman diplomats from their inception to the end of their careers. By elucidating the social backgrounds of these diplomats and addressing pertinent questions regarding their educational and professional development, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the latter years of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry and its diplomatic corps. Furthermore, the prosopographic analysis of the characteristics of our sample group can be generalized to offer insights into the broader cohort of diplomats who served during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

1. Social Origins

This section seeks to analyze the social origins of the diplomats by examining key factors such as their places of birth, familial backgrounds, religious affiliations, and the professional occupations of their fathers. By delving into these aspects, the analysis aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural milieus that shaped the diplomats and influenced their trajectories within the diplomatic sphere.

1.1. Birthplaces

The birthplace of a diplomat serves as a critical determinant of their status within the civil bureaucracy, offering valuable insights into their social standing and regional origins. This factor can significantly shape their career opportunities and professional trajectories within the administrative hierarchy, reflecting broader socio-political dynamics and regional affiliations that influence their advancement and roles within the diplomatic service.

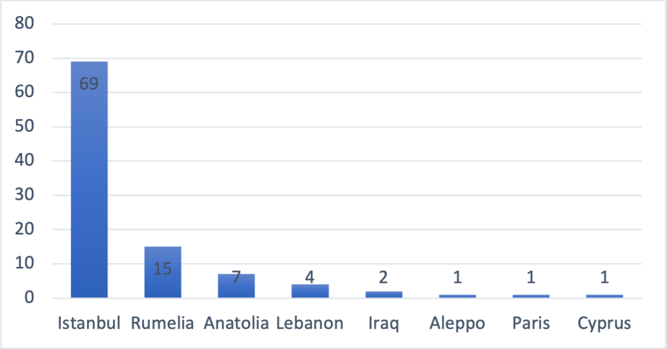

Figure 1. Diplomats' Birthplaces

Figure 1 presents the distribution of birthplaces among the one hundred diplomats included in this study. A significant majority, 69%, were born in Istanbul, the imperial capital. The remaining diplomats were born in a diverse array of locations: 15% in the territories currently comprising the Balkans, 7% in Anatolia, 4% in Lebanon, 2% in Iraq, and the remaining 3% across Aleppo, Paris, and Cyprus. This data suggests that a predominant proportion of the diplomats, nearly two-thirds, hailed from Istanbul. The next most common region of origin was the former Rumelian provinces, which accounted for 15% of the diplomats analyzed.

1.2. Religious Affiliations

In examining the social backgrounds of diplomats, it is essential to consider their places of birth and their religious affiliations. Analyzing the religious identities of diplomats provides deeper insights into the socio-cultural environments from which they emerged and the broader societal structures that may have influenced their entry into the diplomatic service. Understanding these affiliations is crucial for assessing the extent to which religious identity intersects with other social determinants, such as education and regional origin, to shape their careers and positions within the civil bureaucracy.

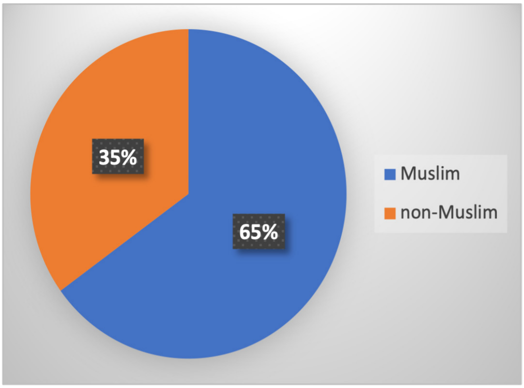

Figure 2. Religious Beliefs of Diplomats

According to the data presented in Figure 1, sixty-five of the one hundred diplomats in the sample were Muslims, while thirty-five were non-Muslims. This distribution indicates a substantial non-Muslim presence, comprising 35% of the diplomatic workforce, within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry during the later years of the empire.[12] The significant representation of non-Muslim diplomats, including those who served at the ambassadorial level, highlights the absence of systematic religious or ethnic discrimination in the empire's foreign service.[13] This finding suggests that the Ottoman state maintained a level of inclusivity in its diplomatic appointments, reflecting a degree of meritocracy that transcended religious affiliations.

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[12] Also, for some studies dealing with non-Muslim officials serving in Ottoman diplomacy, see Saro Dadyan, "Sultan Abdülaziz, V. Murad ve II. Abdülhamid Dönemlerinin Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Üst Düzey Gayrimüslim Bürokrat ve Diplomatlar", *Milli Saraylar* 10 (2012), 66-72; Olivier Bouquet, *Sultanın Paşaları: Osmanlı Devlet Ricali Hakkında Bir Deneme (1839-1909)*, trans. Devrim Çetinkasap, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2016).

[13] For some studies drawing attention to the presence of different ethnicities in the Ottoman diplomatic service, see Isa Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen* (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 2003); Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Frederick F. Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (London: University of London, 2014).

The elevation of the plight of non-Muslims residing in Ottoman territories to a global issue by European Christian governments was another significant factor contributing to the substantial representation of non-Muslims within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. To mitigate the risk of European powers leveraging the status of non-Muslims as a diplomatic pressure point, the Ottoman Empire strategically opted to employ non-Muslims in pivotal positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This strategy aimed to counterbalance potential diplomatic challenges and demonstrate the empire's commitment to addressing the concerns raised by European states, thereby reinforcing its diplomatic standing and internal stability.

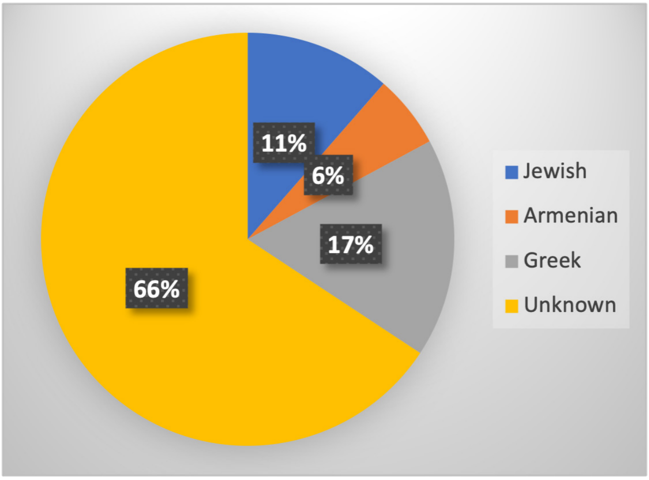

Figure 3. Distribution of non-Muslim Diplomats by Nationality

Although non-Muslims seldom specified their ethnicity in personnel records, available data reveals that six diplomats identified as Greek, four as Jewish, and two as Armenian. Among those who disclosed their nationality, Greeks constituted the largest group, accounting for 17%, followed by Jews at 11%.

