
THE FOUNDERS

Vision, Piety, Power,
Entrepreneurship and Charity



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Three Generations in Ottoman Modernization

Hafız Ahmed Ağa

Rodosîzade Ahmed Fethi Pasha

Said Pasha the Englishman

Introduction

Modernization has long been a conceptual framework for analyzing historical change and societal transformation across diverse contexts. Within the Ottoman historical context, modernization broadly refers to the process through which the empire adopted and integrated the prevailing cultural norms, values, rationalities, scientific advances, and institutional models of its time. This multifaceted transformation found expression in terms such as *cedit* (renewal), *ıslahat* (reform), *tanzimat* (reorganization), and *asrileşme* or *muasırlaşma* (contemporization). Each of these terms reflects distinct yet interconnected aspects of the social, political, institutional, and intellectual shifts that shaped the Ottoman path to modernity. Though early cultural shifts in the Ottoman Empire, notably the Tulip Period, signaled initial modernizing tendencies, substantial institutional and intellectual reforms gained momentum during the *Tanzimat* era (1839–1876). This period marked the Empire’s active engagement with Western policies and ideas, signifying a decisive shift towards institutional and societal restructuring.

This chapter explores Ottoman modernization through the experiences and legacies of the Rodosî family, centering on Rodosîzade Ahmed Fethi Pasha, whose life and career form a historical bridge between his father, Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa, and his son-in-law, Said Pasha, known as the Englishman. By tracing this intergenerational trajectory, the chapter analyzes their educational, administrative, and philanthropic contributions, underscoring the significance of personal initiatives and familial traditions as driving forces within the broader modernization movement. Rather than viewing Ottoman modernization merely as the result of centrally mandated governmental policies, the study highlights the substantial impact exerted by individual endeavors, intellectual commitments, and lasting legacies cultivated by prominent bureaucrats and state officials. Through this perspective, the chapter presents a nuanced interpretation of Ottoman modernization as a layered historical process shaped by the interplay of institutional reforms, local engagements, and individual agency.

The Rodosî Family: A Legacy of Imperial Service

The Rodosî family, also known by the lineage title Rodosîzâdes, traces its origins to the island of Rhodes. According to historical sources and epigraphic evidence on family gravestones, the family’s involvement in Ottoman service began with the conquest of Rhodes by Suleiman the Lawgiver on December 25, 1522. These sources record that Ahmed Fethi Pasha’s great-grandfather participated actively in the campaign, gaining distinction through demonstrated loyalty and military

competence, an achievement that led to his incorporation into the imperial court.¹ In the following generations, the Rodosî lineage sustained this tradition of service through various administrative and military roles within the Ottoman bureaucracy.

According to archival records from the Directorate General of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*), particularly the foundation deeds (*vakfiyes*) of the Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa Foundation and the Rodosîzâde Ahmed Fethi Pasha Foundation, as well as inscriptions on gravestones, Hafız Ahmed Ağa’s father was Hasan Ağa, whose own father was named Abdullah Ağa. Hasan Ağa’s gravestone, located within the burial enclosure (*hazire*) of the Murad Reis Complex in Rhodes, is dated 1772. Its inscription reads:

Hüve'l bâkî Rikabdâr-ı hazret-i Şehriyârî Sâbık Hâfız Ahmed Ağa'nın pederleri merhûm ve mağfur ilâ rahmet-i rabbih'l-ğâfur Baba Hasan Ağa'nın ruhuna bi-hürmet'l-fâtîha. Sene 1186 (1772).

He is the Everlasting. For the soul of Baba² Hasan Ağa, deceased father of the former *Rikabdar* of His Imperial Majesty Hafız Ahmed Ağa, may God, the All-Forgiving, bestow His mercy upon him. Recite Al-Fatiha. Year 1186 (1772).

Furthermore, Hasan Ağa’s name is also commemorated on the fountain inscription in the library courtyard established by Hafız Ahmed Ağa in Rhodes in 1793. The inscription states:

Rikabdâr-ı hazreti şehriyâr-ı sâbık / Hâfız Ahmed Ağa'nın pederleri / Merhum Hasan Ağa'nın ruhu / Şâd ola fî sebîlillâh 1212 (1797–1798).

For the soul of the late Hasan Ağa, father of Hafız Ahmed Ağa, former *Rikabdar* of His Imperial Majesty, may his spirit rejoice in the path of God. Year 1212 (1797–1798).³

These inscriptions substantiate familial lineage and the enduring cultural legacy established by the Rodosî family in Rhodes.

1 Tayyazâde Ahmed Ata Efendi, *Osmanlı Saray Tarihi Tarih-i Enderun*, 2, ed. Mehmet Arslan (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2010), 250; Mustafa Bulut, *Sultan II. Mahmud Haziresi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2012), 85.
2 The inscription on the grave stele of Hasan Ağa, the father of Hafız Ahmed Ağa, located in the cemetery of the Murat Reis Tekke in Rhodes, bears the title – *Baba* - traditionally bestowed upon dervishes who have reached a certain spiritual rank within Bektashi and similar Sufi orders that were established in Anatolia and across the Ottoman territories. *Baba* is a Sufi term referring to a leader who guides disciples (*mürids*) on the spiritual path. The presence of such a title on Hasan Ağa’s gravestone indicates that he probably was a person who had attained this spiritual status.
3 Mehmet Zeki İbrahimgil and A. İbrahimgil, *Rodos Adasında Osmanlı Mirası (Mimari Eserler, Kitabeler, Mezar Taşları)* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2019), 50.

Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa: Between Court and Community

Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa, known by the epithet Rodosî after his birthplace, hailed originally from the village of Uzgur, today known as Asgourou (Ασγούρου), on the island of Rhodes. Born in the 1740s into a prosperous family, he was the son of Hasan Ağa and Ayşe Hatun. At an early age, Ahmed Ağa was admitted to the *Enderun-ı Hümayun*, the elite imperial academy of the Ottoman palace, presumably during the reign of Mustafa III (1757–1774). Archival records from the period of Abdülhamid I indicate that by April 16, 1786, Ahmed Ağa had ascended to the prestigious position of *Peşkir Ağası*,⁴ a senior court official with privileged access to the sultan, indicative of his trusted status within palace administration.⁵ In the subsequent years, his distinguished service was further recognized by his promotion to the rank of *Rikabdâr-ı Hümayun Ağası*, one of the highest ceremonial offices within the Ottoman court hierarchy.⁶

During the initial months of Sultan Selim III’s reign, Ahmed Ağa continued to occupy this influential position until his retirement on September 28, 1789. Historical accounts generally portray his subsequent life as one dedicated predominantly to piety and seclusion.⁷ However, archival evidence sheds further light on this period, revealing that Ahmed Ağa simultaneously maintained active involvement in commercial pursuits.⁸ According to records, approximately a decade after his retirement in 1789, Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa was appointed to the distinguished position of *Kaftan Ağası*, a prestigious court position responsible for presenting ceremonial robes (*hil’at*) at official ceremonies and conveying the Sultan’s gifts to religious dignitaries in the Holy Cities.⁹ In this prestigious capacity, Ahmed Ağa embarked upon the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), consequently earning the honored designation of *Hajji*. A major historical account records that he passed away in 1800 on his return journey.¹⁰ Although archival records remain silent regarding the exact details surrounding his appointment, it may reasonably be assumed that this distinguished role was bestowed upon Ahmed Ağa in recognition of his dedicated and longstanding service within the Ottoman imperial administration.

Historical accounts concerning the death of Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa offer conflicting narratives and varied chronologies. An Ottoman archival document dated July 19, 1798, explicitly refers to Ahmed Ağa as already deceased.¹¹ Contrarily, several other sources claim he was killed by Cezzar Ahmed Pasha during his return from the Hijaz, proposing different dates ranging from 1799 to 1802. These discrepancies highlight the enduring ambiguity surrounding the exact circumstances and timing of Ahmed Ağa’s demise, underscoring the necessity for continued scholarly investigation

4 Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Directorate of State Archives, Ottoman Archives (BOA.) AE.SABH.I. 346/24240 (16 April 1786).
5 Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, “Peşkir Ağası,” *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 2, (Ankara: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1993), 773.
6 Abdülkadir Özcan, “Rikâbdar,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 35 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2008), 111.
7 Tayyazâde, *Osmanlı Saray Tarihi*, 250.
8 BOA. C. BLD 28/1367 Permission for Rodosî Ahmed Ağa to import grain from Jaffa and sell it in the imperial granary (12 Mart 1295).
9 Yusuf Çağlar and Salih Gülen, *Dersaadet’ten Haremeyn’e Surre-i Hümayûn* (İstanbul: Yitik Hazine Yayınları, 2008), 32.
10 Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, 1, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 153.
11 BOA. D. BŞM.d. 6659, The fees paid, and income collected from the various tax districts that formed part of the late Hacı Ahmed Ağa of Rhodes’s lifelong hereditary estate (12 October 1798).

and archival research to clarify this historiographical uncertainty.¹² An additional document from the Ottoman Archives, dated May 2, 1802, bears the heading “Execution of Kaftan Ağası Ahmed Ağa of Rhodes by Imperial Order,” yet provides no explanation regarding the motives behind this decree, nor specifies the exact date or location of its implementation.¹³ Following his death, archival records indicate that pensions were subsequently granted to his surviving children.¹⁴ Although certain historical accounts suggest he was laid to rest at the family burial site at Karacaahmed Cemetery in Istanbul, considerable uncertainty persists concerning the precise circumstances and location of his death during his return journey from the Hijaz.¹⁵ Several narratives assert that he was assassinated by Cezzar Ahmed Pasha and interred near Ma’an; however, these accounts remain inconclusive and lack definitive corroboration.¹⁶ This ambiguity challenges historical scholarship, underscoring the need for further rigorous archival investigation.

The source identifies Ahmed Ağa’s death as occurring on July 24, 1799, specifying Dar al-Hamra, near the present-day village of Al-Buriekah, as the place of his demise. Known in Turkish as *Pirinç Ovası* (Rice Plain), this location lies within the area of Mada’in Saleh (historically Al-Hijr or Hegra), approximately 368 kilometers from Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, situated along the Ottoman pilgrimage route.¹⁷ The document further notes that the *Qadi* (judge) of Mecca inventoried his valuable possessions, after which the surviving members of his household commenced their return journey to Istanbul via Damascus, Aleppo, and Sivas.¹⁸ These details offer valuable insights into the circumstances surrounding Ahmed Ağa’s death, contributing to the historical understanding of this episode. Given the considerable distance between Mada’in Saleh and Istanbul, it would have been logistically impractical to transport Ahmed Ağa’s remains back to the Ottoman capital during that period. Consequently, it is reasonable to presume that he was buried near his place of execution.

Rodosî Ahmed Ağa is recorded among the distinguished residents of Soğanağa, a prestigious neighborhood situated along Istanbul’s Divanyolu, historically renowned as home to prominent Ottoman bureaucrats, senior state officials, religious scholars (*ulema*), palace dignitaries, affluent merchants, and leading citizens of the era. Further archival records reveal that his mother, Ayşe Hatun, who also resided in this quarter, passed away on January 24, 1795.¹⁹ Additional confirmation of Ahmed Ağa’s connection to Soğanağa appears in the endowment deed (*vakfiye*) of the Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa Foundation, dated 1792, which stipulates the foundation’s responsibility for financing the construction and maintenance of a public fountain within this very neighborhood.²⁰ This detail further underscores the family’s lasting presence and contribution to the cultural and social fabric of Soğanağa.

Ahmed Fethi Pasha commissioned a gravestone commemorating his father in the family burial area adjacent to the mosque bearing his name in Üsküdar, opposite the Karacaahmed Sultan Mausoleum. Initially constructed in wood by his father, the mosque was subsequently rebuilt in masonry by

Ahmed Fethi Pasha.²¹ The gravestone is particularly noteworthy for depicting a Mahmûdî-style fez, bearing the date 1800. Given that the Ottoman decree mandating the fez as official headgear, replacing the traditional turban, was issued only in 1829, it is evident that the current gravestone was installed later, reflecting the son’s retrospective commemoration.²²

Within the enclosed family burial plot adjacent to the Ahmed Fethi Pasha Mosque in Üsküdar stands the gravestone commemorating Rodosi Ahmed Ağa. The epitaphs inscribed on the headstones within this fenced enclosure provide valuable historical insight into his broader familial relationships. According to these inscriptions, Ahmed Ağa had three wives: Hatice Nimetullah Hatun (d. January 1820), Zeliha Kadın (d. April 1808), and Saliha Hanım (d. July 1855), the mother of Ahmed Fethi Pasha. In addition to Ahmed Fethi Pasha, he had another son, Hasan (d. 1812), and two daughters, Emine Hanım (d. 1791) and Ayşe Hanım (d. 1838). These familial details reveal the broader social networks and interpersonal dynamics that shaped the Rodosi lineage, enriching the historical context and highlighting the family’s enduring legacy.²³



Seal of the Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library

*Şâbikan Rikâbdâr-ı Hazret-i Şehriyârî Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa'nın
Cezîre-i Mezbûr'da binâ eylediği kitâbhâne'nin kütüb-i mevkûfesidir fî sene 1207*

(This is the endowed collection of books of the library erected on the aforementioned island in 1207 (1793) by *Şâbikân Rikâbdâr* (Former Court Equerry) to His Majesty the Sultan, Rhodes-born Hafız Ahmed Ağa)

12 Kemal Beydilli, *Osmanlı'da İmamlar ve Bir İmamın Günlüğü* (Istanbul: Yitik Hazine Yayınları, 2013), 92; Süreyya, *Sicilli Osmanî*, 1, 522; Mehmet Nermi Haskan, *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar*, 1, (Istanbul: Üsküdar Belediyesi Yayınları, 2001), 194; Zeki Çelikkol, *Rodos'taki Türk Eserleri ve Tarihçe* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 87.

