

An Ottoman Diplomat in Vienna
Ahmed Fethi Paşa

Abstract

This paper discusses a short period of time in the life of the Ottoman Tanzimat politician Ferik Ahmed Fethi Paşa (1801-1858). In both 1835 and 1836 he spent a few months as Turkish ambassador in Vienna. The Austrian press participated lively in his numerous activities which they reported in detail and always benevolently. An analysis of these press reports as well as the memoirs of the Austrian Orientalist Josef von Hammer-Purgstall, who had both professional and private connections to Ahmed Fethi, will reconstruct Ahmed Fethi Paşa’s life in Vienna and also show the prevailing discourse on the image of the Turk at that time.¹

I came across Ferik Ahmed Fethi Paşa, one of the earliest Ottoman ambassadors to Vienna, in the course of research on another topic: namely, in preparing the edition of a treatise on Austria (*Risâle-i Avusturya*) written by someone named Enveri Efendi, who was Ahmed Fethi’s embassy secretary. While on the trail of Enveri Efendi’s traces in contemporary Austrian newspapers and magazines, I noticed the following advertisement:



„Newly available from J. Bermann, dealer in art and music, am Graben, zur goldenen Krone: A portrait with a good likeness of Achmed Fethi Pascha, Turkish division general and envoy at the imperial–royal Court.” Lithography by Schramm, price 1 guilder”. *Wiener Zeitung*, October 24 and 30, 1835.

It seemed remarkable to me that an Ottoman diplomat should have himself painted and that this picture should have even been advertised for sale; so I set out to find further clues about this personality and his time in Vienna. As a matter of fact, I found plenty of material that I would like to present in this article.

Ahmed Fethi Paşa is quite a well-known, high-ranking official of the Tanzimat period and intimate of Sultan Abdülmecid, and some aspects of his personality have already been dealt with in various studies. Önder Küçükerman 2005: 458–481 and Ali Akyıldız (2007: 21–22, 32, 127, 129) have written on his role as an entrepreneur; Davut Hut (2009: I, 621–634) discusses his grand summer-house (*yalı*); Semavi Eyice (1985: 1596–1599) deals with his role as the founding father of the first

GISELA PROCHÁZKA-EISL is associate professor of Turkish and Ottoman at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Vienna, Austria where she completed her MA and PhD in Turkology. Her PhD consisted of a critical edition of the *Sûrnâme-i Hümayûn*, an Ottoman book dealing with a festival in 16th-century Istanbul. In 2001 she was awarded the *venia docendi* in Turkish and Islamic Studies for her study on *Papağan*, a literary-satirical magazine published during the first years of the Turkish Republic. From 2011 to 2014 she conducted a large-scale project on Ottoman popular learning in the 16th and 17th centuries, in the course of which a number of Ottoman personal miscellanies and an encyclopedia preserved in the Austrian National Library were edited. She currently teaches Ottoman Turkish and courses related to Ottoman texts, text editions and cultural history. Her research interests are Ottoman literature (both poetry and prose) and cultural history, Ottoman manuscripts, and Ottoman-period newspapers and journals. She has published several monographs and numerous articles on these subjects and is a regular contributor to the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. In 2023 she founded *Keshif*, a peer-reviewed e-journal on Ottoman-Turkish micro-studies devoted to textual editions.

“Almost by chance, I came across Rodosîzâde Ahmed Fethi Paşa, the son of Hafız Ahmed Ağa and the first Ottoman ambassador to Vienna, and began to trace his footsteps through contemporary Austrian newspapers. The more I learned about him, the more captivated I became – a charming and cosmopolitan figure, admired for his open-minded curiosity and vibrant presence in Viennese society. His genuine enthusiasm for art, music, culture, and all aspects of modernity, combined with his gracious social charm and remarkable generosity, made him a beloved and unforgettable personality of his time. By the time I had finished writing my paper, I felt as though I had come to know him well – as if we had, somehow, become friends. When Tarık Tüten contacted me shortly afterwards and introduced himself as a direct descendant of my Ahmed Fethi Paşa, I could hardly believe it. It was with great pleasure and respect that I accepted the invitation to this Conversation on Rhodes. Conversation – what a fitting and thoughtful format, one that I am certain Ahmed Fethi would have deeply appreciated!”

Gisela Procházka-Eisl

¹ This article is a slightly expanded reprint from: Yılmaz Emine, Nurettin Demir, Emre Çetinkaya (eds.) *Andreas Tietze ve Avusturya Türkolojisi. Türkçenin Zenginliğine Efsanevî bir Katkı – Andreas Tietze und die Österreichische Turkologie* Vienna: Neue Welt Verlag, 2022, 187-205.