One of the factors that facilitated the recruitment of non-Muslims by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry was the central government's difficulty in finding Muslim officials with the requisite diplomatic skills. A significant aspect contributing to this challenge was foreign language proficiency, where Muslim officials were often at a disadvantage compared to their non-Muslim counterparts. Due to the lower rate of foreign language proficiency among Muslims, the Ottoman government increasingly relied on non-Muslim civil servants who possessed the necessary linguistic skills to engage in diplomatic affairs effectively. This reliance underscores the practical considerations behind the composition of the diplomatic corps, reflecting a merit-based approach driven by the demands of international diplomacy.

1.3. Careers of Fathers

The careers of diplomats are profoundly shaped by various factors, including familial background and connections. In the context of Ottoman diplomacy, the professional trajectory of a diplomat could be significantly influenced by the training, political connections, and social status imparted by their father or other relatives. This study examines the careers of the fathers of diplomats to understand their potential impact on the diplomats' careers.

An analysis of personnel registry files reveals variability in the extent of detail provided: some records are brief, while others are comprehensive. Despite this variability, all registry data consistently include basic information such as the diplomat's name, father's name, and educational background. However, certain specific details, such as the vocations of the fathers, are not uniformly documented. Findley suggests that this lack of detailed information may indicate that the diplomat did not originate from a particularly prominent or well-known family.[14] This perspective underscores the potential role of familial influence in shaping diplomatic careers.

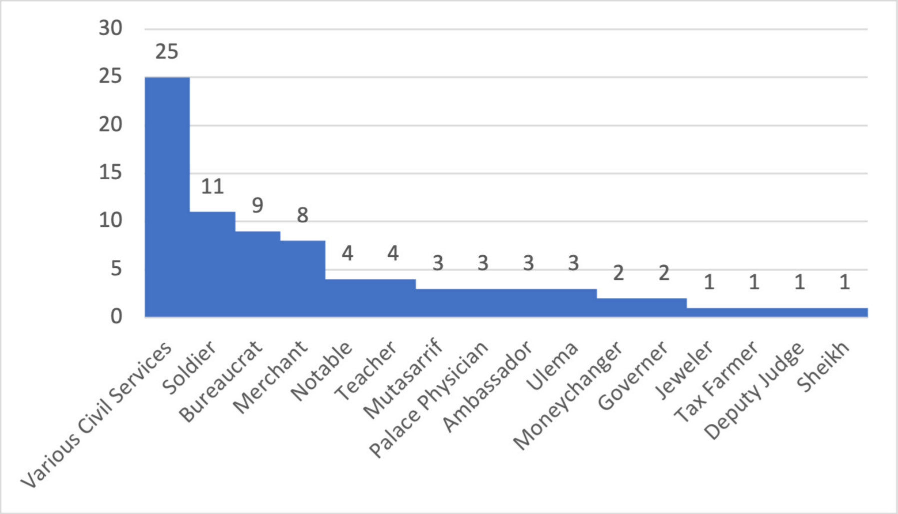

Figure 4. Distribution of Professions of the Diplomats' Fathers

Figure 4 illustrates that, among the eighty-one diplomats who provided information about their fathers' occupations, sixty-four (approximately 80%) identified their fathers as having roles in state service. This group includes twenty-five civil servants, eleven soldiers, nine bureaucrats, four teachers, three mutasarrifs, three palace doctors, three ambassadors, three ulema, two governors, and one deputy judge. In contrast, the remaining diplomats reported their fathers' occupations as sheikhs, tax farmers, notables, jewelers, money changers, and merchants. This data underscores the preeminent role of public service professions in shaping the careers of diplomats, suggesting a potential correlation between a familial background in state service and the subsequent entry into diplomatic roles.

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[14] See, Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 110-111.

A parent who has established a career in state service may significantly influence his child's opportunities in diplomacy, as evidenced by the high proportion of fathers employed as diplomats, bureaucrats, or civil officials among the diplomats surveyed. Sons who followed their fathers' professional paths and pursued careers in state service often managed to secure positions within the Ottoman diplomatic corps. Notable examples of this phenomenon include Hasan Basri Bey, who was appointed as the attaché in Rome, and Hüseyin Şefik Bey, also appointed as an honorary attaché to the Rome embassy.[15] Both were sons of Mustafa Reşid Bey, the Ottoman Ambassador to Rome. These appointments exemplify how familial connections and the prestige associated with a parent's career in state service could facilitate entry into and advancement within the diplomatic sector.

While Findley approaches the inclusion of senior civil servants' children in the diplomatic service from an elitist perspective, this study attributes this phenomenon primarily to access to high-quality education rather than elitism or nepotism. Due to their elevated socioeconomic status, high-ranking officials and diplomats often provided their sons with superior educational opportunities, preparing them for skilled careers, including diplomacy. For example, Hasan Basri Bey, son of Mustafa Reşid Bey, received his high school education in Brussels, which included the prerequisites for admission to the Brussels School of Politics. His multilingual proficiency—spanning French, English, German, and Italian—further exemplifies the advantages conferred by his education.[16] Similarly, Hüseyin Şefik Bey, another son of Mustafa Reşid Bey, was tutored privately before continuing his studies in Geneva, where he acquired proficiency in Turkish, French, English, and Italian. He later completed his education at the Darülfünun in Rome.[17] These cases demonstrate that children of high-ranking officials often benefited from a competent education, which facilitated their advancement to prominent positions within the diplomatic service. Thus, it is observed that the educational advantages provided by their fathers played a crucial role in their ability to reach the highest echelons of diplomacy.

2. Education

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire undertook significant efforts to align its diplomatic missions with contemporary international norms, leading to substantial reforms in the education of its diplomats. A pivotal development in this era was the establishment of modern educational institutions designed to formalize and professionalize diplomatic training. The inception of these institutions began in 1838, marking a transformative period in the educational trajectory of Ottoman diplomats. Introducing Western-style education in these newly established schools provided a distinct advantage, positioning diplomat candidates for critical roles within the empire's diplomatic apparatus.

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[15] BOA, Hariciye Nezareti Sicill-i Ahval İdare-i Umumiyyesi Müdüriyeti (HR.SAİD), 18/26, 19 Zilhicce 1325 (23 January 1908); BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4, 24 Zilkade 1324 (9 January 1907).