13 BOA. HAT. 105/4141 (2 May 1802).

14 BOA. C.ML. 132/5713 (11 October 1800).

15 Süreyya, *Sicilli Osmanî*, 1, 522.

16 Tahsin Öz, “Ahmed Fethi Paşa ve Müzeler,” *Türk Tarih, Arkeologya ve Etnografya Dergisi* 5 (1949): 2.

17 Beydilli, *Osmanlı'da İmamlar*, 205.

18 BOA. HAT. 37/1873 (4 July 1799).

19 Beydilli, *Osmanlı'da İmamlar*, 92, 226.

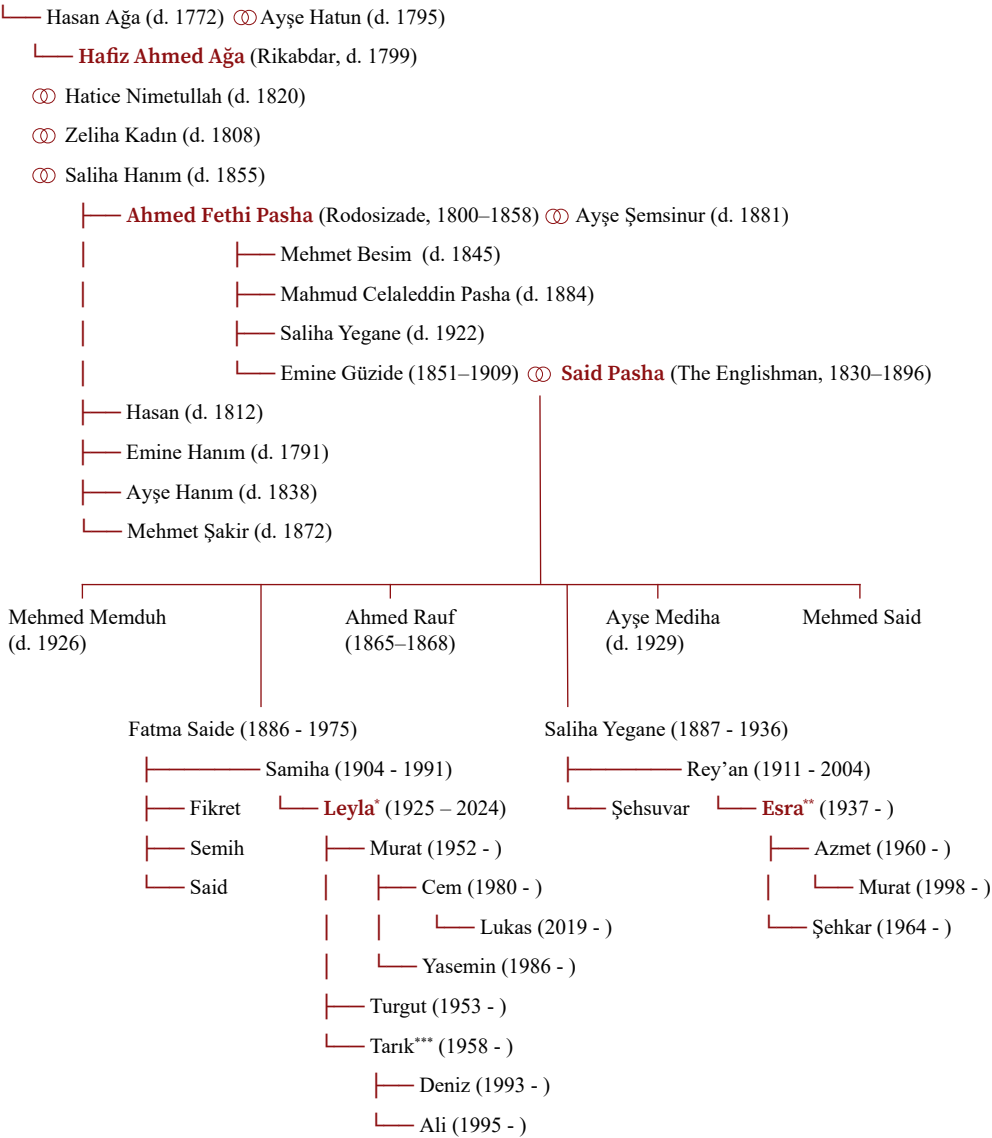
20 İbrahimgil, *Rodos Adasında Osmanlı Mirası*, 40.

21 Haskan, *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar*, 1, 197.

22 Haskan, *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar*, 2, 841.

23 Haskan, *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar*, 2, 840-842.

Abdullah Ağa



Genealogical chart of the Rodosî family

highlighting three central figures: Hafız Ahmed Ağa, Ahmed Fethi Pasha,
and Said Pasha the Englishman

* **Leyla Tüten** - Trustee (*Mütevelli*) of the Hafız Ahmed Ağa & Ahmed Fethi Pasha Foundation until December 2024
** **Esra Yegane Birgen Jah** - Soon to serve as Trustee (*Mütevelli*) of the Hafız Ahmed Ağa & Ahmed Fethi Pasha Foundation
*** **Tanık Tüten** - Deputy Trustee (*Mütevelli*).

Following his retirement on September 28, 1789, Rodosi Hafız Ahmed Ağa founded a charitable endowment (*vakıf*) on February 26, 1792. Through this foundation, he financed the construction of a library in 1793 on Rhodes, his birthplace, next to the island's Süleymaniye Mosque. The library comprises two chambers, one designated as a reading hall and the other reserved for the preservation and storage of books. Additionally, the library's garden accommodates dedicated spaces for the recitation of the Qur'an, a librarian's (*hafız-ı kütüb*) house, a water well, and a public fountain constructed in 1797, dedicated to the memory of his father, Hasan Ağa.



Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library, Rhodes, 1870s
The Hamidian Albums
Istanbul University Rare Books Library

According to the original inventory records created at its founding, the library established by Hafız Ahmed Ağa initially contained 828 manuscripts covering various disciplines. These works spanned approximately twenty distinct subject areas, including Qur'anic studies, exegesis (tafsir), hadith, history, literature, medicine, jurisprudence, and astronomy, reflecting the comprehensive scholarly interests of the period. Notably, the oldest manuscript in the collection dates back to 1411. Beyond functioning merely as a knowledge repository, the library served as a crucial educational and cultural institution for the Muslim community of Rhodes. Within its premises, a school dedicated to Qur'anic memorization (*Hafızlık Mektebi*) was established, offering free instruction in Qur'anic recitation and Arabic to local Muslim youth. Moreover, the library complex included dedicated residential facilities for the scholars and instructors responsible for the education of these students, further highlighting its integral role in the island's intellectual life. The endowment deed (*vakfiye*) explicitly outlines various social and religious services provided by the library, including the preparation and distribution of halva during religious observances such as *Kandil* nights, the serving of *ashoura* (Noah's pudding) on the fifteenth day of Muharram, and the sacrificial offering of

sheep during Eid al-Adha, with the meat subsequently distributed among the poor.²⁴ Furthermore, the library attracted distinguished visitors, notably Namık Kemal, one of the prominent intellectuals of the late Ottoman period. During his tenure as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Rhodes from 1884 to 1887, Namık Kemal is known to have authored several literary works and composed personal correspondence at a desk in the library's reading room, underscoring the institution's significance as a site of intellectual and cultural activity.

This library flourished under the custodianship of his son, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, who enriched its holdings by acquiring numerous manuscripts and scholarly works. As a result, the library emerged merely as an educational focal point for Rhodes' Muslim community and broader society, laying the groundwork for Ottoman modernization through educational advancement and intellectual enrichment. Beyond the renowned library he founded on Rhodes, Hafız Ahmed Ağa commissioned several other notable structures, including a mosque constructed of wood in Üsküdar, situated opposite the Karacaahmed Sultan Mausoleum, as well as an adjacent school (*mekteb*), which unfortunately has not survived to the present. Additionally, he sponsored the construction of a public fountain in the Soğanağa neighborhood of the Laleli district. Collectively, these charitable works reflect his broader legacy of cultural patronage, educational philanthropy, and commitment to public welfare.

The Career of Rodosizâde Ahmed Fethi Pasha: Diplomat and Military Reformer

Rodosizâde Ahmed Bey was born in 1800 at the Abdullah Pasha Palace in Eyübsultan, Istanbul, as the son of *Rikâbdar-ı Hümayun* Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa. His father passed away before his birth. In 1809, Ahmed entered the *Enderun-ı Hümayun*, the imperial palace school, where he pursued his education until 1826.²⁵ Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826, he was selected to join the newly established Mansure Army, specifically the Court Battalion (or *Enderun Ağaları* Battalion), which formed the core of this new military force.²⁶

In December 1828, Ahmed Bey transitioned from his role within the Imperial Palace School (*Enderun*) to active military service, initially holding the rank of Adjutant Major (*Kolağası*), before swiftly ascending to Battalion Major (*Binbaşı*) by January 1829. Equipped with extensive training acquired in the *Enderun*, coupled with his intellectual abilities, diligence, and pronounced enthusiasm for military pursuits, he rapidly distinguished himself within military circles. His exceptional bravery and notable accomplishments during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828–1829 earned him the honorary title “*Fethî*” (meaning conquest), along with a subsequent promotion to Lieutenant Colonel (*Kaymakam*).²⁷

24 The original endowment deed (*vakfiye*) of Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa, dated 26 February 1792 (3 Rajab 1206), was later expanded through a series of supplementary *vakfiyes*. According to the records held in the Archives of the Directorate General of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi*), three such additions were made: the first dated 18 November 1793 (13 Rabi al-Thani 1208), recorded in Register No. 743, p. 79, entry 26; the second dated 13 July 1796 (7 Muharram 1211), p. 153, entry 36; and the third dated 18 July 1808 (14 Jumada al-Ula 1223), p. 159, entry 37. Likewise, the endowment deed of Rodosizâde Ahmed Fethi Pasha, dated 5 December 1851 (10 Safar 1268), is registered in Volume 747, p. 235, entry 195, along with an annex dated 4 December 1852 (21 Safar 1269), recorded on the following page, entry 196.

25 Süreyya, *Sicilli Osmanî*, 1, 522; Davut Hut, “Fethi Paşa,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Supplement 1 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2016): 450; Öz, “Ahmed Fethi Paşa ve Müzeler,” 3.

26 BOA, HAT 308/18206 (18 August 1792); Tayyazâde, *Osmanlı Saray Tarihi*, 250.

27 Gülnar Kara, *Polenezköy'ün Kurucularından Çaykovski Mehmed Sadık Paşa'nın Anıları* (Istanbul: Kömen Yayınları, 2016), 24.

Upon returning to Istanbul after the war, Ahmed Fethi Bey married Ayşe Şemsinur Hanım.²⁸ In 1830, he was promoted to Colonel (*Miralay*) and soon thereafter appointed as aide-de-camp (*Yaver*) to the Sultan. His career trajectory continued to rise significantly, culminating in his elevation to the rank of Major General of the Imperial Guard (*Ferik-i Hassa-i Şâhane*), solidifying his prominence within Ottoman military and court circles.²⁹



Seal of Ahmed Fethi Pasha
“Ahmed Fethi in 1247”
(1831)

In 1835, Ahmed Fethi Pasha was dispatched as an extraordinary ambassador to Vienna to convey Ottoman congratulations upon Emperor Ferdinand's ascension to the Austrian throne.³⁰ His three-month diplomatic mission captured widespread interest and acclaim from both Viennese high society and the broader Austrian public, with newspapers throughout the empire, from Lviv and Budapest to Linz and Klagenfurt, regularly reporting on his activities.³¹ The distinguished Austrian diplomat and orientalist, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, officially assigned as interpreter for the Ottoman envoy, demonstrated considerable personal affinity toward Fethi Pasha beyond his formal responsibilities. Hammer-Purgstall admired that the ambassador was received throughout Vienna with extraordinary distinction and enthusiasm, famously characterizing him as “the lion of the summer of 1835” and one of the most celebrated figures of the social season.³²

Ahmed Fethi Pasha returned to Vienna in 1836, this time serving as Ottoman ambassador, a post he held for nearly a year. During this diplomatic tenure, he further enhanced his standing within Vienna's elite circles, widely admired for his sophisticated demeanor, charisma, and diplomatic finesse. Frequently described as an elegant figure whose appeal was partly rooted in his refined yet exotic persona, Ahmed Fethi Pasha hosted numerous receptions and events, reinforcing his prominent status in Viennese high society. These gatherings attracted notable attention among the Austrian aristocracy and contemporary observers.³³ Notably, the Austrian novelist Frances Milton Trollope dedicated detailed passages in her memoir, *Vienna and the Austrians* (1838), to

28 Öz, “Ahmed Fethi Paşa ve Müzeler,” 3.

29 BOA. HAT. 307/18141 (12 July 1828); Tayyazâde, *Osmanlı Saray Tarihi*, 203, 251.

30 BOA. HAT 484/23753 (26 March 1838); *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 22 Safar 1251, 104.

31 Gisela Prochazka-Eisl, “An Ottoman Diplomat in Vienna: Ahmed Fethi Paşa,” ve Andreas Tietze, *Avusturya Türkolojisi Türkçe'nin Zenginliğine Efsanevi bir Katkı*, ed. Emine Yılmaz et al (Vienna: Neue Welt Verlag, 2002), 190.

32 BOA. HAT. 1195/46928 (26 March 1838).

33 Procházka-Eisl “An Ottoman Diplomat in Vienna: Ahmed Fethi Paşa,” 193.

elaborate accounts of the extravagant balls and receptions held by Ahmed Pasha, highlighting his considerable influence and reputation within European diplomatic circles of the era.³⁴

In the summer of 1837, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, accompanied by Mehmed Emin Âli Efendi (later known as Âli Pasha), was dispatched to Russia to observe military maneuvers conducted in St. Petersburg. Subsequently, on January 28, 1838, he was appointed military governor (*müşir*) of Aidin and shortly thereafter designated Ottoman ambassador to London.³⁵ However, due to Mustafa Reşid Pasha's inability to assume his diplomatic posting in Paris due to other pressing obligations, Ahmed Fethi Pasha was reassigned to the Paris embassy in his stead. Before commencing his duties in Paris, he was also designated to represent the Ottoman Sultan at the coronation ceremony of Queen Victoria; unfortunately, his illness prevented him from attending this historic event.³⁶ During his journey from Istanbul to Paris, he visited several prominent European cities, including Vienna, Berlin, and various locations in Italy, undertaking careful observations. Most notably, during his stay in Rome, he became the first Ottoman statesman to meet officially with the Pope. Ahmed Fethi Pasha began his ambassadorial tenure in Paris in September 1838 and served for one year, returning to Istanbul in 1839 following Mahmud II's death and Sultan Abdülmecid's accession.³⁷

During the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid, Ahmed Fethi Pasha was appointed as a member of the *Meclis-i Vâlâ* (Supreme Council) in 1839, subsequently becoming Minister of Commerce (*Ticaret Nâzırı*) on January 8, 1840.³⁸ In June of the same year, he married his second wife, Atiye Sultan, the daughter of Mahmud II, thus establishing familial ties with the Ottoman imperial dynasty.³⁹ For a brief period during a military administrative reshuffle, he also served as Acting Commander-in-Chief (*Serasker Kaymakamı*). In May 1842, he returned to his position in the Supreme Council. On November 8, 1843, he was elevated to the presidency of the *Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye* (Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances), reflecting his increasing prominence within Ottoman governance.⁴⁰

Ahmed Fethi Pasha's career advanced significantly when he was appointed Minister of Military Supplies (*Mühimmat-ı Harbiye Nâzırı*) on March 20, 1845, followed shortly thereafter by his first term as Commander (*müşir*) of the Imperial Arsenal (*Tophane-i Âmire*) on August 10, 1845.⁴¹ In June 1850, he accompanied Sultan Abdülmecid on a Mediterranean voyage, which included visits to Rhodes and Crete. During their stay on Rhodes, Ahmed Fethi Pasha briefed the Sultan on his recently established philanthropic foundation, highlighting ongoing construction projects such as a clock tower, a *muvaakkithane* (timekeeper's office), and a junior secondary school (*rüşdiye*). He also presented the library established by his father, Hafız Ahmed Ağa, in 1793. Sultan Abdülmecid's visit was particularly significant, marking the first and only time an Ottoman Sultan traveled to Rhodes since its conquest by Sultan Suleiman the Lawgiver in 1522.