Turkish museum, and Serap Sunay (2013:119–145) writes about his marriage to a daughter of Sultan Mahmud II.² The most recent publication to date, which draws on a wealth of primary sources, appeared in 2020 and is also by Serap Sunay. In this very insightful article about Ahmed Fethi Paşa’s estate register, we learn not only about his financial arrangements but also about his lifestyle, consumption, and reading habits.³ Serap Sunay also states in this article that there is no source other than the estate registers which allow us to get to know officials from the Tanzimat period as individuals and not only as politicians (Sunay 2020:746). Well, in the specific case of Ahmed Fethi’s time in Vienna, we can modify this statement a little bit: There are also other sources, namely the Austrian and international newspapers, which enjoyed reporting about him and about his private activities, which we will discuss in more detail in the following. Another source on Ahmed Fethi as an individual is the memoirs of the famous Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. These also contain some very amusing references and anecdotes.⁴ Hammer-Purgstall was an interpreter at court at that time and had a great deal to do not only professionally but also privately with Ahmed Fethi.

First, Ahmed Fethi will be introduced in a few lines,⁵ and then a closer look will be taken at his time in Vienna. This very short period in his life is repeatedly mentioned en passant in the literature, but relatively little is known about it.

Ahmed Fethi Paşa was born in Istanbul in 1801 as the posthumous son of the wealthy *rikâbdâr* Hafız Ahmed Ağa, who was originally from Rhodes, and hence is sometimes referred to by the bynames Rodosizade, Rodoslu, and Damad; this last meaning “son-in-law” because he was married to a daughter of Sultan Mahmud II. After an education at the Enderun Palace School, he followed a very linear military career: His entry into the *Enderun Ağaları Bölüğü*, a division which formed the core of the ‘Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye, the new, modern army of Mahmud II after the abolition of the Janissaries, was followed by his participation in the 1828–29 Ottoman-Russian War.⁶ He was subsequently promoted to *mîrlivâ* in 1830 and *ferîk* in 1831.⁷

In the summer of 1835, Sultan Mahmud II sent Ahmed Fethi Paşa to Vienna as a special envoy for a short time. The following year, he was appointed to Vienna as a regular ambassador but again only for a few months.

In 1838 he was in London, where he was to attend Queen Victoria’s coronation festivities, but he arrived too late. He was then ambassador to Paris—Reşid Paşa was actually nominated for this position⁸ but, for various reasons, he was not able to take it up.⁹ That same year, he also became

the first Ottoman state official to have an audience with the Pope (Hut 2016:450–451).¹⁰ In 1839 he returned to Istanbul after the death of Sultan Mahmud II and the accession of Sultan Abdülmecid.¹¹ It is feasible that he did not undertake any more journeys abroad from that time on.

The following year he married Atiye Sultan, the daughter of Mahmud II, with whom he had two daughters. As Sultan Abdülmecid’s brother-in-law and confidant, he rapidly climbed the career ladder and held a number of different positions, at times several at the same time. Thus, he held the post of minister of commerce (*ticâret nâzîri*) twice (1840 and 1853) and the post of the director of artillery (*tophâne müşîri*) three times. He was also in charge of establishing the first Ottoman quarantine facility.¹² It was mainly his position as director of artillery that gained him fame (Sunay 2020:748). Ahmed Fethi Paşa died in 1858, relatively young at the age of 57, from a lung disease.

Ahmed Fethi Paşa was—and is—considered a worldly-wise, eloquent statesman of the Tanzimat period, open to all Western achievements.



Palais Schönborn in Vienna’s 4th district, Ahmed Fethi’s residence during his first stay in Vienna 1835. Photo: Gisela Procházka-Eisl.

However, he has entered history not only as a statesman but also as a bon vivant who accumulated infinite riches, while leaving behind piles of debts.¹³ He was also the founding father of the first Turkish museum,¹⁴ the owner of a steamship company on the Golden Horn (Akyıldız 2007, *apud* Sunay 2020), a brick factory, numerous estates, and the founder of the Beykoz Paşabahçe Glass and Porcelain Factory.

2 See the bibliography in Hut 2016:451.

3 “Bir Hanedan Damadının Yaşam Tarzı ve Standardı: Ahmed Fethi Paşa’nın Terekesi”.

4 Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall’s (d. 1856) memoirs comprise several thousand pages. A typewritten copy, probably made during the interwar period, is available online: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:hp>.