[16] BOA, HR.SAİD, 18/26, 19 Zilhicce 1325 (23 January 1908).

[17] BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4.

This section of the article is integral for understanding the impact of these educational reforms on the diplomatic corps. By examining the establishment and evolution of these modern educational institutions, we can gain insight into how the Ottoman Empire's efforts to modernize its educational system influenced the formation and advancement of its diplomatic personnel. The shift towards a more structured and contemporary approach to diplomatic education not only enhanced the qualifications of diplomat candidates but also reflected the empire's broader attempts to integrate into the international diplomatic community.

2.1. Initial Training

To assess the qualifications of Ottoman diplomats, it is essential to examine the educational backgrounds that shaped their careers. Our research reveals that most diplomats commenced their educational journeys at Ottoman *sıbyan mektebi* (Ottoman primary schools), which provided the foundational education essential for their future roles. It was common for these individuals to begin their studies in these state-run primary schools, where they received basic literacy and numeracy skills. In addition to formal schooling, it was typical for diplomat candidates to supplement their education through private instruction. The role of the private tutor (*muallim-i mahsus*) was significant in providing tailored, individualized education that addressed specific needs and advanced learning beyond the standard curriculum offered in sıbyan mektebi. Conversely, non-Muslim diplomats frequently pursued their primary education in minority schools, which were often established to cater to the diverse ethnic and religious communities within the empire.

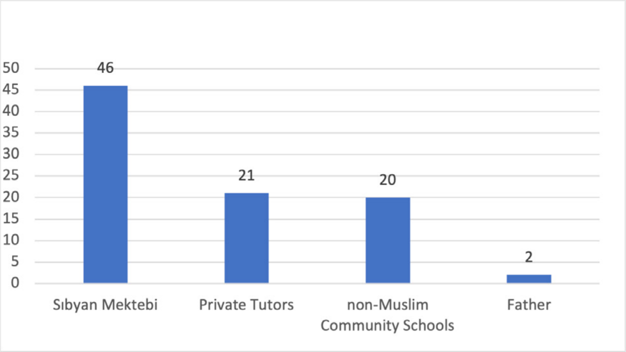

Figure 5. Primary Education of Diplomats

Among the diplomats under examination, 46 individuals reported completing their primary education at *sıbyan mektebi*, which was indicative of their adherence to the traditional educational framework of the time. Additionally, twenty-one diplomats received instruction from private tutors (*muallim-i mahsus*), reflecting a personalized approach to their early education. Two diplomats reported that their fathers conducted their primary education, highlighting an alternative education method involving familial instruction. In contrast, twenty non-Muslim diplomats completed their primary education in minority schools, such as the Alliance Israélite School, Fener Greek School, and Armenian Catholic School. The educational backgrounds of eleven diplomats remain partially undocumented, as the methods used to complete their primary schooling were not specified in the available records.

The data presented in the graph, which illustrates the educational backgrounds of diplomat candidates, indicates that most diplomats completed their initial education at *sıbyan mektebi*. Further analysis of the personnel registry files of these diplomats reveals that the typical age of admission to *sıbyan mektebi* ranged from six to nine years. Generally, the average age for entering *sıbyan mektebi* was seven years. An exception to this norm is noted in the case of Consul Mehmed Münci Bey, who reported starting primary school at the age of five. This early admission deviates from the standard age range and highlights the variability in the educational experiences of diplomats during this period.[18]

Among the diplomats examined, twenty reported completing their primary education in minority schools, underscoring a prevalent trend where non-Muslim diplomats typically attended educational institutions aligned with their ethnic or religious communities. Nonetheless, some non-Muslim diplomats also received their initial education at *sıbyan mektebi*, reflecting a degree of integration within the broader Ottoman educational system.

For instance, Krayeva Consul Artin Hazar Effendi, of Armenian descent, and Ohan Effendi, a Greek national who later served as the Undersecretary of the Berlin Embassy, both indicated that they completed their elementary education at the *Selamsz Sıbyan Mektebi* in Üsküdar. This example illustrates that non-Muslim diplomats could and did participate in the Ottoman primary education system alongside their Muslim peers.

In addition, several non-Muslim diplomats, such as Stepan and Mike Effendi, reported receiving their foundational education from private tutors.[19] This method of instruction highlights an alternative educational pathway that some diplomats pursued, providing a more individualized and possibly more culturally specific form of education outside the formal school system.

To serve as a civil servant in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, candidates were expected to meet specific educational standards, including initial training. The fact that approximately half of the diplomats completed their primary education at *sıbyan mektebi* underscores the institution's pivotal role as the primary entry point into formal education within the Ottoman educational system. However, the educational paths of some diplomats reveal that initial enrollment in official Ottoman educational institutions was not a prerequisite for appointment. Notably, diplomats who began their education with private tutoring, as well as non-Muslim diplomats who completed their primary education in minority schools, illustrate alternative routes to civil service. These examples suggest that the Ottoman Empire's Foreign Ministry valued diverse educational backgrounds and did not rigidly require initial schooling at *sıbyan mektebi* or other state-run institutions for civil service appointments.

2.2. Higher Education

The Ottoman administration, recognizing the profound impact of education on society and its critical significance for the empire's future, was influenced by Western educational institutions. Rather than fully adopting these models, the administration opted to adapt them, thereby establishing analogous institutions within the Ottoman Empire.[20] To cultivate a cadre of qualified public officials for the Ottoman Empire, modern educational institutions were established, and the educational system was institutionalized in the 1830s. These reforms marked a significant shift from traditional methods of education, laying a robust foundation for the transition to a modern education system.

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[18] BOA, HR.SAİD, 9/2, 7 Safer 1319 (26 May 1901).

[19] BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/10, 22 Ramazan 1314 (24 February 1897); BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/25, 21 Rabiulahir 1312 (22 October 1894).