34 Frances Milton Trollope, *Vienna and the Austrians; with Some Account of a Journey through Swabia, Bavaria, the Tyrol, and the Salzbourg*, 2, (London: R. Bentley, 1838), 93, 181–184.

35 BOA. HR. SFR.3 1/35 Letter from the Foreign Office to the Ottoman Embassy concerning Ahmed Fethi Pasha's appointment as ambassador to London (16 March 1838).

36 BOA. HR. SYS 2922/3 Dispatch Confirming Fethi Pasha's Posting to Paris (Nisan 1838); BOA. HR. SYS 2922/7 Fethi Pasha's Appointment to the Ottoman Embassy in Paris (5 May 1838); Ömer Eğecioğlu, “Kraliçe Victoria'nın Taç Giyme Töreni ve Fethi Ahmed Paşa,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 211, (2011): 68-73.

37 Davut Hut, “Fethi Paşa,” 450.

38 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Vak'aniüvis Ahmed Lütfi Efendi Tarihi*, 6, ed. Yücel Demirel (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 1024; BOA. C.IKTS. 21/1032 (3 February 1840).

39 BOA. A.DVNSNMH.d. 11/10-12 (19 May 1839).

40 BOA. HR.SFR.3. 6/72 (1843 Z 31.)

41 BOA. TS.MA.e 496/11.

In recognition of his distinguished service and numerous achievements, Ahmed Fethi Pasha was awarded the First-Class Order of *Medjidie* (*Mecîdî Nişanı*) in January 1853.⁴² Subsequently, on February 26 of the same year, he was appointed Minister of Commerce for the second time, a role soon followed by his reinstatement as Commander of the Imperial Arsenal.⁴³ Although briefly relieved of this command on September 9, 1857, he was swiftly reinstated on October 22, 1857, serving as commander for a third term until his death.⁴⁴ Ahmed Fethi Pasha passed away on February 14, 1858, and was interred in the mausoleum garden of Sultan Mahmud II, located along Istanbul's Divanyolu, thus becoming only the second individual to be granted burial in this prestigious site.⁴⁵

Cultivating Modernity: Contributions to Ottoman Society and Culture

Ahmed Fethi Pasha actively advanced the empire's military modernization agenda during his diplomatic posting as the Ottoman ambassador to Vienna. In January 1837, he held discussions with Austrian Chancellor Metternich, from whom he successfully obtained a copy of the regulations governing the Austrian reserve forces (*Landwehr*). He forwarded this material to Istanbul to inform and support ongoing military reform efforts. Later, in June 1838, while quarantined in Malta during his journey from Istanbul to Paris, he encountered an American-manufactured rifle set. Recognizing its potential military value, he purchased the weapon for detailed examination upon his return to the capital.⁴⁶ Later, as a member of the *Meclis-i Vâlâ*, he was instrumental in promoting the introduction of conscription by lottery, a military reform promised by the *Tanzimat* Edict, further reinforcing his influential role in Ottoman military modernization efforts.⁴⁷

Ahmed Fethi Pasha's historic audience with Pope Gregory XVI holds particular significance in evaluating his contributions to Ottoman modernization through diplomacy. In 1838, while en route from Istanbul to Paris to assume his ambassadorial post, he stopped in Rome, becoming the first Ottoman statesman to hold an official audience with the pope. The discussion centered primarily on the condition and welfare of the Maronite Catholic community in Lebanon, set against the backdrop of Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt's rebellion challenging Ottoman authority. During the meeting, the Pope expressed his appreciation for the security and favorable treatment afforded to Catholics within the Ottoman Empire. He presented Ahmed Fethi Pasha with a medal and a commemorative gift to mark this unprecedented diplomatic occasion.⁴⁸

In response to widespread outbreaks of infectious diseases, particularly cholera and plague, which posed severe threats to public health during the early 19th century, the Ottoman government established the Quarantine Council in 1838. Before formally establishing this organization, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, serving as the military governor of Aidin, participated in preliminary deliberations at the Sublime Porte. Having witnessed the efficacy of quarantine protocols already implemented throughout Europe, he strongly advocated adopting similar preventative measures within Ottoman

42 BOA. I.DH. 256/15805 (7 August 1862).

43 BOA. A.DVN. 88/99 (17 November 1852).

44 BOA. I. DUIT. 190/29 (22 November 1857).

45 Davut Hut, “Fethi Paşa,” 450.

46 BOA. HAT. 1185/46751 (25 Jun 1838).

47 Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye'de Askerlik* (Istanbul: İmge Yayınevi, 2008), 69.

48 Ahmet Türkan, “Osmanlı ile Papalık Arasındaki İlk Dostane İlişkiler ve Bunun Doğu Kiliseleri Açısından Önemi,” *History Studies* 6 (2014) 1; Davut Hut, “Fethi Paşa,” 450.

territories. His views and contributions to these deliberations, which he later personally conveyed to the historian Ubicini, highlight the strategic importance of quarantine policies within the broader context of Ottoman modernization, particularly in public health and epidemic prevention.⁴⁹ Ubicini notably remarked that the establishment and organization of the Ottoman quarantine service was primarily attributable to Ahmed Fethi Pasha.⁵⁰ Indeed, during his three separate terms spanning twelve years as Commander of the Imperial Arsenal, under which the Quarantine Administration operated, Ahmed Fethi Pasha played a decisive role in developing the infrastructure. Utilizing his knowledge of contemporary European practices, he refined the administrative structure, increasing its efficiency and organizational capacity. Under his guidance, quarantine stations and isolation facilities were constructed at critical locations throughout Ottoman territories. Furthermore, he oversaw the systematic employment of specialized personnel, including quarantine administrators, physicians, administrative officers, and security staff, solidifying the institutional framework essential for effective public health management within the empire.⁵¹ Pasha also contributed to the Ottoman Empire's medical modernization, notably through his instrumental role in establishing the Imperial Medical School (*Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane*) in 1839. His initiative to recruit Dr. Jakob Anton Neuner from Vienna facilitated the introduction of contemporary medical practices and training methodologies to Ottoman lands. Additionally, during his service in the Imperial Arsenal, he supervised the construction of medical institutions, including the Zeytinburnu and Gümüşsuyu Military Hospitals, substantially strengthening the empire's healthcare infrastructure and institutional capacity.⁵²

Indeed, Ahmed Fethi Pasha actively supported the education of numerous promising Ottoman youths abroad, aiming to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to significantly enhance their homeland's cultural and intellectual life upon their return. His profound interest in the arts, particularly in painting, enabled him to identify and nurture artistic talents such as the painter Hüsnü Yusuf Bey, whom he sponsored and encouraged to pursue formal artistic training in Europe.⁵³ The renowned French author Alphonse de Lamartine eloquently characterized this aspect of the Pasha's legacy by depicting his residence as a distinguished intellectual and cultural sanctuary. Lamartine emphasized that the Pasha's home was frequented by prominent literary figures such as İbrahim Şinasi, a pioneering Ottoman intellectual, poet, and journalist, serving as both a scholarly haven and a refuge closely associated with the intellectual aspirations and literary careers of the era's leading writers and poets.⁵⁴ Among those influenced by Ahmed Fethi Pasha's commitment to education and intellectual advancement was Said Pasha, who later became his son-in-law. Ahmed Fethi Pasha was instrumental in facilitating Said Pasha's studies in Edinburgh, directly contributing to his subsequent prominence in Ottoman administration and intellectual life.⁵⁵ Praised by the renowned Turkish literary figure Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar for turning the

administrative offices of Imperial Arsenal into a vibrant “cradle of new ideas,” Ahmed Fethi Pasha's patronage substantially enriched Ottoman cultural and artistic spheres, nurturing and introducing numerous influential personalities to Ottoman intellectual circles.⁵⁶

Ahmed Fethi Pasha pioneered the first archaeological excavations at Sultanahmet Square (the ancient Hippodrome) in Istanbul in 1847. Concurrently, he promoted archaeological investigations across several regions of the Empire, including Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Aleppo, Samsun, and Aidin. His efforts extended beyond fieldwork, encompassing the centralized collection and preservation of artifacts and findings in Istanbul, contributing to the development of Ottoman archaeological scholarship and heritage preservation.⁵⁷ Widely regarded as a foundational figure in Ottoman museology, Ahmed Fethi Pasha undertook curatorial initiatives in 1846 at Hagia Irene, which served as an arsenal at the time. He converted the arcaded galleries surrounding the courtyard into dedicated exhibition spaces by enclosing them with glass showcases. One gallery housed the Collection of Ancient Weapons (*Mecma-ı Ešliha-i Atika*), while the other exhibited the Collection of Antiquities (*Mecma-ı Âsâr-ı Atika*).⁵⁸ These foundational efforts paved the way for the institutional emergence of the Military Museum and the Archaeological Museums. Due to his visionary contributions in curating and exhibiting historical collections, Ahmed Fethi Pasha may be recognized as the first Turkish curator, underscoring his instrumental role in establishing modern practices of preserving and presenting Ottoman cultural heritage.

His exposure to European cultural life during his diplomatic postings profoundly shaped his appreciation for Western arts, particularly music and theatre. This interest continued upon his return to Istanbul, notably during his tenure as Commander of the Imperial Arsenal when he introduced Sultan Abdülmecid to opera performances at prestigious venues such as the Pera Theatre and Naum Theatre, thereby contributing to the integration of European cultural practices within Ottoman elite society.⁵⁹ Moreover, during his tenure as Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna (1836-1837), Ahmed Fethi Pasha was notably included in an exclusive series of portraits commissioned by Princess Metternich from the renowned Austrian painter Moritz Michael Daffinger. This series depicted the princess's inner circle and eminent guests, underscoring the Pasha's high standing within European diplomatic and cultural networks.⁶⁰ In addition, he commissioned several other portraits from prominent Western artists, reflecting his cultural engagement and social prominence. His prominence in Viennese society was further underscored through musical tributes composed in his honor by celebrated musicians of the era: Johann Strauss dedicated a waltz to Ahmed Fethi Pasha in 1837, followed by Josef Lanner, who similarly composed a waltz in his honor in 1839.⁶¹

56 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, ed. Abdullah Uçman (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), 137-138.

57 Edhem Eldem, “Early Ottoman Archaeology: Rediscovering the Finds of Ascalon (Ashkelon), 1847,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 378, (2017): 25-53.

58 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Osmanlı Müzeciliği: Müzeler, Arkeoloji ve Tarihin Görselleştirilmesi*, ed. Esin Soğancılar, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 45; Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, “Zarif Bir Yüksek Bürokrat Rodosluzade Ahmet Fethi Paşa,” ed. Mustafa Kaymakçı, Cihan Özgün, *Rodos ve İstanköy Türk Kültürü* (Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi, 2020), 359-360.

59 Emre Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu: 19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unun İtalyan Operası* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 127-129.

60 Zeynep İnankur, “Fethi Ahmed Pasha: A Cosmopolitan Ottoman Diplomat in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Culture and Diplomacy: Ambassadors as Cultural Actors in Ottoman-European Relations from the 16th to the 19th Century*, 1, ed. Reinhard Eisendle, Suna Suner, and Hans Ernst Weidinger (Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2023), 1002.

61 Ömer Eğecioğlu, “Strauss ve Lanner'in Fethi Ahmet Paşa'ya İthaf Ettiği Valsler,” *Sanat Dünyamız*, 118, (2010): 22-24.

49 Gülден Sarıyıldız, “Karantina Meclislerinin Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri,” *Belleten* 58/222, (1994): 335.

50 Abdolonyme Ubicini, *La Turquie actuelle* (Paris: Hachette, 1855), 113–116.

51 Pınar Çevik Azap, *Tophane-i Âmire Müşiriyeti* (Istanbul: Timaş Akademi, 2023), 251.

52 Seda Kula Say, “Gümüşsuyu Askeri Hastanesi,” *Sultan Abdülmecid'in Bir Mimarı: William James Smith*, ed. İlona Baytar, Jale Beşkonaklı (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları, 2016), 108.

53 Naciye Turgut Cebeci, “Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümayûn Mezunu Bir Ressam: Hüsnü Yusuf,” *Millî Saraylar Sanat, Tarih ve Mimarlık Dergisi* 19, (2020): 47-67; *Eyüplü Meşhurlar*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk (İstanbul Eyüp Belediyesi, 2014), 109.

54 Şemsettin Şeker, *Ders İle Sohbet Arasında 19. Asır İstanbul'unda İlim Kültür ve Sanat Meclisleri* (Istanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2013), 216.

55 Burhan Çağlar, *İngiliz Said Paşa ve Günlüğü Jurnal* (Istanbul: Arı Sanat, 2010), 5-11.

Ahmed Fethi Pasha was distinguished by his exceptional cultural sophistication, refined aesthetic sensibility, and cultivated appreciation for beauty and art. His formative years within the Imperial Treasury (*Hazine Dairesi*) at the *Enderun* granted him early exposure to an array of exquisite artworks and historically significant objects, fostering his discerning taste from a young age. His subsequent time in Europe further expanded and enriched his cultural horizons through involvement in elite social events, visits to prominent museums, and a sustained interest in artifacts cherished for their historical value and aesthetic refinement. This profound sense of cultural discernment and refined appreciation for artistic heritage notably set Ahmed Fethi Pasha apart from many of his contemporary Ottoman statesmen. As a reflection of his sophisticated aesthetic sensibilities, he was instrumental in shaping the interior decoration and furnishings of the Dolmabahçe Palace, one of the most iconic structures symbolizing Ottoman modernization. His residence in Kuzguncuk, exquisitely adorned in European style with crystal glassware, delicate ornaments, and other refined artifacts, notably attracted the admiration of Sultan Abdülmecid. Recognizing Ahmed Fethi Pasha's discerning taste, the Sultan entrusted him with overseeing Dolmabahçe Palace's interior design.⁶² Among the Pasha's significant contributions were commissioning the palace's renowned crystal staircase from Britain, securing the services of the prominent architect William James Smith for the palace's architectural and interior designs, and initiating the construction of the Dolmabahçe Gasworks to provide heating and illumination.⁶³ Moreover, Ahmed Fethi Pasha personally supervised the selection and acquisition of elegant glassware, luxurious furnishings, and distinctive decorative pieces from leading European manufacturers, influencing the refined aesthetic character that defines the Palace.⁶⁴

The establishment of *rüşdiyes*, junior secondary schools inspired by Western educational models during the *Tanzimat* era, marked a significant step in the modernization of Ottoman education. Following their integration with primary education, the number of these schools grew notably from 1845 onward, reflecting the empire's sustained commitment to educational reform. Among these institutions, a *rüşdiye* founded on the island of Rhodes during Sultan Abdülmecid's visit in 1850 and completed in 1852 stands as a tangible expression of the sultan's direct involvement in advancing the educational agenda. As indicated by its commemorative inscription, the school was dedicated to the memory of Atiye Sultan, whose untimely death in 1850 left a profound personal impact on the pasha. Functioning under the charitable endowment established initially by his father, Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa, the institution was further developed through Ahmed Fethi Pasha's patronage. In particular, he expanded the library founded by his father in 1793, significantly enriching its holdings by adding 1,200 volumes, 459 of which were manuscripts, through his initiative. These contributions greatly enhanced the library's scholarly resources and reinforced its central role in Rhodes's cultural and intellectual life.