5 Based on Hut 2016: 450–451, Koçu 1971:5708–5709, and Sakaoğlu 1994:298–299.

6 Apparently, he was awarded the epithet “Fethî” — “the Victorious” for his efforts in this war; see *Österreichischer Soldatenfreund*, March 10, 1858 (obituary for Ahmed Fethi).

7 Lit. “commander of an administrative district (*livâ*)”, but also a military title corresponding to “major general”; *ferîk* “brigade general”, was the next highest rank. From the rank of *mîrlivâ* and above, the title *paşa* was bestowed and the epithet “se’âdetlü” was used. See Pakalın 1983, 2: 545.

8 Mustafa Reşid Paşa (1800–1858), a high-ranking Ottoman statesman, direct colleague—and often rival—of Ahmed Fethi (Beydilli 2006:348–350).

9 A very critical comparison of the two pashas can be found in the newspaper *Agramer Zeitung*, November 17, 1841: “Fethi Pascha must now be regarded as [Reschid Pascha’s] present replacement. Alone, he does not possess the spirit and the energy of Reschid Pascha, is more a man of the world than a statesman, more a blind imitator of external French forms than a real reformer, his generosity, bordering on extravagance, his command of the

fine French social tone, his light, cheerful spirit, would perhaps make him more suitable to represent young Turkey gallantly in the salons of Paris than to recognize here in the serious, ceremonial Stambul what is needful for his fatherland in the present critical period”. (translation by GPE).

10 Three months later, Reşid Paşa also received an audience with Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846), and several Austrian newspapers published Mustafa Reşid Paşas’ speech (originally in French) in which he thanked the pope on behalf of Sultan Mahmud II for his good reception of Ahmed Fethi Paşa. See, for example, *Österreichischer Beobachter*, October 16, 1838.

11 Koçu 1971:5709.

12 *Steyermärkische Zeitschrift* 1844, vol. 2, p. 33.

13 There is also a file from 1838 in the Austrian State Archives in Vienna with the title “Ahmed Ferik Pascha, Turkish ambassador, debt claims”. Sign. Nr. AT–OeSTA/HHStA HA OMaA 71–24. It was not possible to examine this file or the files concerning his audiences with the Emperor as the archive cannot be consulted due to Covid19 restrictions.

14 It was a collection of ancient weapons in the Irene Church which now form the cornerstone of Istanbul’s Archaeological Museum (Öz 1949).

Ahmed Fethi first came to Vienna from July 30 to September 24 1835, as an Ottoman special envoy.¹⁵ This was possibly his first stay in Europe; no references to earlier travels could be found in the sources.

During the following year, from September 30, 1836 to the spring of 1837, he was in Vienna again, this time as a regular Ottoman ambassador. In total, he apparently spent less than a year in the Habsburg capital. His subsequent stays in England and France are also assumed to have been rather short, as in August 1839, immediately after Sultan Mahmud’s death, all the newspapers in the Habsburg Empire unanimously reported his recall from Paris.¹⁶ It is this period of only four years in Ahmed Fethi’s career that has earned him the reputation of the well-traveled connoisseur of the West.

The reports in numerous newspapers and journals show that he made the best and most intensive use of his time in Europe. Thus, we know that within the relevant four years of 1835–1839, in addition to the countries to which he had been sent as ambassador, he also visited Hungary, Italy, Germany, Russia and Poland, and that he also traveled extensively within the Habsburg Empire. After his removal from Vienna, he visited Austria at least once more on his way to England. The *Preßburger Zeitung* reports that in July 1838 he had—together with the new ambassador Rıfat Paşa—an audience with the Emperor and presented him with gifts from the Sultan.¹⁷

Both Viennese high society and the general public had a strong interest in the Turkish ambassador and followed his activities curiously and sympathetically. As was the case with the arrival of every Ottoman delegation throughout history, the arrival of Ahmed Fethi and his entourage in Vienna caused a certain exotic sensation. Austrian newspapers throughout the Habsburg Empire, from Lviv to Budapest to Vienna to Linz and Klagenfurt, reported as early as June 1835 that Ahmed Fethi had been ordered by the sultan on May 20 to travel to Vienna and would be leaving soon.¹⁸ He was to deliver a letter from Sultan Mahmud II expressing his condolences on the death of Emperor Franz I and congratulations on the accession of Emperor Leopold I to the throne. From the time of his departure from Semlin (today Zemun, Belgrade) via Hungary and Bratislava to Vienna, the stops on his journey are regularly reported. Numbering 18 members, it was a relatively large delegation that was on its way to Vienna. We only know that Enveri Efendi (Enverizade Sa’dullah) accompanied Ahmed Fethi as his private secretary as did the Greek Alexander Theologis, his interpreter.¹⁹