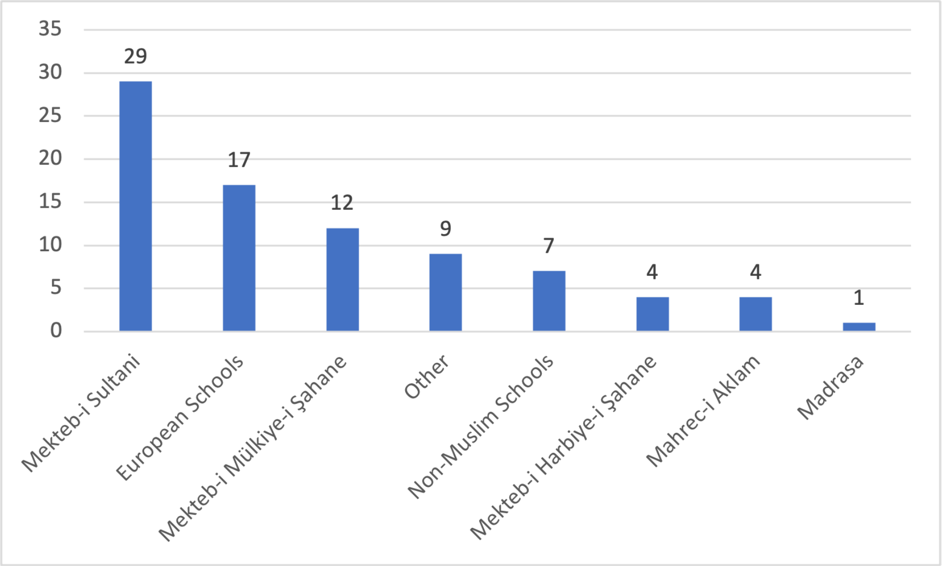

Figure 6. Higher Education of Diplomats

Figure 6 illustrates that diplomats pursued their education at various modern institutions established within the Ottoman Empire and abroad. Within the empire, diplomats attended prominent institutions such as Mekteb-i Sultani (Galatasaray Lycée), Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şahane (School of Civil Administration), Mekteb-i Harbiye-i Şahane (Military Academy), and Mahrec-i Aklam (Vestibule of the Offices). Additionally, some diplomats furthered their education at European institutions, including Mekteb-i Osmani (the Ottoman School in Paris), Darülfünun (the University) of Paris, and Darülfünun of Rome. Furthermore, diplomats also attended specialized schools such as Mekteb-i Tıbbiye (School of Medicine), Ticaret Mektebi (School of Commerce), Lisan Mektebi (School of Language), and Ziraat Mektebi (School of Agriculture).

The data presented in this figure indicates that the initial education obtained by diplomat candidates through primary schools, private tutoring, or minority institutions—whether local or foreign—often fell short of the requirements for effective representation in institutional and modern diplomacy. This inadequacy underscores the need for advanced educational training to meet the evolving demands of diplomatic service.

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[20] Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 42-64; Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-10.

As a result, there was a notable shift towards education in modern-style institutions, particularly during the late Ottoman era. Many diplomats whose records were reviewed reported attending advanced modern schools after their completion of primary education and *rüşdiye* (secondary school) education. This progression reflects a concerted effort to enhance the qualifications of diplomats by providing them with comprehensive training in contemporary educational settings, thereby better preparing them for the complexities of modern diplomatic roles.

A notable observation from the graph is the minimal number of diplomats who opted to enroll in a madrasa following their primary education at *sıbyan mektebi* or private tutoring. Among the one hundred diplomats examined, only one individual, Şevki Kamil Effendi, pursued further education at a madrasa—specifically at the Fatih Mosque madrasa—after completing his primary education at a *sıbyan mektebi* and secondary education at a *rüşdiye*.[21] This choice contrasts the broader trend of attending modern educational institutions and highlights the relatively limited appeal of traditional religious schools for diplomats during this period.

The presence of diplomats with doctoral degrees within the sample underscores the advanced educational qualifications of this group. For example, Atin Karatodori Pasha, who served as the charge d'affaires at the Petersburg Embassy, exemplifies this trend. He completed his education at *Mekteb-i Tıbbiy*e (School of Medicine) following his *rüşdiye* education. Subsequently, he pursued further studies at Berlin University, where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1860 after dedicating five and a half years to his academic endeavors.[22] This level of educational attainment highlights the significant intellectual and professional development achieved by certain diplomats, reflecting a broader trend towards higher education and specialization within the Ottoman diplomatic corps during this period.

2.3. European-Trained Diplomats

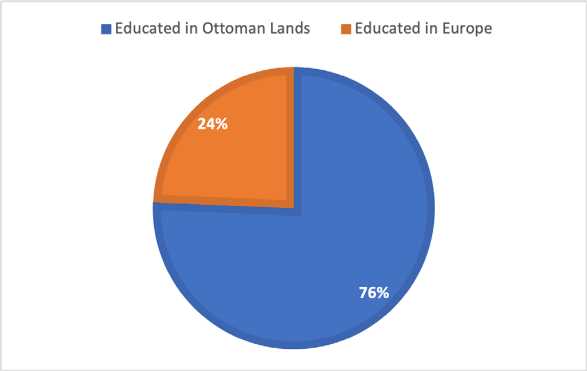

Figure 7. Education of Diplomats in Europe

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[21] BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/4, 27 Rabiulahir 1324 (20 June 1906).

[22] BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/4, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1313 (30 October 1895).

Although the primary objective was to deter children from enrolling in foreign schools by establishing modern educational institutions within Ottoman territories and fostering loyalty to the state among students, there were also diplomats who opted to pursue their education in contemporary institutions abroad.[23] Among the diplomats who provided information about their higher education, eighteen individuals (24%) reported having studied in Europe, while fifty-six individuals (76%) completed their higher education exclusively at institutions within the Ottoman Empire. The choice to pursue education in Europe was often motivated by the prospect of securing a position within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, as European institutions were perceived to offer advanced training and exposure that could enhance one's qualifications for diplomatic roles.

The initial period a diplomat spent abroad, whether for educational purposes or as part of their government duties, was crucial for gaining professional experience. This exposure abroad contributed to their academic and professional development and provided valuable insights into international diplomatic practices and standards.

The decision for diplomat candidates to pursue foreign language education abroad was often influenced by their family's financial status and the Sublime Porte's policy regarding educational funding. The Ottoman government occasionally sponsored such educational endeavors, covering the associated costs as part of its broader strategy to enhance diplomatic proficiency. For example, in 1853, the government sent Hüseyin Hüsnü Pasha, then Ambassador to Petersburg, to Paris for advanced studies. Similarly, in 1854, Mahmud Esad Pasha, who was serving as Ambassador to Paris, was also dispatched to Paris for educational purposes.[24] These educational trips were fully funded by the state treasury, reflecting the Ottoman Empire's commitment to investing in the professional development of its diplomatic personnel.