One of the essential challenges the Ottoman Empire faced following the proclamation of the *Tanzimat* Edict on November 3, 1839, was the need to modernize its legal and administrative structures in line with European norms. During his ambassadorship in Paris that same year, Ahmed Fethi Pasha actively participated in the diplomatic campaign to manage the international dimension of the Mehmed Ali Pasha crisis. In close coordination with Mustafa Reşid Pasha, then ambassador in London and architect of the *Tanzimat*, Fethi Pasha sought to shape French and broader European

public opinion in favor of the Ottoman cause, reinforcing the legitimacy of the new reformist agenda abroad. Their joint diplomatic initiatives and intellectual contributions shaped the ideological groundwork of the era. Mustafa Reşid Pasha, widely regarded as the principal architect of the reforms, relied notably on Ahmed Fethi's support during this transformative period. Indeed, the official protocol prepared before the *Tanzimat* Edict, bearing the signatures and seals of prominent Ottoman statesmen, included Ahmed Fethi Pasha among its signatories. Both Mustafa Reşid and Ahmed Fethi concurrently served on the *Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye*, the empire's supreme legislative and judicial council responsible for drafting, overseeing, and implementing reforms.⁶⁵ However, after seven months, both statesmen were dismissed from this council due to disagreements arising from discussions about the new commercial code.⁶⁶

Ahmed Fethi Pasha set himself apart from his contemporaries through his entrepreneurial vision and substantial contributions to Ottoman industry and commerce. While serving as a diplomat in Europe during a period when the Industrial Revolution was fundamentally reshaping daily life, he took advantage of the opportunity to observe firsthand its transformative effects across major European cities. Deeply influenced by these experiences, he emerged as a leading advocate for industrial advancement within the Empire, establishing several factories and promoting Ottoman industrial modernization. In 1841, he obtained a concession to establish a brick factory in Büyükdere, in partnership with Mustafa Reşid Pasha.⁶⁷ This initiative aimed to enhance public safety by addressing the frequent and devastating fires from Istanbul's widespread use of wooden buildings. Additionally, the establishment of the factory sought to stimulate domestic economic growth and reduce dependency on foreign monopolies. The terms of the concession granted extensive privileges, providing him not only exclusive operational rights for the factory but also authority to restrict the establishment of competing enterprises. It stipulated that any future requirements for additional brick production would be met solely through expansion of his facilities.⁶⁸ The bricks produced at the Büyükdere Brick Factory were notably employed in the construction of the *Darülfünun* (The University) building, initiated in 1846 in Istanbul's historic Sultanahmet district.⁶⁹ In his travel memoirs, the Scottish traveler Charles MacFarlane also confirms Ahmed Fethi Pasha's direct involvement in managing the clay quarries and brick manufacturing facilities, providing additional evidence of Pasha's pivotal role in advancing industrial development within the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁰

Although the Ottomans had achieved prominence in ceramic arts between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, their first major industrial venture into porcelain production commenced in the nineteenth century with Ahmed Fethi Pasha's establishment of a factory in the Incirköy district of Beykoz in 1845. The porcelain items produced at this facility, distinguished by the hallmark "*Eser-i İstanbul*" (work of Istanbul), represented a pivotal industrial shift in Ottoman material

62 Şeker, *Ders İle Sohbet Arasında*, 216.

63 BOA. HH.İ. 5/3 (1 February 1852); Tuncay Cengiz Göncü, *Dolmabahçe Sarayı: İnşa Süreci, Mekân ve Teşkilatı* (Istanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2019), 70.

64 Önder Küçükerman, Jülide Edirne Erdinç, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Bir Ağır Sanayi Bölgesi Zeytinburnu* (Istanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2021), 125.

65 Ali Akyıldız, "Meclisi Vâlâyı Ahkâmı Adliye," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 28 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2003): 250.

66 Ahmed Dönmez, "Mustafa Reşid Paşa ve Reform Karşıtları: Tanzimat Fermanı'nın Bedeli," *Turkish Studies* 11/6 (2016): 17-30.

67 BOA. İ.MVL. 15/233 (17 January 1841).

68 Serap Sunay, "Bir Hanedan Damadının Yaşam Tarzı ve Standardı: Ahmed Fethi Paşa'nın Terekesi," *Belleten* 84, (2020): 745-788.

69 Ahmet Hamdi Bülbul, *İstanbul'da Osmanlı Dönemi Endüstri Yapıları* (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası Yayınları, 2024), 185.

70 Charles MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny: The Result of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of That Country*, 2, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), 389, 561-597, 701-792, 804, 1162-1226.

culture from traditional ceramics toward refined porcelain wares.⁷¹ Notably, sixty examples from Ahmed Fethi Pasha’s Incirköy factory were exhibited and documented at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. These items included soup bowls, sauce boats, candlesticks, hookah bases, coffee cups, ewers, envelope holders, and decorative pineapple-shaped ornaments, showcasing Ottoman achievements in industrial porcelain manufacturing to an international audience.⁷² During his tenure at the Imperial Arsenal, he promoted the development of industrial enterprises in Istanbul and facilitated the integration of European artistic traditions into Ottoman cultural practices. In 1844, he advanced Ottoman industrial modernization by establishing the Beykoz Glass and Crystal Factory, a pioneering institution in the history of Turkish glassmaking.⁷³ Recent research has shown that this factory and the nearby porcelain works in Beykoz, previously considered separate ventures, actually operated as a single integrated enterprise.⁷⁴

Upon visiting the factory, Charles MacFarlane described its operations, highlighting the presence of fourteen German craftsmen working under the supervision of an elderly English foreman. He particularly commended the facility’s compact yet systematically arranged showroom, which displayed an impressive variety of finely crafted glass and porcelain items, including ornate drinking vessels, pitchers, goblets, coffee cups, ewers, decorative bowls, perfume bottles (*gülbadan*), flower vases, and intricately designed inkwells.⁷⁵ In addition to these international artisans, the factory employed numerous skilled Ottoman porcelain and ceramic craftsmen from various districts across Istanbul. Among these local craftsmen was Hacı Beyzade Ali Bey, a distinguished porcelain decorator whose work later gained prominence at the Imperial Yıldız Porcelain Factory, and who initially refined his craft at Pasha’s *Eser-i İstanbul* workshop.⁷⁶ Moreover, inspired by the Venetian glass-making tradition, Ahmed Fethi Pasha introduced an innovative and distinctive style of glassware known as *Çeşm-i bülbül* (Nightingale’s Eye), significantly enriching Ottoman artistic heritage in glassmaking.⁷⁷ Products from his factory gained international acclaim, notably earning medals at the Paris Exposition of 1855.⁷⁸ Furthermore, establishing the Zeytinburnu Ironworks represented another pivotal step in the Ottoman Empire’s industrial modernization, an initiative actively championed and closely supervised by Ahmed Fethi Pasha during his tenure at the Imperial Arsenal. His contributions were substantial, extending beyond routine oversight. During his diplomatic mission to Paris in 1838, he engaged in critical preliminary negotiations in Britain, laying essential foundations and securing the technical expertise necessary for the establishment and successful operation of the factory.⁷⁹

The establishment of *Şirket-i Hayriyye* (Bosphorus Ferry Company) in the spring of 1852 represented a milestone in the Ottoman Empire’s efforts to modernize urban transportation and enhance maritime connectivity within its capital. Founded through joint investment from Sultan Abdülmecid, his mother, influential statesmen, high-ranking officials, and private investors, the company substantially improved daily commuting along the Bosphorus by providing steamship

services. Ahmed Fethi Pasha was among its prominent shareholders, further representing his active engagement in the Empire’s broader modernization initiatives.⁸⁰ However, the Golden Horn (*Haliç*) was excluded from *Şirket-i Hayriyye*’s operational jurisdiction. Consequently, Sultan Abdülmecid granted a separate twenty-year concession on September 6, 1856, to Yusuf Ağa, authorizing small-scale steamship passenger services along the Golden Horn. Within a few months, this concession was transferred to Ahmed Fethi Pasha, extending its term to January 1877.⁸¹ Established under the name *Haliç-i Dersaadet Şirket-i Hayriyesi* (Golden Horn Ferry Steamship Company of Istanbul), this company provided passenger ferry services between the Galata Bridge and various piers along the Golden Horn, facilitating public access to modern transportation in the Ottoman capital.⁸²

Ahmed Fethi Pasha, renowned for his patronage of culture and the arts, also expressed his refined aesthetic sensibility through contributions to Ottoman architecture. Among the most distinguished examples of his sophisticated taste are the Fethi Pasha Grove (*Fethi Paşa Korusu*), which today serves as a cherished green space for the residents of Istanbul, and the Ahmed Fethi Pasha Mansion, considered one of the most exemplary surviving representations of classical Ottoman waterfront architecture along the Bosphorus. Acquired originally from İbrahim İsmet Efendi, the father of Arif Hikmet Bey, the mansion was extensively renovated and expanded by Ahmed Fethi Pasha in line with his cultivated tastes. Indeed, contemporaries regarded the mansion as one of the era’s most elegantly appointed and aesthetically pleasing residences.⁸³ The mansion was originally designed with two main sections: the *hare*m (private quarters) and the *selamlık* (reception area). In the 1920s, the hare, along with an adjacent pavilion and kitchen, was destroyed by fire. The surviving *selamlık* section comprises sixteen rooms distributed over two floors, each centered around a spacious hall (sofa). The garden courtyard features intricate paving in the *rodoskârî* style, a traditional technique using carefully arranged black and white pebbles to form geometric patterns.⁸⁴

Ahmed Fethi Pasha’s architectural legacy in Üsküdar notably includes the reconstruction in 1855 of a mosque originally built in wood by his father in 1795. This masonry reconstruction featured an elevated structure (*fevkani*), embodying the contemporary architectural aesthetics of the period. Additionally, although it has not survived to the present day, a public fountain he commissioned once enriched the local urban landscape, further underscoring his contributions to the district’s architectural heritage. His approach to architecture reveals a keen interest in shaping the built environment in ways that aligned with the changing expectations of his time. Beyond his contributions to the capital, he left a lasting imprint on Rhodes, his family’s ancestral homeland. The public works he sponsored on the island, including a clock tower, a timekeeper’s office (*mu*vakkithane), and educational facilities, demonstrated his engagement with the broader drive toward institutional and spatial renewal. Following the mid-century reforms, clock towers became defining features of Ottoman urban landscapes, often placed in prominent locations to symbolize both public order and state authority. The Rhodes Clock Tower, completed in 1852 and built in

71 Ecem Haberal, 19. Yüzyılda ‘Eser-i İstanbul’ Damgalı Porselen Üretimi (Master’s thesis, Hacettepe University, 2002), 1-4

72 Haberal, “Porselen Üretimi,” 225.

73 Önder Küçükerman and İhsan Yücel, “Milli Saraylar’daki Cam Eserlerin 19. Yüzyılda Türk Cam Sanayiinin Gelişimine Etkileri ve Ahmed Fethi Paşa,” *Milli Saraylar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993), 39.

74 Haberal, “Porselen Üretimi,” 224.

75 MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny*, 389, 561–597, 701-792, 804, 1162-1226.

76 Haberal, “Porselen Üretimi,” 58.

77 Küçükerman, “Fethi Ahmed Paşa ve Türk Cam Sanayiinin Gelişimine Katkıları,” 473.

78 Önder Küçükerman, *Sanayi Devriminin Beykoz’daki Ünlü Temsilcileri Beykoz Camları* (Istanbul: Beykoz Belediyesi, 2021), 75.

79 BOA. HAT. 828/37483 (16 July 1838).

80 Ali Akyıldız, “Şirketi Hayriyye,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 39 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2010): 201.

81 Ali Akyıldız, *Haliç’te Seyrüsefer Haliç Vapurları Şirketi ve Faaliyetleri* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), 21-24.

82 Reşat Baykal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndan Günümüze İstanbul’da Kent İçi Deniz Ulaşımı* (Istanbul: Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, 2021), 167, 168.

83 Halûk Y. Şehsuvaroğlu, “Fethi Ahmed Paşa Yalısı,” *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* 10, ed. Reşad Ekrem Koçu (Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), 5711.

84 Sedat Hakkı Eldem, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri* (Istanbul: İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Yayınları, 1968), 186.

a European architectural style, clearly expresses this trend. Although the adjacent *muvaakkithane*, once photographed in the Hamidian Albums, has not survived, the tower remains one of the island’s most iconic landmarks. Through these architectural ventures inspired by contemporary Western models, Ahmed Fethi Pasha contributed to shaping a new vision of urban life that emphasized precision, visibility, and state presence.⁸⁵

Professional Formation of Said Pasha the Englishman:
Education and Technical Expertise

Educated within the reformist spirit of the *Tanzimat* era, Mehmed Said became known as “the Englishman,” a tribute to his rare mastery of English in a period when French reigned supreme, and his distinctly British bearing and refinement. The formative years he spent immersed in London’s intellectual circles endowed him with profound technical expertise, cultural elegance, and social grace, crafting him into a living link bridging the worlds of the Ottoman and British empires. His engineering and military technology expertise enabled him to play active roles in development initiatives across various sectors, including weaponry modernization, railway construction, maritime infrastructure, coal extraction, and the establishment of military-industrial facilities. Moreover, through his involvement in scholarly institutions such as the Ottoman Society of Science (*Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye*) and educational establishments like the Ottoman Naval Academy (*Mekteb-i Bahriye*), Said Pasha, the Englishman, contributed to the education and formation of a new generation of intellectual and technical elites within Ottoman society. In his administrative roles as governor across various Anatolian provinces, he promoted and personally supervised infrastructure projects, notably constructing roads, bridges, waterways, and weirs, accelerating regional development. He advocated modern agricultural techniques to revitalize the rural economy, foster increased productivity, and promote local economic growth. Additionally, establishing educational institutions and administrative buildings at provincial and district levels strengthened regional educational infrastructure and enhanced the efficiency of bureaucratic governance. These contributions collectively played a focal role in facilitating broader Ottoman administrative reforms and advancing the modernization efforts throughout the empire’s regional peripheries.

Mehmed Said was born in 1830 in Izmid, into a distinguished sayyid family from Eğin, known today as Kemaliye in Erzincan, Turkey. His father, Mustafa Ağa, served as a *Has Ağası*, a senior administrative official responsible for overseeing imperial landholdings known as *has*, and concurrently held the position of *mutasarrıf* (district governor) in the region.⁸⁶ Following his father’s untimely death in 1832, his family relocated to Istanbul, where he began his early education at the Nuruosmaniye Primary School (*Sıbyan Mektebi*). A pivotal moment in his intellectual and professional development came in 1848 with his enrollment at the Imperial School of Military Engineering (*Mühendishane-i Berrî-i Hümayûn*), a leading educational institution central to Ottoman

modernization efforts.⁸⁷ The rigorous curriculum and intellectual environment at this academy influenced Mehmed Said’s character, academic development, and subsequent professional career.

The Ottoman Empire’s efforts toward modernization are especially evident in military education. One of the pivotal institutions representing this transformative shift was the Imperial School of Military Engineering, established under Sultan Selim III in 1795. Located in Hasköy, the school was founded primarily to educate artillery and fortification officers, offering exceptional opportunities to young individuals such as Mehmed Said, who demonstrated considerable aptitude for military sciences and engineering. Distinguished from earlier Ottoman military schools by its adoption of contemporary methods in mathematics and natural sciences, the institution notably integrated European languages, particularly French, into its curriculum, enabling students to engage directly with Western scholarly sources. Mathematics, geometry, topography, physics, astronomy, and ballistics were taught in classrooms furnished with modern educational tools, including desks and blackboards, aligned with prevailing Western pedagogical standards. These comprehensive and innovative courses provided students access to contemporary engineering concepts and scholarly literature, enhancing intellectual development.⁸⁸ Within this progressive educational framework, Mehmed Said acquired a fundamental grasp of the technical and military aspects integral to the broader Ottoman modernization movement.

Upon graduating in 1851, Said Bey was promoted to Captain (*Yüzbaşı*) and appointed assistant instructor at the school due to his academic record.⁸⁹ During this period, he produced translations and prepared extensive lecture notes, circulating among students as informal yet essential educational resources, reflecting an early stage of educational modernization when printed instructional materials remained scarce. He concurrently served as an assistant to the renowned Scottish professor Edward Sang, an eminent mechanical and engineering scholar widely recognized across Europe for his authoritative publications on gear mechanisms and mechanical principles.⁹⁰ Sang also demonstrated considerable interest in astronomy, notably establishing a sundial on campus to instruct students in celestial phenomena, including solar eclipses and lunar movements.⁹¹ Said Bey’s close collaboration with Sang enhanced his mathematical knowledge and proficiency in English, enriching his intellectual and professional endeavors.

Having completed his tenure in Istanbul in June 1854, Edward Sang returned to Britain, accompanied by two distinguished students selected for advanced training. Among these was Mehmed Said, recently promoted to Adjutant Major (*Kolağası*) at the Imperial School of Military Engineering.⁹² These students, sponsored by Ahmed Fethi Pasha in his official capacity as Commander of the Imperial Arsenal, were granted state scholarships to undertake advanced engineering studies at the University of Edinburgh, placing them at the center of European scientific and industrial developments. They integrated rigorous theoretical coursework with practical internships at prominent British military

85 Stefanos Yerasimos, “Tanzimat’ın Kent Reformları Üzerine,” *Modernleşme Sürecinde Osmanlı Kentleri*, ed. Paul Dumont, François Georgeon, trans. Ali Berktaş (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1996), 1-19.

86 Nazan Danışmend, “Türk Demokrasi Tarihinin Unutulmuş Simalarından: Eğinli Sait Paşa,” *Türklük* 1 (1939): 252; Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, 4, (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1302), 858; Mehmed Esad, *Mirât-ı Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümayûn* (Istanbul, 1312), 168, 373.

87 Esad, *Mirât-ı Mühendishâne*, 180,372-373; İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, “Said Paşa, İngiliz Mehmed,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, 28 (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), 51–52.

88 Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Mühendishâne, Mühendishâne Matbaası ve Kütüphanesi (1776–1826)*, (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1995), 30–35, 59–60.

89 Esad, *Mirât-ı Mühendishâne*, 170; *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311, 1.

90 Alex D. D. Craik, “The Logarithmic Tables of Edward Sang and His Daughters,” *Historia Mathematica* 30 (2003): 47–84.

91 Esad, *Mirât-ı Mühendishâne*, 370-375; BOA. İ.HR. 40/1886 (31 May 1841).

92 BOA. İ.HR. 110/5047 (7 June 1854); Esad, *Mirât-ı Mühendishâne*, 168.

and industrial institutions throughout their academic training, expanding their professional knowledge, technical proficiency, and practical expertise.⁹³

Mehmed Said, in particular, obtained comprehensive practical training at the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield, where he closely examined advanced methods in rifle manufacturing, fabrication techniques, and contemporary practices of mass production. His internship at the Woolwich Arsenal allowed him to observe the complex logistical and technical procedures involved in ammunition production, substantially broadening his practical comprehension of military-industrial operations. Additionally, at the Waltham Abbey Gunpowder Mills, he gained specialized expertise in industrial chemistry and modern techniques of gunpowder manufacturing processes. His training further encompassed prominent naval shipyards such as Plymouth, Portsmouth, Devonport, and Keyham, where he engaged directly with naval architecture, shipbuilding techniques, and explored the military implementation of steam-powered technologies.⁹⁴ Beyond these technical experiences, Said immersed himself in European society and its vibrant cultural environment, notably participating in the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris, where he closely observed Western advancements in science, technology, and culture.⁹⁵ These experiences shaped his professional capabilities and intellectual outlook, preparing him to contribute substantially to Ottoman modernization efforts and inspiring his later involvement in similar international exhibitions in Istanbul.

After completing his education in Britain, Mehmed Said returned to Istanbul in November 1859. In a report by the Ottoman Ambassador in London, Kostaki Musurus, particular emphasis was placed on Mehmed Said's specialized expertise in railway engineering, accompanied by a recommendation to be employed in this field. Ambassador Musurus highlighted that he was the first Ottoman engineer skilled in producing detailed technical drawings for locomotives and railway systems.⁹⁶ By this recommendation, Said Bey was appointed in 1860 as railway commissioner within the Department of Roads and Bridges (*Turuk ve Maâbir Dairesi*), affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works (*Ticaret ve Nâfia Nezâreti*). In this capacity, he was responsible for supervising and facilitating technical coordination on the Smyrna-Aidin railway project, undertaken by the Ottoman Railway Company.⁹⁷ His close association with the project's chief engineer, Thomas Russell Crampton, allowed him to further his experience. Subsequently, the knowledge and competencies Mehmed Said acquired during this period influenced his involvement in establishing the Ottoman Scientific Society (*Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye*), thereby contributing meaningfully to the advancement of Istanbul's scholarly and intellectual community.⁹⁸

Mehmed Said subsequently transitioned from railway administration to academia, accepting an appointment as an instructor at the Naval Academy (*Bahriye Mektebi*) in August 1861, with the rank of major (*Binbaşı*).⁹⁹ His advanced engineering education and practical experience in Britain

positioned him to fulfill this educational role. Through his mastery of mathematics, physics, and mechanics, he contributed to training modern technical personnel, integrating contemporary scientific resources to meet the evolving technological requirements of the Ottoman navy effectively.

Intellectual Progress: The Ottoman Scientific Society and Journal of Sciences

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers and periodicals increasingly became features of social and intellectual life within Ottoman society. Among these publications, *The Levant Herald* was Istanbul's first English-language newspaper, widely perceived as an informal publication closely associated with the British Embassy. Regularly followed by Mehmed Said throughout his lifetime, this newspaper represented Western journalistic practice within the Ottoman context.¹⁰⁰ Concurrently, the emergence of *Tercüman-ı Ahval* (Interpreter of Events), the first privately owned Turkish-language newspaper independent from state support, introduced a dynamic new element into the Ottoman press landscape. Within this dynamic and increasingly competitive media landscape, contemporary intellectuals sought various platforms to disseminate their ideas and more effectively engage public opinion.¹⁰¹

In this intellectual atmosphere, Mehmed Said, together with his close associates Halil Şerif and Tahir Münif, began exploring the establishment of a new scholarly organization to address the scientific and intellectual gap resulting from the dissolution of the *Encümen-i Dâniş* (Council of Knowledge). Central to their vision was creating a scholarly association that, while remaining autonomous from governmental oversight, would gain official recognition through imperial authorization.¹⁰² Given the politically sensitive context shaped by events such as the *Kuleli* Incident of 1859, the founders deliberately established foundational principles designed explicitly to exclude political or religious controversies. Thus, the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye* (Ottoman Scientific Society), formally inaugurated on May 24, 1861, was structured by these cautious, impartial, and scholarly objectives. Mehmed Said's role in establishing the society demonstrates his substantial contributions to Ottoman modernization, extending beyond the domains of technical and engineering expertise into the cultural and intellectual spheres. Established through the concerted efforts of Said and his close associates, this society represents a prominent endeavor designed to introduce European scientific knowledge to Ottoman society and to encourage the spread of scientific thinking among the wider public. In this respect, the society may be viewed as both a tangible and symbolic reflection of the cultural and scholarly transformation that characterized the *Tanzimat* era.

In an effort to raise public awareness about the activities of the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye* and promote the broader dissemination of scientific thought within Ottoman society, the journal *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* (Journal of Sciences) commenced publication in July 1862. This journal sought to acquaint Ottoman readers with contemporary European advancements in science, philosophy, technology, and commerce. The journal maintained a clear and consistent focus on scholarly and intellectual

93 *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311, 1; BOA. HR. SFR3. 16/37, Letter from Professor Edward Sang in Edinburgh to the Ottoman Ambassador in London, Kostaki Musurus (21 August 1854); BOA. HR.SFR.3 16/37 Letter from Kostaki Musurus to Edward Sang (5 September 1854).

94 Danişmend, "Eğinli Sait Paşa," 252-254; BOA. İ.HR. 110/5047 (7 June 1854); BOA, A. AMD. 74/9 (1856).

95 *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311, 1

96 BOA. İ. DH. 449/29726 Ottoman Ambassador Kostaki Musurus to the Ministry of the Interior (28 November 1859).

97 BOA. İ. DH. 449/29726 From the Ministry of the Interior to the Grand Vizierate (6 December 1859); BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 175/47 From the Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Commerce (9 December 1859); BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 303/4 From the Ministry of War to the Grand Vizierate (27 January 1860).

98 Yeşim Işıl, *Bir Aydınlanma Hareketi Olarak Mecmua-i Fünûn* (Master's thesis, Istanbul University, 1986), 149–154.

99 BOA, İ. DH. 477/32044 (10 August 1861); BOA, A. MKT. NZD. 364/51 From the Sublime Porte to the Office of Grand Admiral (14 August 1861).

100 Burhan Çağlar, *Anglophone Press in Constantinople: The Levant Herald & Eastern Express (1859-1878)* (Libra Kitap, 2020), 119-122.

101 M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 94-95.

102 Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, "Cemiyet-i İlmiye ve Mecmua-i Funun," *Osmanlı İlmî ve Meslekî Cemiyetleri: I. Milli Türk Bilim Tarihi Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1987), 2170–2180.

discourse by distancing itself from everyday political controversies.¹⁰³ Mehmed Said actively supported the journal and contributed to its intellectual profile by authoring two comprehensive articles on engineering and the natural sciences. In the first article, entitled “*Fevâid-i Turuk*” (On the Advantages of Road Networks), Said highlighted the crucial importance of transportation infrastructure for economic development, emphasizing the transformative impact that technological improvements in transportation and communication networks could have upon Ottoman society.¹⁰⁴ His second article, “*Nazari ile Ameli Beyninde Olan Cihet-i Vahdet*” (On the Unity of Theory and Practice), provided a critical analysis of the historical dichotomy between theoretical and applied sciences, arguing persuasively for their integration as part of a cohesive modern scientific paradigm.¹⁰⁵

Another noteworthy undertaking of the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye* involved founding a modern public library and a reading room (*kuraathane*) in Istanbul. Mehmed Said directly facilitated this initiative by obtaining a donation of 173 scientific volumes from Thomas R. Crampton, the British chief engineer of the Smyrna-Aidin railway project. The library swiftly became a central institution through which contemporary scientific works were introduced to Ottoman readers. The adjoining reading room complemented the library by providing a dynamic intellectual space for discussions, language instruction, and academic lectures.¹⁰⁶ Through these activities, the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye* solidified its position as a leading cultural and intellectual institution representative of the *Tanzimat* era, contributing to the Ottoman modernization movement.