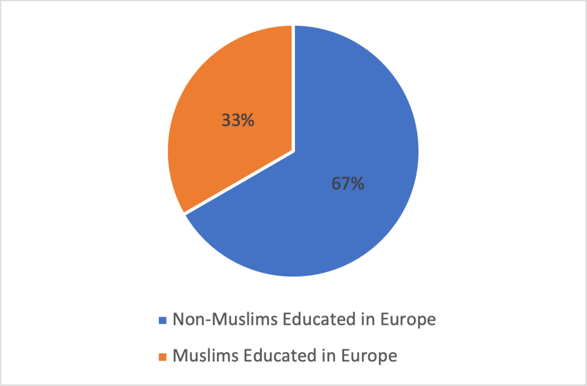

Figure 8. Religious Beliefs of Diplomats Educated in Europe

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[23] Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 51.

[24] BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/30, 24 Rabiulevvel 1315 (23 August 1897); BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/1, 15 Şaban 1312 (11 February 1895).

A comparison of European-educated diplomats based on their religious affiliation reveals a notable disparity: non-Muslim diplomats were more prevalent among those who received training in Europe. Of the eighteen diplomats who pursued education in European institutions, only six (33%)[25] were Muslim, while twelve (67%)[26] were non-Muslim. Among the six Muslim diplomats educated in Europe, only two disclosed that the government sponsored their studies abroad for academic purposes. The remaining Muslim diplomats financed their own education using personal wealth.

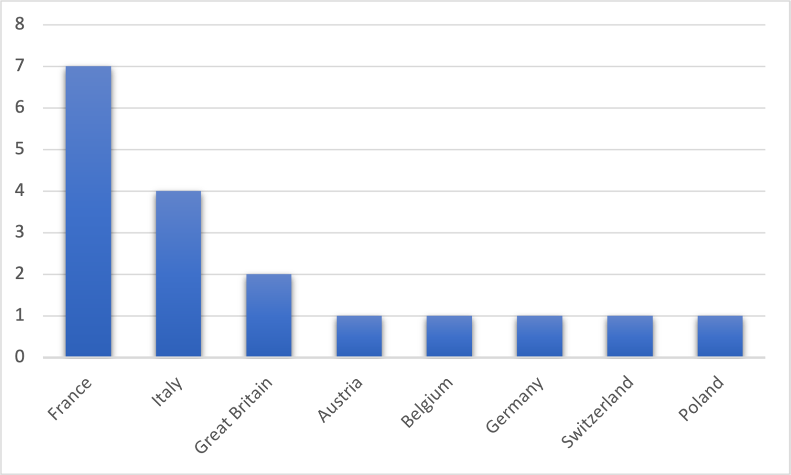

Figure 9. Distribution of Diplomats Trained in Europe by Country

According to Figure 9, Paris was the most favored destination for Ottoman diplomat candidates seeking education in Europe, with 41% (seven diplomats)[27] choosing the city for their studies. Paris ranked top among students looking to study in Europe, with a rate of 41% (seven diplomats)[28]. The preeminence of Paris as a center for international education can be largely attributed to the prominence of the French language in global diplomacy and international relations. France's advanced educational institutions and the effectiveness with which French was taught contributed to its status as the preferred location for higher education. Following Paris, Rome emerged as the second most popular destination, chosen by 18% (three diplomats)[29] of those studying abroad. Paris was followed by Rome by 18% (three diplomats)[30]. Other diplomat candidates studying abroad preferred Great Britain,[31] Austria,[32] Belgium,[33] Berlin,[34] Geneva,[35] and Warsaw.[36]

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[25] For Muslim diplomats educated in Europe, see BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/1; BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/30; BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/28, 17 Rabiulevvel 1315 (16 August 1897); BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4; BOA, HR.SAİD, 16/2, 28 Cemaziyelevvel 1325 (9 July 1907)-Mehmed Rafed Bey; BOA, HR.SAİD, 15/28, 26 Rabiulahir 1325 (8 June 1907).

[26] For non-Muslim diplomats educated in Europe, see BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/9, 27 Ramazan 1311 (3 April 1894); BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/4; BOA, HR.SAİD, 10/22, 16 Cemazeyilevvel 1321 (10 August 1903); BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/10, 20 Cemazeyilahir 1313 (8 December 1895); BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/27, 21 Zilhicce 1318 (11 April 1901); BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/27, 21 Rabiulahir 1312 (22 October 1894); BOA, HR.SAİD, 23/6, 28 Muharrem 1329 (29 January 1911); BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/5, 28 Rabiulahir 1324 (21 June 1906); BOA, HR.SAİD, 12/5, 28 Rabiulevvel 1324 (22 May 1906); BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/8, 11 Zilhicce 1317 (12 April 1900); BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/16, 16 Cemazeyilahir 1318 (11 October 1900); BOA, HR.SAİD, 12/9, 5 Rabiulahir 1324 (29 May 1906).

[27] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/1, 15 Şaban 1312 (11 February 1895); BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/28, 17 Rabiulevvel 1315 (16 August 1897); BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/10; BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/14, 29 Recep 1313 (15 January 1896); BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/27; BOA, HR.SAİD, 23/6; BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/8.

[28] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/1; BOA, HR.SAİD, 5/28; BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/10; BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/14; BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/27; BOA, HR.SAİD, 23/6; BOA, HR.SAİD, 8/8.

2.4. Language Skills

One needed to be well-educated and conversant in one or more foreign languages to work in Ottoman Representations. The demand for staff to be able to speak Western languages, particularly French, set the Ottoman Foreign Ministry apart from other institutions. Politic relations with foreign states where diplomats who did not speak a foreign language were stationed could only be maintained through interpreters. Additionally, the inability of diplomats to speak other languages made it challenging for them to integrate into Europe's social and cultural life. For this reason, the diplomats needed to be fluent in French, the language of diplomacy.[37]

The sixth article of the third chapter of the *Sicill-i Ahval* Code of Laws is about how civil servants should express the languages they know in the personnel registry files. Following this article, civil servants must list the languages they are proficient in, along with their level of proficiency. They were, therefore, asked to say, "I am familiar with these languages, and I understand them," if they only know one or more foreign languages carelessly. They were asked to say, "I can speak (*tekellüm*) and write (*kitabet*)," if they were proficient in both speaking and writing.[38] Declaring that someone just has a "writing level" understanding of a language means they may write in it and may also be able to speak it. His "speaking" indicates that he is capable of reading and possibly speaking that language. A person who uses the word "familiar" (*aşina*) indicates that he understands the spoken or written language to some extent.