In its formative years, one of the prominent subjects frequently addressed by the *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* was the General Ottoman Exhibition (*Sergi-i Umûmî-i Osmânî*), inaugurated in Istanbul on February 27, 1863. The exhibition was a conspicuous symbol of the Ottoman Empire’s commitment to modernization during the era. Drawing inspiration from the European tradition of international expositions popularized throughout the nineteenth century, the event exposed Ottoman society to diverse technological advancements, encompassing areas from agricultural machinery to industrial products. Through detailed reporting and critical analysis, the journal highlighted the exhibition’s role in facilitating the circulation of scientific ideas, technological innovations, and industrial developments, thereby significantly enriching the Ottoman intellectual landscape. A particularly notable exhibition section was devoted to weaponry and machinery manufactured by Ottoman military facilities. This section prominently displayed an extensive array of military equipment, including cannons, rifles, and ammunition produced at imperial institutions such as the Imperial Arsenal (*Tophâne-i Âmire*), Imperial Shipyard (*Tersâne-i Âmire*), and the Zeytinburnu Arms Factory. By presenting these exhibits, the Ottoman state aimed to publicly showcase its technological advancements and enhanced production capacities within the military-industrial sector, underscoring its ongoing commitment to modernization and industrial growth.¹⁰⁷ The miniature locomotive model, designed by Mehmed Said, emerged as a prominent attraction, captivating public attention as Ottoman society’s initial encounter with this technology. Its recognition extended beyond local observers, drawing considerable attention from European media, thereby enhancing Mehmed Said’s international

stature as a distinguished Ottoman engineer. An article published in the London-based newspaper *The Daily News*, referencing coverage by *The Levant Herald*, specifically identified Mehmed Said’s locomotive model as the most remarkable event exhibit.¹⁰⁸ Further highlighting this achievement, Münif Efendi, writing in *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, credited Mehmed Said as the creator of the locomotive and underlined his prestigious role as vice president of the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmâniye*. Such public recognition bolstered Mehmed Said’s personal prestige and reinforced the intellectual and technical reputation of the scholarly society he represented.¹⁰⁹

Mehmed Said’s instrumental role in founding the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye* and his contributions to the publication of the *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* illustrate that his impact on Ottoman modernization reached far beyond the technical and engineering domains, impacting cultural and intellectual spheres as well. Mehmed Said contributed to the transformation of Ottoman intellectual life through his active involvement in initiatives such as establishing a modern public library, disseminating scientific knowledge via periodicals, and promoting technological innovations at public exhibitions. This intellectual environment allowed individuals to maintain their personal beliefs separately from public life, encouraging a transformation of communal identity away from traditional religious affiliations toward modern communities defined by shared intellectual interests. Such developments laid the groundwork for scientific associations within Ottoman society, enabling people to come together based on shared intellectual goals rather than religious identities. In this context, his activities within the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye* represent clear manifestations of broader efforts to transmit European scientific and intellectual traditions into Ottoman culture, thus facilitating the wider dissemination and acceptance of scientific thought throughout Ottoman society.

Defense Industry and Military Renewal: The London Mission

Following his appointment as an instructor at the Naval Academy, Mehmed Said’s professional reputation and personal prestige were likely enhanced by the widespread recognition of his locomotive design showcased at the General Ottoman Exhibition. Shortly thereafter, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel (*Kaymakam*). In August 1863, Mehmed Said was again dispatched to Britain, supervising the acquisition of naval vessels, weaponry, and ammunition crucial for the Ottoman military’s ongoing modernization efforts.¹¹⁰ His mission in London thus became a juncture combining technological modernization, diplomatic engagement, and technical cooperation, facilitating the transfer of Western knowledge and technological expertise to the Ottoman Empire.¹¹¹

During this period in Britain, Mehmed Said Bey engaged directly with British arms manufacturers, naval shipyards, and ammunition producers, effectively undertaking duties akin to those of a military attaché. Through closely monitoring the manufacturing processes within Britain’s military industry, he facilitated the transfer of advanced technical knowledge and

103 İhsanoğlu, “Cemiyet-i İlmiye,” 2180-2185.

104 Mehmed Said, “Fevâid-i Turuk,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 4 (1279): 186-196; Mehmed Said, “Fevâid-i Turuk, mâbâd,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 4 (1279): 232-238.

105 Mehmed Said, “Nazari ile Ameli Beyninde Olan Cihet-i Vahdet,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 1 (1279): 368-376.

106 İhsanoğlu, “Cemiyet-i İlmiye,” 2180-2185.

107 Ahmet Erdem Tozoğlu, “Addressing the Modern Regimes of Urban Spectacle: Revisiting the Ottoman General Exhibition of 1863 in Istanbul,” *Journal of Urban History* 50 (2022): 640-649.

108 “The Ottoman National Exhibition,” *Daily News*, April 6, 1863, 2; “The Ottoman National Exhibition,” *Morning Post*, April 7, 1863, 8; “The Ottoman National Exhibition,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 9, 1863, 6; “The Turkish Industrial Exhibition,” *Leeds Mercury*, March 19, 1863, 4.

109 Kadri Bey, “Sergi-i Umumî-i Osmânî,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 8 (1279): 338; Münif Efendi, “Sergi-i Umumî Osmânîyeden Vuku-i Küşâdı,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 9 (1279): 362; Kadri Bey, “Tarih-i Sergi-yi ber-Vech-i Umumî,” *Mecmua-i Fünûn* 9 (1279): 387; Münif Efendi, “Zamime-i Sergi-i Osmânî,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 10 (1279): 409; Kadri Bey, “Sergi-i Umumî-i Osmânî,” *Mecmûa-i Fünûn* 10 (1279): 431.

110 BOA. A. MKT. MHK 277/24 To the Undersecretariat of the Imperial Arsenal (18 August 1863).

111 Frank Lee, “Marshal M. Said” (Obituary), in “Memoirs,” *Proceedings of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers* 50 (1896): 93.

technologies to the Ottoman armed forces.¹¹² Between 1863 and 1867, he personally supervised the production and delivery processes of warships ordered by the Ottoman Navy.¹¹³ Among these projects, Said Bey directly oversaw the procurement process and attended the official handover ceremony of the ironclad warship *Osmaniye*, constructed by B. Napier & Sons in Glasgow, Scotland. In addition, he was instrumental in acquiring four armored battleships, each with a displacement of 6,400 tons, as well as various steam vessels of smaller capacities intended for patrol duties and troop transportation.¹¹⁴ In 1864, he played a role in negotiations concerning a large battleship of 10,800 tons, initially ordered but subsequently cancelled three times due to financial disputes, and eventually sold to Prussia. Furthermore, through his continued efforts in 1867, three smaller warships were successfully commissioned and delivered to the Ottoman Navy in 1870.¹¹⁵

Mehmed Said Bey further expanded his responsibilities during this mission by acquiring specialized machinery and manufacturing equipment from the Woolwich Arsenal, which was intended to modernize and upgrade the facilities of the Imperial Arsenal. He also secured essential technical apparatus required for establishing the domestic production of Armstrong artillery batteries, representing some of the era’s most advanced military technologies. To ensure the successful transfer and implementation of these technologies, he coordinated the dispatch of British technical experts to the Ottoman capital. These activities accelerated the Arsenal’s technological progress and infrastructural enhancement, thereby reducing the Ottoman military industry’s reliance on foreign suppliers while fostering the development of self-sufficient domestic production capabilities.¹¹⁶ In addition to these advancements, Mehmed Said Bey played a role in the Ottoman military’s transition from traditional short-range flintlock muskets to advanced, long-range Enfield rifles, initiated in 1863. To support this modernization, he negotiated the procurement of 50,000 Enfield rifles from Britain in July of the same year, along with essential ammunition components such as percussion caps, cartridges, and cartridge cases. Furthermore, Said Bey collaborated closely with the Royal Small Arms Factory to acquire specialized machinery and equipment required to establish domestic rifle manufacturing facilities at the *Tüfekhane* (Imperial Arms Factory). This strategic initiative enhanced the Ottoman Empire’s capacity for independent production, ultimately reaching an output of approximately one thousand rifled muskets per week. Moreover, he arranged for technical specialists to travel to Istanbul to oversee equipment installation and provide essential training to local personnel, reinforcing the Ottoman military industry’s technological proficiency and industrial autonomy.¹¹⁷

Mehmed Said’s tenure in London also provided opportunities to enhance his connections within prominent European engineering communities, thus laying the groundwork for greater international representation of Ottoman engineers. Reflecting these strengthened connections, in 1864, he was admitted as a member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), a leading British society renowned for advancing the engineering profession. His membership, obtained

through a formal process of nomination and endorsement, was sponsored by the eminent military engineer John Anderson and supported by engineers such as Thomas R. Crampton and Frederick William Taylor, who had been involved in Ottoman railway and industrial ventures. Through his affiliation, Mehmed Said facilitated closer professional ties between European engineering networks and the Ottoman Empire, enhancing the visibility and participation of Ottoman engineers on international technical platforms.¹¹⁸

Restructuring the Navy: Reforms and Regulatory Improvements

Upon returning to Istanbul in 1867, Mehmed Said was promoted to Colonel (*Miralay*). With his extensive engineering expertise, military-technical experience, and professional network, he quickly assumed primary responsibilities within the Ottoman capital. Initially appointed as director of the Imperial Arsenal, he led initiatives to advance weapons manufacturing technologies and expand this facility’s industrial capacity. Concurrently, he became involved in the restructuring efforts accompanying the establishment of the Ministry of the Navy (*Bahriye Nezâreti*). Within this context, he was appointed as a permanent member of the newly established Naval Manufacturing Board (*İmalat-ı Bahriye Meclisi*) at the Imperial Shipyard (*Tersâne-i Âmire*).¹¹⁹ Following the abolition of the office of Kapudan Pasha (Grand Admiral), the newly formed Naval Administration Board (*Bahriye İdare Meclisi*) under the ministry marked a decisive step toward modernizing the Ottoman Navy. Entrusted with broad-ranging responsibilities, the board supervised financial administration, shipbuilding, fleet management, logistical planning, maintenance operations, and the procurement of naval supplies.¹²⁰ Central to these modernization efforts, Colonel Mehmed Said played roles in drafting and implementing new naval regulations beginning in 1867, placing particular emphasis on improving educational standards for maritime personnel, expanding technical capabilities, and ensuring reliable and sustainable fuel supplies for naval operations.

British Admiral Augustus C. Hobart, during this period, submitted reports to the Naval Administration Board, highlighting critical shortcomings within the Ottoman Navy, notably regarding personnel training and logistical infrastructure. Responding to Hobart’s recommendations, Mehmed Said contributed to developing and implementing regulations to elevate naval training standards.¹²¹ Simultaneously, he introduced measures designed to strengthen the navy’s logistical capacities, emphasizing securing reliable coal supplies, a resource of strategic importance. On May 7, 1867, following the Ministry of the Navy’s assumption of administrative authority over the Heraklia (Ereğli) Coal Basin, Colonel Mehmed Said was appointed to the commission tasked with overseeing the management of this resource. Drawing upon his previous experience from August 1861, during which he facilitated the transition of administrative control from British corporate entities to Ottoman authorities, Mehmed Said effectively integrated practical insights with the

112 BOA. HR. MKT. 464/36 To the Office of the Imperial Arsenal (22 December 1863).

113 BOA. HR. TO. 57/10 From the London Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (28 March 1867).

114 “The Turkish Ambassador,” *Glasgow Herald*, September 3, 1864, 4; “Launch of an Iron-Clad on the Clyde for Turkey,” *Morning Post*, December 31, 1864, 5.

115 Daniel Panzac, *The Ottoman Navy: From the Height of Empire to Dissolution, 1572–1923*, trans. Peter R. Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 330–339.

116 Serdal Soyluer, *Osmanlı Silah Sanayii’nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876)* (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2013), 98–101, 123–125, 202–205, 230–233, 397–400.

117 Soyluer, *Osmanlı Silah Sanayii’nde Modernleşme*, 98–101, 123–125, 202–205, 230–233, 397–400.

118 Lee, “Marshal M. Said,” 93.

119 BOA. İ.DH. 570/39719 (31 December 1867); *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311, 1; *Salnamei Devleti Aliyye-i Osmâniyye* 20 (Istanbul: Matbaai Amire, 1282), 15; *Salnamei Devleti Aliyye-i Osmâniyye* 22 (Istanbul: Matbaai Amire, 1282), 40.

120 Dilara Dal, *The Modernization of the Ottoman Navy during the Reign of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861–1876)* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015), 53–60.

121 Dal, *The Modernization of the Ottoman Navy*, 80–95.

engineering expertise acquired during his tenure in Britain.¹²² His involvement proved essential in drafting regulations to resolve persistent production issues and modernize the facilities within the coal basin. These interventions increased coal production, bolstering the logistical infrastructure and enhancing the Ottoman Navy’s readiness for operations.

Colonel Said strengthened the technical and administrative aspects of Ottoman military modernization through these responsibilities and the regulatory frameworks he introduced. His initiatives in modernizing critical institutions, including the Imperial Arsenal and the Ministry of the Navy, facilitated the Ottoman military industry’s adoption and advancement of contemporary production methods and technologies. Furthermore, his administrative reforms improved operational efficiency within the Ottoman Navy, effectively aligning the empire’s military and technological capabilities with modern standards. Consequently, Mehmed Said emerged as a pivotal figure within the Ottoman modernization movement, widely recognized for his substantial contributions to the empire’s military and technical transformation.

Transforming the Naval Academy: Instruction and Curriculum

Colonel Said played a prominent role in advancing Ottoman modernization through his educational initiatives and institutional reforms at the Naval Academy (*Bahriye Mektebi*). Established during the reign of Sultan Mustafa III, the Academy underwent substantial modernization under Sultan Abdülmecid, who relocated the institution to Heybeliada (Halki). The Academy entered another transformative phase following the establishment of the Ministry of the Navy. The introduction of steam-powered and ironclad warships into the Ottoman naval fleet required more advanced and technically oriented training programs for naval officers.¹²³

Having served initially as an instructor at the Naval Academy in 1859, Mehmed Said provided foundational instruction in the basic sciences. On September 30, 1868, he was promoted to Brigadier General (*Mirliva*), granted the title of “Pasha”, and appointed director (*nazır*) of the Academy.¹²⁴ He undertook extensive curricular reforms in this new capacity, aligning the Academy’s educational standards with those of leading contemporary naval institutions. By emphasizing practical training and intensifying foreign language instruction, he elevated the educational quality of the institution through the recruitment of both local and international instructors. Through these comprehensive reforms, Mehmed Said Pasha established a robust foundation for cultivating qualified naval personnel, contributing substantially to the ongoing modernization of the Ottoman Navy. During Mehmed Said Pasha’s tenure as director, the Naval Academy revised and expanded its curriculum by incorporating advanced technical subjects, including physics, mechanics, fluid dynamics, and material strength. The reforms he instituted introduced contemporary educational practices modeled on the training standards of the British Royal Navy.¹²⁵ Emphasizing a balance between theoretical instruction and practical training, the Academy facilitated experiential learning aboard its vessels, providing cadets opportunities to acquire essential field experience. These curricular and

methodological improvements enhanced the cadets’ practical skills and professional readiness.¹²⁶ As a result, the Naval Academy aligned itself with the educational benchmarks of leading maritime institutions of its time, furthering the broader objectives of Ottoman naval modernization.

Complementing these curricular advancements, Said Pasha introduced several measures designed to enhance the Academy’s instructional capabilities. He facilitated collaboration with the Imperial Military Academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*), assigning instructors to provide comprehensive gymnastics and physical training courses aimed at the holistic development of cadets.¹²⁷ Recognizing the importance of English proficiency in contemporary naval education, he recruited British instructors, thereby improving the cadets’ linguistic competencies. Furthermore, by appointing educators with extensive international experience, notably Henry Felix Woods, he elevated the Academy’s standards and broadened its educational perspective.¹²⁸ In response to the Ottoman Navy’s persistent need for qualified personnel, Said Pasha expanded the Naval Academy’s student enrollment capacity, resulting in considerable financial strain on the institution. Nonetheless, through fiscal oversight and allocation of available resources, he maintained the Academy’s educational standards, institutional discipline, and academic integrity. Under his guidance, the Naval Academy evolved into a prominent educational institution, closely aligned with contemporary maritime standards and dedicated to producing competent naval officers equipped to address the technological and operational demands of the period effectively.¹²⁹

Beyond his roles at the Naval Academy, Said Pasha was involved in broader educational reforms across the Empire. In 1872, he was appointed to a special committee formed by the Ministry of Public Education (*Maarif Nezareti*) dedicated to preparing school textbooks. The committee aimed to resolve a shortage of books that had hindered the implementation of the new educational regulations (*Maarif Nizamnamesi*) introduced in 1869. Chaired by Minister of Public Education Cevdet Pasha, it comprised Said Pasha, educational and military officials, and the directors of imperial colleges, including the *Mühendishane* (Engineering), *Tıbbiye* (Medicine), and *Harbiye* (Military). Given the significance of this initiative, Cevdet Pasha, himself an author of several textbooks, closely oversaw and accorded priority to the commission’s activities.¹³⁰ Through his participation in the commission, he contributed to resolving one of the major challenges facing Ottoman educational reform by supporting the introduction of standardized curricula and preparing textbooks for both civilian and military educational institutions.

Mehmed Said’s enduring commitment to naval education and instructional resources is further highlighted by his interaction with former U.S. President General Ulysses S. Grant during the latter’s visit to Istanbul in March 1878. Serving as Minister of the Navy at a critical juncture marked by the tense conclusion of the Russo-Ottoman War, Said Pasha was assigned as interpreter during Grant’s audience with the Sultan. Seizing this diplomatic encounter as an opportunity, he

122 Sabah, February 14, 1311, 1; İkdâm, February 10, 1311, 1; İkdâm, February 11, 1311, 1; BOA. HR. MKT. 614/19; BOA, HR. MKT. 614/19 To the Ministry of the Navy (26 March 1868); Funda Songur, *Logistics in the Ottoman Navy: Facilities, Capabilities, and the Status of Bases (1867–1914)* (Istanbul: Timaş Akademi, 2022), 286-290.
123 Dal, *The Modernization of the Ottoman Navy*, 148-190.
124 BOA. İ. DUİT. 185/84 (27 October 1868).
125 Meltem Akbaş, *Modern Physics in Ottoman Turkey (19th Century)* (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2008), 58–84.

126 BOA. A.MKT.MHM 427/34 To the Ministry of the Navy (8 November 1868).
127 BOA. İ. DUİT. 185/78 (4 March 1870); Süleyman Nutki Bey, *Süleyman Nutki Bey’in Hatıraları*, trans. Nurcan Bal, (İstanbul: Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Yayınlar 2003), 3-4.
128 Dal, *The Modernization of the Ottoman Navy*, 98-100; Sir Henry Felix Woods, *Spunyarn: From the Strands of a Sailor’s Life Afloat and Ashore; Forty-Seven Years Under the Ensigns of Great Britain and Turkey*, 1, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), 12–14.
129 Akbaş, *Modern Physics in Ottoman Turkey*, 58–84; Süleyman Nutki Bey, *Süleyman Nutki Bey’in Hatıraları*, 3–4; Ali İhsan Gencer, *Bahriyede Yapılan Islahat Hareketleri ve Bahriye Nezaretinin Kuruluşu (1789–1867)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), 286–288.
130 Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir: 40–Tetimme*, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 126.

expressed a keen interest in the curricula and instructional materials of the United States Military and Naval Academy, requesting General Grant's assistance in obtaining textbooks and course outlines. Grant willingly facilitated this request, personally ensuring the materials were sent to Istanbul.¹³¹ This brief yet considerable incident underscores Mehmed Said's consistent dedication to advancing Ottoman education by seeking international knowledge and resources, a commitment he maintained throughout his career.

Following a period serving as the head of the Railway Construction Council (*Demiryolları İnşaat Meclisi*) under the Ministry of Public Works (*Nâfia Nezâreti*), Said Pasha assumed a new role in March 1875, becoming a member of the Artillery Department (*Topçu Dairesi*) within the Military Council (*Dâr-ı Şûrâ-yı Askerî*). This council played a central role in the Ottoman army's reform, innovation, and organizational restructuring efforts, with the Artillery Department specifically tasked with supervising critical aspects such as artillery training, weapons technology, and ammunition production.¹³² Said Pasha's appointment to this position drew upon his engineering education, familiarity with contemporary European military advancements, and practical expertise developed at prominent British institutions like the Enfield Rifle Factory and Woolwich Arsenal, where he had studied artillery and ammunition manufacturing. Shortly after his appointment, the Artillery Department underwent substantial reorganization. On January 25, 1876, the Ottoman administration implemented a new arrangement designed to streamline the processes of procurement, inspection, evaluation, and quality control of military supplies and armaments required by the Imperial Arsenal (*Tophane-i Âmire*). Within this framework, the Artillery Department was abolished, and its responsibilities were transferred to the newly established Testing and Military Products Branch (*Tecrübe ve Mamûlât-ı Harbiyye Şubesi*), directly subordinated to the Imperial Arsenal. The primary objectives of this organizational reform were to accelerate procurement processes, uphold quality standards, and expedite decision-making regarding military equipment, ultimately aiming to enhance the Ottoman army's operational readiness and technical capabilities.¹³³

Said Pasha was soon appointed to lead this newly formed branch. Shortly after Murad V's deposition and Abdülhamid II's accession on August 31, 1876, Said Pasha was prominent in the new imperial administration. He was appointed to the post of Aide-de-camp Lieutenant General (*Mâbeyin Ferikî*), a position directly assisting the Sultan in daily affairs, ceremonial duties, and communication between the sovereign and the military establishment.¹³⁴ This appointment reflected his growing influence in palace circles and the advantage of close family ties. His stature at court was further reinforced through his brother-in-law, Mahmud Pasha, who was married to Cemile Sultan, sister of Abdülhamid II, solidifying his standing within the imperial inner circle.¹³⁵

During the drafting of the Ottoman Constitution (*Kanûn-i Esâsî*), Said Pasha supported measures aimed at limiting monarchical authority and consistently advocated diplomatic rather than confrontational

approaches in foreign policy. These positions underscored his commitment to Ottoman modernization efforts.¹³⁶ On January 23, 1877, Said Pasha assumed directorship of the Military Academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiyye Nâzırı*), also gaining oversight of all military educational institutions.¹³⁷ He was subsequently appointed acting Minister of the Navy (*Bahriye Nâzırı*) on July 19, 1877, a position confirmed officially on December 25 of the same year.¹³⁸ On January 11, 1878, he was promoted to the rank of Marshal (*Müşir*), thereafter continuing his service as Aide-de-Camp Marshal (*Mâbeyin Müşiri*).¹³⁹



Seal of Mehmed Said - Minister of the Navy
in the year 1295
(1878)

The defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 created severe political instability in the Ottoman capital, resulting in widespread unrest. Amid this turmoil, the outbreak of the Çırağan Incident (May 20, 1878), a failed attempt by Ali Suâvi to restore former Sultan Murad V, further heightened tensions. Critical articles published in *The Levant Herald*, perceived as oppositional to Sultan Abdülhamid II, intensified suspicions within this politically charged environment. Consequently, Said Pasha, implicated by association and viewed with suspicion, was relieved of his official duties and reassigned to a provincial position, effectively distancing him from the political center in Istanbul.¹⁴⁰ Said Pasha served as governor of Ankara (1878), Kastamonu (1878), Aleppo (1879–1881), and Konya (1881–1887), and was also appointed inspector to investigate Armenian disturbances in Zeitun in 1879. This marked the beginning of a decade during which his modernizing efforts shifted from the imperial center to provincial administration, offering him new opportunities to implement reformist initiatives at the local level.¹⁴¹ Mehmed Said Pasha passed away on February 20, 1896, and was buried in the cemetery of Sultan Mahmud II's Tomb in Istanbul, close to the grave of his father-in-law, Ahmed Fethi Pasha. His burial at this distinguished site reflects his enduring prominence among the Ottoman administrative elite.

131 Ulysses S. Grant, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 28, ed. John Y. Simon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 354–360.

132 *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311; BOA. MF.MKT 25/63 Report to the Directorate of the Imperial School appointing Said Pasha to review the academic standing of students (14 February 1875); BOA. I.DH. 697/48785 Memorandum concerning the transfer of the School Minister, Said Pasha (3 March 1875).

133 Uğur Ünal, *Sultan Abdülaziz Devri Osmanlı Kara Ordusu (1861–1876)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008), 89–91; *Sabah*, February 14, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 10, 1311, 1; *İkdâm*, February 11, 1311.

134 BOA, C.AS. 1002/43820 (2 September 1876); François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, trans. Ali Berktaş (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2006), 60.

135 Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1980), 154–155; Ali Haydar Midhat, *The Life of Midhat Pasha*, (London: John Murray, 1903), 95–97; Midhat Paşa, *Mirât-ı Hayret*, ed. Ali Haydar Midhat (İstanbul: Hilal Matbaası, 1325), 159–160.

136 Ali İhsan Gencer, “İlk Osmanlı Anayasasında Türkçenin Resmi Dil Olarak Kabulü Meselesi,” *Kanun-u Esasi'nin 100. Yılı Armağanı* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1978), 185–186; Nazan Danişmend, “Türk Demokrasi Tarihinin Unutulmuş Sımlarından: Eğinli Sait Paşa,” *Türklük* 9 (1939): 188; Upon his appointment as Aide-de-camp Lieutenant General (*Mâbeyn Ferikî*), Said Pasha began keeping a diary, which he titled *Jurnal*, documenting events and reflections from his life between 1876 and 1887. Hereafter, it will be referred to simply as *Jurnal*.

137 BOA. MB.İ. 32/99 (23 January 1877); “Turkey,” *The Morning Post*, February 13, 1877, 6.

138 BOA. İ.DH. 751/61338 (19 July 1877); BOA. İ.DH. 761/62087 (25 December 1877); BOA. MB.İ. 42/121 (25 December 1877).

139 BOA. İ.DH. 762/62141 (11 January 1878).

140 Burhan Çağlar, “Turmoil in the Capital: British Publication Alarmed the Hamidian Regime,” *Belleten* 85 (2021): 138–143.

141 Çağlar, *İngiliz Said Paşa*, 45–60, Burhan Çağlar, “1878–1879 Zeytun Ermeni İsyanları ve İngiliz Said Paşa'nın Aldığı Tedbirler,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları* 46 (2013): 163–165.

Constructing Anatolia: Infrastructure Works and Public Architecture

Throughout his tenure as governor in various Anatolian provinces, Mehmed Said Pasha pursued educational and infrastructural reforms, embodying the modernization characteristic of the late Ottoman era. His initiatives, including constructing masonry government buildings, roads, and bridges; establishing new schools; and developing prisons and guesthouses to enhance public safety and welfare, represented concrete manifestations of central authority and reformist aspirations extending into the provincial administration. Said Pasha’s reforms thus served to institutionalize modernization at the local level, visibly reinforcing state presence and administrative coherence across the Empire’s periphery.

Among Said Pasha’s provincial initiatives was constructing and renovating administrative buildings in numerous provincial and district centers. He supervised the architectural designs for new governmental structures in towns such as Seydişehir, Nevşehir, and Aksaray, and improved inadequate prison facilities, most notably in Niğde (August 1882).¹⁴² Central to these developments was the provincial administrative building erected in Konya, a tangible reflection of the empire’s central authority and provincial bureaucratic reform (May 1885). Said Pasha assumed direct responsibility for this project, diligently supervising its architectural accuracy, financial transparency, and systematic implementation from inception to completion.¹⁴³ Through these transformative endeavors, he strengthened provincial administration’s physical infrastructure and institutional effectiveness, extending central governance into the rural periphery and fostering the broader integration of modern administrative norms across the Ottoman countryside.

Another important aspect of Said Pasha’s tenure was his commitment to road construction, which he viewed as a technical necessity and an essential driver of social welfare and civil advancement. In pursuit of this vision, he supervised extensive road-building projects, from initial route planning through detailed engineering processes. During his governorship in Konya, he developed modern road networks to connect the province to Mediterranean ports via three primary routes, boosting the local economy. His direct involvement was evident in the comprehensive renovation of the Gelemiş Pass, facilitating more efficient access from Konya northward toward Istanbul.¹⁴⁴ He also launched the construction of major roadways along the Konya-Karaman-Silifke, Konya-Meram, Niğde-Akköprü-Mersin, and Isparta-Burdur-Antalya routes. Among these projects, the extensive road construction he commissioned at Akköprü along the Gülek Pass (Cilician Gates), linking Konya to Adana, stood out as a significant achievement in provincial civil engineering.¹⁴⁵

Beyond intercity road construction suitable for carriage traffic, Said Pasha also emphasized improvements in urban streets and thoroughfares. He promoted the McAdam method in city centers, the era’s most advanced road-surfacing technique. Drawing upon his engineering expertise, he supervised the construction of exemplary roads in towns such as Aksaray and Bozkır. He guided construction crews directly and closely monitored their work to maintain high standards. Through oversight and hands-on training, Said Pasha introduced contemporary engineering methods into provincial infrastructure, improving physical connectivity, economic vitality, and social integration within his administrative districts.¹⁴⁶

Under his road-building initiatives, Said Pasha undertook infrastructure projects, including

irrigation canals, river improvement schemes, bridges, and weirs. His endeavors, particularly notable in the provinces of Aleppo and Konya, represented ambitious engineering efforts to transform these regions’ economic and social landscapes. Through such comprehensive projects, Said Pasha reshaped provincial communities, promoted agricultural productivity, enhanced local economic conditions, and further integrated rural areas into the broader modernization agenda of the Ottoman Empire.

As governor of Aleppo, Said Pasha addressed the city’s increasingly severe drought by undertaking a substantial canal project that diverted water from the Sajur River to the Aleppo River. Previous efforts had failed due to engineering inadequacies, a fact he established through detailed on-site examinations. Recognizing discrepancies in elevation and other technical deficiencies within existing canal structures, he determined that constructing new canal segments and thoroughly restoring the old canal beds were essential. In June 1880, work commenced on a new canal measuring approximately 1,135 meters linking the two rivers. Closely supervising the project’s execution, funded by local agricultural communities, Said Pasha also engaged the community through public meetings, addressing concerns over water usage and ensuring equitable distribution.¹⁴⁷

While posted in Konya, Said Pasha responded to local requests to construct weirs along the Zondi stream near Niğde to facilitate agricultural irrigation. After inspecting the area and assessing the streambed along with the surrounding terrain, he concluded that the initially proposed location was unsuitable due to its steep and rocky topography, which would complicate construction and limit effective water retention. Investigating alternative sites, Said Pasha identified a more favorable location downstream near Değirmen village, determining that weirs approximately twenty Ottoman cubits in height (approximately 13.5 meters) would effectively capture water across a broader basin, extending irrigation benefits to neighboring villages.¹⁴⁸ Following his assessment, construction commenced promptly, demonstrating Said Pasha’s practical application of engineering expertise in enhancing rural agricultural infrastructure.