Although the notions of "writing, speaking, and being familiar" were utilized by the public servants in the *Sicill-i Ahval* Registries to signify their level of foreign language proficiency, some officials went beyond these concepts and used the term "I know." However, there are also phrases like "speaks, reads, writes." All foreign languages mentioned by the diplomats in their files are considered to be fluent, regardless of their degree and level, as the diplomats examined in this study typically express the languages they know with words other than the phrases specified in the *Sicill-i Ahval* Code of Laws or simply say "I know."

It is possible to conclude diplomats' proficiency in foreign languages from the information they provide in their records. Still, it is important to remember that each diplomat's proficiency level should be assessed individually. In this situation, it is possible for diplomats to transmit unfamiliar languages as though they are native speakers, or they may choose to act modestly and limit their statement of familiarity to languages they are fluent in. It is unable to remark on the accuracy of the foreign language information diplomats submit in their register entries because this study does not focus on the personal lives of individual diplomats. Nonetheless, since the state has verified and reviewed their personal registers, we can presume that they are being truthful when speaking the foreign languages they are proficient in.

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[29] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/9; BOA, HR.SAİD, 10/22; BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4.

[30] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/9; BOA, HR.SAİD, 10/22; BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4.

[31] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 3/27; BOA, HR.SAİD, 16/2.

[32] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/5.

[33] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 12/9.

[34] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/4.

[35] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 14/4.

[36] See, BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/5.

[37] Roderic H. Davison, "On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reformlarına Araç Olarak Fransız Dili", trans. Çiğdem Erkal İpek, *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2/4-5 (1994-1995), 172-177.

[38] See, BOA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı (Y.EE), 113/13, 6 Rabiulahir 1327 (27 April 1909), 2-3/ part 3, article 6.

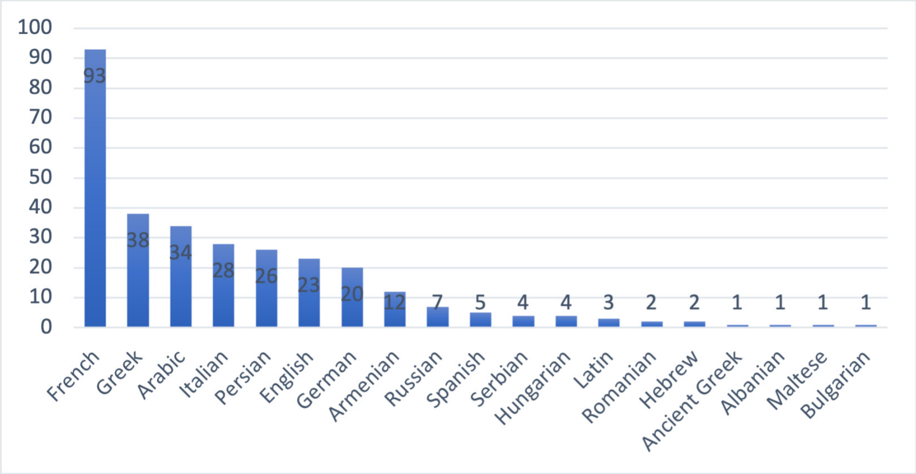

Figure 10. Languages Except for Turkish Known by Diplomats

Figure 10 reveals that 93% of the one hundred diplomats examined are fluent in French. During a period when proficiency in French was a prerequisite for diplomatic service, the fact that seven diplomats were not reported as fluent in French either suggests exceptional circumstances or reflects a possible lack of emphasis on declaring French fluency among certain diplomats. In addition to French, the diplomats displayed familiarity with a range of other languages, including Greek, Arabic, Italian, Persian, English, German, Armenian, Russian, and Spanish.

An analysis of the religious affiliations of diplomats who speak Armenian and Greek reveals noteworthy trends. Among the twelve diplomats fluent in Armenian, two are Muslim, while fourteen of the thirty-eight diplomats fluent in Greek are Muslim. The presence of Muslim diplomats proficient in both Armenian and Greek illustrates that Muslim diplomats were not only conversant in the languages of the diverse communities within the empire but also engaged with the multicultural society in which they lived.

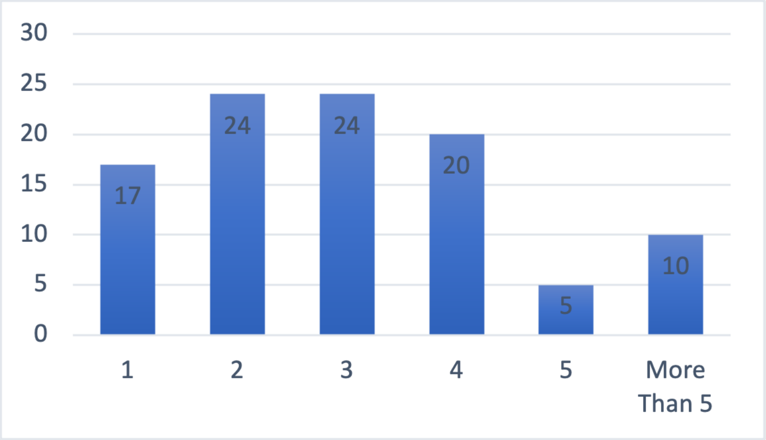

Figure 11. Number of Languages Except for Turkish Known by Diplomats

Figure 11 illustrates the linguistic capabilities of the diplomats, revealing that all possess proficiency in at least one foreign language in addition to Turkish. Specifically, seventeen diplomats are reported to speak only one foreign language apart from Turkish. The majority, comprising twenty-four diplomats, are proficient in two to three languages, while twenty diplomats can communicate in four languages. Five diplomats have mastered five languages, and ten diplomats are reported to speak more than five languages. Among these, eight diplomats claim proficiency in six languages, with one diplomat asserting knowledge of seven languages. The diplomat with the highest level of linguistic proficiency is Nesim Alhaym Effendi, a Jewish diplomat from the empire, noted for his remarkable command of nine languages. As the Consul of Drobeta, Nesim Alhaym Effendi reported fluency in French, German, English, Russian, Serbian, Greek, Spanish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian.[39] On average, diplomats are proficient in three languages, excluding Turkish, reflecting a significant multilingual capability within the Ottoman diplomatic corps.