Upon his appointment to Konya, Said Pasha revisited an unsuccessful initiative to divert water from Lake Beyşehir and Lake Suğla (Karaviran), two major freshwater sources, into the Konya Plain. Recognizing that previous attempts had inadvertently created extensive marshlands that adversely impacted public health, he conducted detailed inspections and engineering assessments. Said Pasha commissioned detailed mapping of the waterway routes connecting these two lakes to the plain, identifying technical shortcomings of earlier attempts. He proposed an advanced canal system, designed to utilize the roughly 35-meter elevation difference between the lakes, ensuring efficient water management. Additionally, he recommended partially draining sections of Lake Suğla to reduce marshlands and reclaim fertile land suitable for agriculture. However, despite his proposals’ technical feasibility and innovative approach, financial constraints ultimately prevented their implementation.¹⁴⁹

Near Nevşehir, within the Niğde Sanjak, the collapse of a vital bridge over the Kızılırmak River had severely disrupted transportation, causing social and economic difficulties for local communities. In response to local demands for a durable replacement, Said Pasha conducted a site evaluation in Avanos. Through detailed analyses of the river’s flow rate, discharge, and the surrounding topographical conditions, he identified technical deficiencies that had led to the failure of the earlier

142 Mehmed Said, *Jurnal*, 4:834–845; 5:1147–1149, 1169–1182, 1193–1194; 6:1208–1210, 1264–1273.
143 BOA. Y.A. Res. 24/31; M. Said, *Jurnal*, 6:1238–1241.
144 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:808–810.
145 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:728, 768, 819–821, 893–896, 899–902; 5:1041, 1043, 1095–1134, 1157–1160.
146 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 6:1208–1210.

147 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 2:413–428.
148 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:839–844.
149 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:664–667, 675; 5:1294.

bridge near Güzelşehir (Arabsun). His investigations indicated that the Avanos site, characterized by a narrower riverbed and slower current, was more suitable for new bridge construction. Pasha closely supervised the technical aspects of the project, anticipating that the completed bridge would enhance connectivity between settlements on opposite riverbanks and thereby bolster regional commerce and economic interaction.¹⁵⁰

In the Korkuteli (Istanos) district, within the Teke Sanjak, shifts in a local stream had led to frequent flooding and the gradual conversion of fertile farmland into marshlands, adversely affecting settlements extending as far as Yakaköy. In response, Said Pasha conducted detailed field assessments to identify effective solutions. After thorough inspections, he recommended clearing existing canals to redirect water to its original way and constructing additional embankments and barriers to prevent future overflows. Recognizing the sandy nature of the soil, which increased the risk of recurrence, he also proposed creating a new central canal designed specifically to regulate water flow consistently. These measures were intended to protect agricultural productivity and safeguard local communities from further flood-related disruption.¹⁵¹

In the Isparta region, heavy rainfall flowing from the surrounding mountains frequently resulted in severe floods, causing substantial damage to urban areas and agricultural lands. Said Pasha conducted field studies to develop sustainable solutions to this issue. He resumed and completed previously halted embankment and barrier constructions, establishing a canal system to collect floodwaters, effectively reducing their destructive effects. Additionally, he advocated expanding the existing irrigation channels sourced from Lake Gölcüğe near Isparta, aiming to increase agricultural productivity and water resource utilization.¹⁵² By securing funding from local farmers and landowners, direct beneficiaries of these projects, Said Pasha encouraged community involvement, ensuring sustained local support for these infrastructural improvements.

In addition to infrastructure projects, Said Pasha intervened in local production processes, addressing technical challenges across diverse sectors ranging from mining to agricultural industries. He identified inefficiencies and implemented targeted improvements to enhance productivity. In Isparta, Said Pasha led initiatives to establish corporate structures to boost the textile industry.¹⁵³ At the Bolkar Mountain and Bereketli mines, he tackled substantial inefficiencies resulting from traditional ore processing methods by designing and overseeing the construction of calcination and smelting furnaces for more efficient ore refinement. He also advocated installing narrow-gauge railway tracks at salt mines to improve working conditions.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, in Niğde, he conducted assessments to rehabilitate locally constructed yet technically inadequate windmills, reflecting his ongoing commitment to enhancing regional production through practical engineering interventions.¹⁵⁵ He also played a role in promoting mechanized agriculture in Ottoman provinces. Early in his career, he showcased a domestically produced locomotive prototype at the Istanbul General Exhibition (*Sergi-i Umumi*), where he also examined European agricultural machinery. As governor of Konya, he imported machinery such as reapers, threshers, sieving equipment, corn-processing machines, and grinding mills, primarily from Vienna. Despite logistical challenges in transporting these machines due to inadequate infrastructure, field trials across local villages confirmed gains in productivity

and labor efficiency (July 1882). Nonetheless, Said Pasha faced resistance from villagers attached to traditional farming methods, which frustrated his efforts. Recognizing these obstacles, he considered compulsory measures, engaged local officials and notables during administrative visits, and advocated infrastructure development to support sustainable mechanized agriculture.¹⁵⁶

Said Pasha also demonstrated a progressive approach to urban planning through his immigrant settlement policies in the province of Konya. Addressing the housing and social integration requirements of migrants from Rumelia, the Caucasus, and Crimea, he emphasized urban planning supported by robust infrastructure. Departing from traditional local housing practices, he introduced a modern urban layout characterized by wide streets, structured neighborhoods, and residential units complemented by private gardens, envisioning this as a replicable model throughout the province. Beyond administrative oversight, he managed the technical aspects of neighborhood and housing construction to ensure compliance with contemporary urban planning standards.¹⁵⁷ These measures enhanced the visibility of the modern state's role in addressing settlement issues, underscoring its presence in both spatial and social terms.

Education in the Provinces: Inspections and Structural Issues

Said Pasha viewed modernization as an integrated process, where investments in physical infrastructure were accompanied by cultivating human capital, placing education at the center of social progress. In his understanding, education was not simply a pathway to individual advancement, but rather the bedrock of collective social transformation and broader modernization. This philosophy guided his contributions to the establishment of the *Ottoman Society of Science*, his role in the publication of the *Journal of Sciences*, and the educational reforms he enacted at the Naval Academy (*Bahriye Mektebi*). These initiatives reflect his unwavering dedication to embedding contemporary educational standards into Ottoman society. His governorship in Konya demonstrated this approach at the provincial level, where, alongside extensive infrastructure improvements, he placed a distinct emphasis on education. Soon after taking office, Said Pasha undertook detailed inspections of local junior secondary schools (*rüşdiye*), traditional primary schools (*sıbyan*), and non-Muslim communal schools, demonstrating his commitment to thoroughly understanding and enhancing local educational conditions.

Said Pasha's inspections of schools across the province extended beyond mere administrative oversight, forming a purposeful initiative to uncover deficiencies within the Ottoman educational structure, observe issues in their local contexts, and formulate practical responses. During these visits, he administered examinations to assess students' performance, engaged in detailed discussions with teachers to acquire insights, and monitored the local implementation of educational policies. At exemplary institutions such as the Bor Junior Secondary School (*Bor Rüşdiyesi*), he praised the dedication and effectiveness of the teaching staff, emphasizing their role in the school's overall success. Conversely, he candidly identified shortcomings at institutions such as the Ereğli and Akşehir junior secondary schools, investigating their root causes and proposing targeted interventions to foster educational improvement.¹⁵⁸

150 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:892–897.
151 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:723; 5:1038–1040.
152 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:690–693.
153 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:601; 4:821–829, 855–859.
154 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:908–910.
155 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 6:1363.

156 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:811–813; 5:984–985; Böcüzade Süleyman Sami, *Kuruluşundan Bugüne Kadar Isparta Tarihi*, ed. Suat Seren (Isparta: Serenler Yayınevi, 1983), 240–270.
157 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:615, 701.
158 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:994; 5:1148, 1166–1167; 6:1399.

In addressing educational challenges, Said Pasha engaged with local administrators and community notables, involving them in efforts to resolve issues affecting provincial schools. He emphasized enhancing primary schools’ physical conditions and educational quality, mobilizing local headmen (*muhtars*) and educational councils (*maarif meclisleri*) to support infrastructure improvements.¹⁵⁹ Notable outcomes of these initiatives included the establishment of the Hamidiye Primary School in Antalya, as well as the founding of new junior secondary schools (*rüşdiyes*) in Karaman and Nevşehir.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, he established educational committees based on the Regulation of Public Education (*Maarif Nizamnamesi*) of 1869 to foster greater coherence in educational policies at both provincial and district levels. These committees addressed diverse issues, including curriculum development, teacher training, professional standards, and measures to encourage regular student attendance, strengthening educational quality throughout the province.

Drawing on that same commitment to close financial oversight and administrative guidance, Said Pasha then turned to the family waqf on Rhodes, which his father-in-law had founded. He took charge of the endowment’s *rüşdiye* and library restorations and, finding that revenues fell short of the school’s operating costs and teachers’ stipends, commissioned a full audit by the Ministry of Public Education. The resulting report uncovered unpaid dues and reactivated dormant income streams, allowing the waqf to eliminate its deficit and increase its support for educational and charitable programs. He also regularly communicated with the school’s administrators and ministry officials regarding teacher qualifications and pension provisions, gathering feedback to secure the foundation’s long-term governance and financial stability.¹⁶¹

Said Pasha also inspected schools operated by the Greek, Armenian, and Protestant communities within the province, recognizing their multilingual curricula and practical teaching methodologies as valuable models for educational modernization. He particularly commended the achievements of these non-Muslim institutions in disciplines categorized as beneficial sciences (*ulûm-ı nâfia*), notably history, geography, and mathematics, while critically contrasting them with state-run *rüşdiye* schools, which he criticized for relying heavily on Arabic-centric, rote-learning techniques.¹⁶² Said Pasha regarded this restrictive approach as detrimental, arguing that it hindered the development of students’ proficiency in Turkish and constituted an inefficient use of the state’s educational resources. Emphasizing the Turkish language as a cornerstone of the Ottoman educational framework, he associated linguistic unity with the broader vision of a modern, cohesive state. He viewed Turkish as integral to fostering a shared sense of identity among the empire’s diverse communities, acting as a binding force within Ottoman society. He regarded the neglect of Turkish instruction in non-Muslim educational institutions as a critical threat to Ottoman identity and the territorial integrity of the empire.¹⁶³ From his perspective, education was crucial for reinforcing communal loyalty, social integration, and administrative coherence. Through these efforts, Said Pasha sought to reposition language within a modern context, advocating schools as essential spaces for nurturing collective identity anchored in the shared linguistic heritage of Turkish.

159 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:628–631.

160 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 4:736–737, 744; 5:1193–1194; 6:1277.

161 Ali Fuat Örenç, *Yakındönem Tarihimizde Rodos ve Oniki Ada* (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2006), 273-276; BOA. DH.MKT. 1606/86 Notification to allocate the necessary expenses for the *rüşdiye* school endowed by Ahmed Fethi Pasha in Rhodes (19 March 1889); (9 July 1890); BOA. MF.MKT. 118/133 Request for Said Pasha’s views on removing the aging head teacher of the Rhodes *rüşdiye* endowed by Fethi Pasha and for authorizing the school’s repairs (9 July 1890).

162 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:650, 696, 708; 6:1294.

163 M. Said, *Jurnal*, 3:838; 4:874; 5:1016–1017, 1166–1167; 6:1196–1197.

Epilogue: Narrative of Ottoman Modernization

Ottoman modernization was a multifaceted phenomenon, closely linked to comprehensive institutional reforms, individual initiatives, and traditions maintained by prominent elite families. While state-directed policies aimed at reshaping the administrative structure altered or displaced numerous traditional institutions, these transformations also profoundly influenced the personal trajectories of Ottoman bureaucrats. The experiences these individuals gained through education, military affairs, and diplomatic engagements provided a foundation from which they articulated their visions of modernity and guided their ambitions towards addressing contemporary challenges. Ottoman statesmen thus emerged as active agents of modernization, employing their intellectual capacities, cultural insights, and individual aspirations to advance reforms from the imperial core outward to the provincial peripheries, ensuring continuity for subsequent generations. Among such figures were Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa, Rodosîzade Ahmed Fethi Pasha, and Said Pasha the Englishman, successive generations of a distinguished lineage who collectively represented the diverse expressions of modernization from the late eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. Their careers illuminate their times’ social, political, and cultural contexts, enriching the analytical understanding of Ottoman modernization.

Building upon the social and cultural initiatives introduced by Hafız Ahmed Ağa through his philanthropic endeavors, his son, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, expanded these efforts into a structured dimension of Ottoman modernization. As an influential statesman of the *Tanzimat* era, Ahmed Fethi embodied the practical implementation of reform policies across the Empire, drawing upon his rigorous education at the *Enderun* and complemented by extensive experience in military and diplomatic spheres. This diverse background allowed him to interpret contemporary realities and respond to emerging reform demands, positioning him prominently in shaping the Ottoman state’s modernization trajectory. Ahmed Fethi Pasha’s initiatives gained further momentum through the efforts of his son-in-law, Mehmed Said Pasha, who represented a subsequent generation influenced by the reform-oriented environment of the *Tanzimat*. Said Pasha’s vision was notably shaped by the progressive ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment encountered in Edinburgh, where concepts of human progress and societal advancement informed his intellectual outlook. His European education enabled him to bridge technical, scientific, and cultural connections between the Ottoman Empire and the Western world.

Ultimately, Ottoman modernization was a gradual and multilayered process, extending beyond centrally planned policies and elite-driven reforms. Local initiatives, familial legacies, and individual endeavors constituted essential components, complementing state actions. The philanthropic foundations laid by Hafız Ahmed Ağa at a regional scale became institutionalized through Ahmed Fethi Pasha’s administrative vision and further enriched by Said Pasha’s intellectual contributions. The collective impact of these three successive generations from a single prominent lineage illustrates the diffusion of Ottoman modernization from the imperial core to the provincial periphery, affecting diverse segments of society and leaving enduring marks through personal commitments. Hence, a comprehensive evaluation of Ottoman modernization necessitates the decisive roles played by individual agency, familial heritage, and regional dynamics in shaping its historical trajectory.