Also, the potential for changes or declines in diplomats' proficiency in foreign languages following the establishment of the *sicill-i ahval* should be carefully considered. For instance, in his personnel file, Ahmed Feyzi Bey, the Ambassador to Cetinje, noted that he had acquired sufficient Russian to communicate effectively through private lessons during his assignment in Petersburg. However, he reported that his proficiency in Russian diminished after returning home, suggesting a decline in his already basic understanding of the language due to lack of use.[40] Similarly, Ahmed Feyzi Bey's personnel records reveal that he experienced a gradual loss of proficiency in Arabic over time, despite initially speaking it fluently.[41]

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[39] BOA, HR.SAİD, 21/4, 28 Cemazeyilahir 1327 (17 July 1909).

[40] BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/7, 8 Cemaziyelevvel 1324 (30 June 1906).

[41] BOA, HR.SAİD, 13/7.

3. Professional Progress

The subsequent section of this article will examine the professionalization process of Ottoman diplomats during the final period of the empire. This analysis will address key aspects of their professional careers, including the timing of their initial appointments and the number of promotions they received. This overview aims to provide a detailed understanding of Ottoman diplomats' career trajectories and professional development in the late imperial era.

3.1. Employment Process

Upon completing the requisite training and demonstrating a commitment to their duties, exceptional performance, skills, and loyalty, candidates for diplomatic positions could be appointed to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. However, those diplomats possessing advanced education and exemplary moral character were occasionally required to undergo a preparatory phase known as *mulazemet* before commencing their official diplomatic roles. During this interim period, these individuals continued to receive professional training, further honing their expertise and preparing for their forthcoming responsibilities.

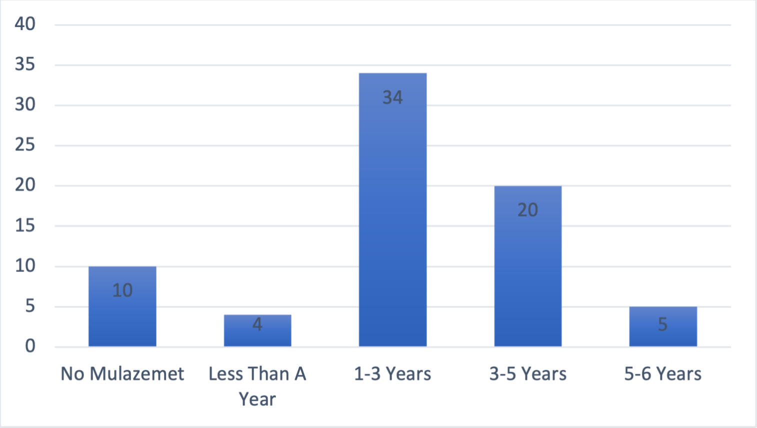

Figure 12. Mulazemet Durations of Diplomats Before Appointing with Salary

In the sample investigated, twenty-seven out of one hundred diplomats did not disclose whether they underwent a *mulazemet* period prior to their appointment as salaried employees. Among the remaining seventy-three diplomats, the duration of the *mulazemet* period varied considerably. Figure 12 illustrates that ten diplomats reported no waiting period, while four experienced a *mulazemet* duration of less than one year. A significant portion, thirty-four diplomats, had a waiting period ranging from one to three years, twenty had three to five years, and five endured a waiting period of five years or longer. Notably, the diplomats with the shortest *mulazemet* periods included Atin Karatodori Pasha, Mehmed Bahaddin Bey, Cebrail Beşir Effendi, and İbrahim Edhem Bey.[42] Conversely, Hüseyin Hüsnü Sermed Effendi, who

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[42] BOA, HR.SAİD, 4/4; BOA, HR.SAİD, 21/3, 7 Cemazeyilahir 1327 (26 June 1909); BOA, HR.SAİD, 18/20, 3 Zilhicce 1325/ (7 January 1908); BOA, HR.SAİD, 9/7, 8 Rabiulahir 1319 (25 July 1901).

experienced the most extended waiting period within the sample, underwent a six-year *mulazemet* before his appointment.[43]

The duration of the *mulazemet* period appears to be independent of the diplomat's age, a factor that warrants consideration in this analysis. The sample includes cases where *mulazim* (interns) were as young as fifteen years old, such as Sadullah Pasha, who commenced his career in 1852 as a member of the Office of Treasury (Hazine-i Maliye Varidat Kalemi) at this age.[44] In contrast, Kirkor Yaldızyan, who later served as the Austrian Consul, began his unpaid service at the Beyoğlu Telegraph Office at twenty-six.[45] This variation highlights that the length and nature of the *mulazemet* period were influenced more by the specific requirements and opportunities available within the Ottoman bureaucratic system rather than the age of the individual diplomats.

3.2. Age at Entry into Civil Service

Although the starting age of individuals who eventually serve as ambassadors for the state varies, as does the duration of their *mulazemet* period, the typical age at which they begin their careers is around nineteen. This trend is particularly evident among late Ottoman diplomats, who often commenced their diplomatic careers at a relatively young age following only a brief *mulazemet* period. This situation can be attributed to the heightened demand for diplomats with advanced degrees during the late Ottoman Empire. Consequently, candidates aspiring to diplomatic positions were frequently able to secure employment within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry after a notably short period of preparatory service.

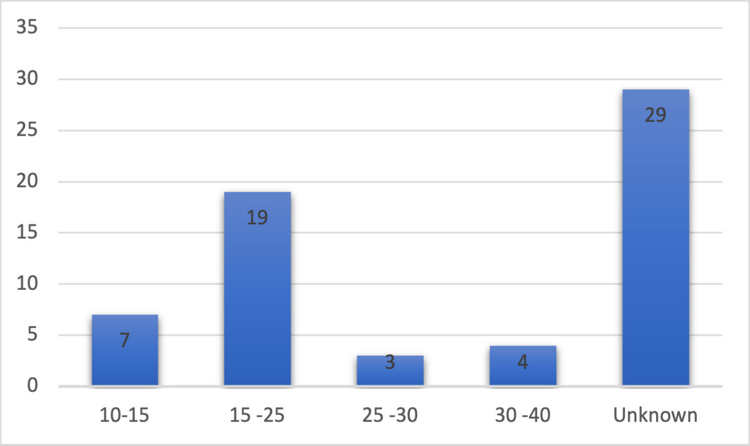

Figure 13. First Entrance Ages of Diplomats With *Mulazemet*

The data in the figure above details the ages at which diplomats entered state service. According to the figure, seven diplomats began their careers between the ages of ten and fifteen, while nineteen entered state service between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five.

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[43] BOA, HR.SAİD, 1/18, 25 Safer 1304 (23 November 1886).

[44] BOA, HR.SAİD, 1/24, 6 Şaban 1305 (18 April 1888).

[45] BOA, HR.SAİD, 12/5.

Additionally, three diplomats started between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, and four diplomats were over thirty years old when they commenced their service. Twenty-nine individuals in the sample did not provide information regarding the entrance age. Among those who disclosed their entrance age, the average age at which diplomats began their service was nineteen. Furthermore, the average duration of the *mulazemet* period for the diplomats examined was two and a half years.

While diplomats may commence their careers in government service as early as nineteen, they generally require many years of service to attain the rank of ambassador, the highest diplomatic position. Analysis reveals that the diplomats in the sample spent an average of twenty-five years progressing through their professional careers before achieving ambassadorial status. Consequently, these diplomats typically attained the rank of ambassador in their mid-forties.

CONCLUSION

The personnel registry files (*sicill-i ahval*), despite their inherent limitations, serve as a crucial primary source for biographical and prosopographic research concerning the final period of the Ottoman Empire. By utilizing the comprehensive empirical data regarding the social backgrounds, educational achievements, and professional trajectories of late Ottoman diplomats contained in these registries, this study endeavors to elucidate aspects of the social histories of these officials. The analysis reveals several salient characteristics of late Ottoman diplomats at the individual and aggregate levels, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of their profiles and career patterns.

Firstly, the finding that 35% of the diplomats examined in this study were non-Muslims underscores the significant representation of non-Muslim individuals within the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. This proportion illustrates that individuals with the requisite qualifications could attain high-ranking positions regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. It reflects a broader consensus within the diplomatic corps emphasizing merit and professional competence over religious or ethnic identity. Consequently, the Ottoman Empire's approach to diplomacy is characterized by a meritocratic system prioritizing professional abilities and achievements, demonstrating a notable commitment to evaluating and advancing personnel based on their qualifications.

Secondly, the analysis reveals that 69% of the diplomats studied were born in Istanbul. Despite the predominance of Istanbul as the birthplace of these diplomats, there were also individuals born in various regions of the Ottoman Empire and even beyond its borders. The concentration of diplomats born in Istanbul can be attributed to the city's political and administrative significance as the empire's capital, which attracted prominent families and their progeny. Consequently, it is evident that diplomats originating from Istanbul often held senior positions within the Foreign Ministry, contributing to a more homogeneous group in terms of their geographic and social origins.

Thirdly, similar outcomes were observed about the social backgrounds and familial connections of diplomats. The investigation revealed that 80% of the diplomats were descendants of individuals involved in state service, including bureaucrats, civil servants, and diplomats. Consequently, most diplomats emerged from privileged social strata, with their fathers holding distinguished professional positions. These families, benefiting from substantial socio-economic advantages, provided their children with access to advanced educational opportunities. Furthermore, data extracted from personnel registers indicated a correlation between a diplomat's educational background, their family's socio-economic status, and the professional advancements they achieved. It appears that the presence of high-ranking officials' offspring within the Ottoman diplomatic service was not a result of nepotism or an elitist mentality. Rather, it was due to the superior educational opportunities afforded to the children of upper-class families. Thus, advancing within the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic hierarchy was more facilitated when social standing was coupled with robust professional training.

While most diplomats examined in this study originate from Istanbul's elite families, there are notable exceptions of diplomats from non-elite backgrounds. These individuals, hailing from more ordinary households, achieved significant diplomatic positions by demonstrating their competence and credentials. This phenomenon underscores the notion that, within the Ottoman administrative system, it is indeed possible for individuals from diverse social origins to ascend to high levels of state positions, provided they pursue a rigorous and qualified educational path. The evidence suggests that a candidate's professional success can be profoundly influenced by the quality of their education, irrespective of their socio-economic background. Nevertheless, the relatively small number of diplomats from non-elite families highlights that access to high-level diplomatic roles remains limited and not universally available across all social groups.

Examining diplomats' educational trajectories reveals notable distinctions based on their religious and socio-cultural backgrounds. Non-Muslim diplomat candidates typically received their primary education at minority schools, whereas Muslim diplomat candidates were educated at *sıbyan mektebi*. In the later years of the Ottoman Empire, some diplomats also pursued primary education through private tutors, illustrating an alternative path beyond the official state educational system. Following their initial and secondary education, diplomats commonly attended the leading institutions of the period, such as Mekteb-i Sultani and Mekteb-i Mülkiye, as well as a range of European schools. Despite the diversity in educational institutions attended, a shared characteristic among the diplomats is their graduation from modern educational establishments. This pattern underscores the significant role of contemporary educational frameworks in shaping the career trajectories of diplomats during the Ottoman era.

It has also been found that diplomats, besides having a qualified education, are among those with the best foreign language skills. The average sample diplomat speaks three languages, primarily French. Greek, Arabic, Italian, and Persian are the most widely spoken languages after French. Foreign languages could be learned by diplomats both in contemporary Ottoman schools and by studying abroad. By sending students overseas, the Ottoman Empire attempted to build the diplomatic corps it required during its final years. The first nation chosen while sending students overseas was France. Additionally, when sending students overseas, the Ottoman government did not make a distinction between its citizens and granted non-Muslims the same rights. Apart from the students sent abroad with the support of the state, there are also examples of students who received education abroad by their means. In addition, it has been determined that the majority of diplomats who study abroad by their means are non-Muslims.

When the professional careers of diplomats are analyzed, it is discovered that, on average, candidates begin working in the civil service at the age of nineteen, typically in clerk and translator roles in departments like the Translation Office or Foreign Correspondence Office. It takes an average of twenty-five years in the state service to be appointed to high-level diplomatic positions like ambassadors. This circumstance demonstrates that appointments to the diplomatic corps are made based on professional qualifications and experience, but it also suggests that a system has been set up to assess the abilities and performances of diplomat candidates.

In conclusion, our research has demonstrated that diplomats possessed the credentials and personality traits they were expected to have as of the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. The study represented a cohort of diplomats originating from elite Istanbul families who had distinguished civil servant fathers, received high-quality education at contemporary institutions in Istanbul or abroad, and were proficient in French. These highly skilled individuals from the Ottoman Foreign Ministry not only maintained their roles in the Republican era but also exemplified a significant evolution in diplomatic practice. The transformations of the nineteenth century shifted Ottoman diplomats from mere emissaries representing their nation to adept representatives actively engaging with the international system and advocating for the Ottoman Empire's national interests. The expertise and insights of these qualified diplomats were instrumental in the rational development of the Ottoman diplomatic framework.

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