In Budapest, Ahmed Fethi stopped for three days for extensive sightseeing and was shown around by the Ofen Provincial Commissary Gabriel von Döbrönteı and the mayor (Stadthauptmann) of Pesth, Johann Eichholz. He visited the Hungarian National Museum, the Blocksberg Observatory and other sights. Two theater performances, one in German and one in Hungarian, were also included in his program. However, he was particularly impressed by the visit to the Pest Institute for the Blind, where the pupils showed him all they had learned—including showing him his route from

Istanbul to Budapest on a map—and played music for him. When the Paşa saw the pianoforte, he asked the director of the institute to play three pieces of Turkish music for him, two marches and a polonaise. He had the sheet music of these pieces (though written for violin) with him; the director fulfilled his honoured guest’s wish to his satisfaction.²⁰ Why Ahmed Fethi had brought sheet music of Turkish musical compositions at all, we do not know.

As he continued on his journey to Esztergom, a special surprise was waiting for him in the village of Dorogh near Eszertgom: The district governor of the county received him together with Michael von Reviczky,²¹ the parish priest of Neudorf. The latter had studied oriental languages in Pesth and Vienna and had composed an Arabic welcome poem in 30 stanzas in honor of the distinguished guest. It began like this:

<i>“Já! ajuha Raszulu Szultáni,</i>	O, thou envoy of the great Sultan,
<i>Já! Áinu lágarjani, va Naziratu ‘d Diváni</i>	O, thou eye of the noble and member of the Divan,
<i>Fa chojjita beekrámen,</i>	Be respectfully greeted,
<i>Va chajjita bajna keramen.</i>	And I wish that you may live long among the honored ones”. ²²

The priest gave Ahmed Fethi a copy of this poem in calligraphy, and Ahmed Fethi expressed his pleasure that the Arabic language was being learned in Hungary as well. Indeed, he himself might not have known Arabic, since Hammer-Purgstall notes in his memoirs that the ambassador was not really well educated and had only a superficial knowledge of Persian.²³

On July 30, Alexandros Mavrogeni, the Turkish chargé d’affaires in Vienna at the time, traveled to Bratislava²⁴ to pick up Ahmed Fethi and his entourage and escort them to Vienna. The Paşa was accommodated in the Keglevich Palace on the Schaumburgergund.²⁵ Hammer-Purgstall notes that he was received everywhere in Vienna with great glamor and honor.

Ahmed Fethi was eager to see everything new that was available here, and even before he was admitted to the audience with the Emperor²⁶ on August 6, he had—contrary to diplomatic rules—already completed an extensive sightseeing program: the Gallery in the Belvedere, the Ambras Collection, the Natural History and Antiquities Cabinet, the Court Library, and the Academy of Engineering, forerunner of the Technical University.²⁷

15 The dates of his arrival and departure are mentioned in all major Austrian newspapers.
16 For example, *Vereinigte Ofner–Pester Zeitung*, August 22, 1839; *Lemberger Zeitung*, September 13, 1839; *Österreichischer Beobachter*, September 4, 1839; *Ofner–Pester Zeitung*, September 12, 1839.
17 *Preßburger Zeitung*, July 20, 1838.
18 For example, in *Wiener Zeitung*, June 10, 1835. The same report also appeared in the *Vereinigte Ofner–Pester Zeitung*, June 14, 1835; *Grazer Zeitung*, July 18, 1835; *Kais. Königl. Schlesische Troppauer–Zeitung*, June 12, 1835; *Brünner Zeitung*, June 11, 1835 *Österreichischer Beobachter*, July 14, 1835; *Siebenbürgener Zeitung*, June 20, 1835; *Der Wanderer*, June 9, 1835; and the *Preßburger Zeitung*, June 12, 1835.
19 *Preßburger Zeitung*, July 31, 1835. Enveri Efendi (d.1849) was present during both of Ahmed Fethi’s stays in Vienna (maybe even during the months in between) and in 1839 wrote a treatise entitled *Risāle-i Avusturya* about his impressions in Austria.

20 *Wiener Theater–Zeitung (Bäuerles Theaterzeitung)*, August 13, 1835.
21 At the University of Vienna with the Maronite priest Anton Aryda, who was employed as an associate professor of Arabic, Syriac and Chaldean language (Bihl 2009:13).
22 *Wiener Theater–Zeitung (Bäuerles Theaterzeitung)*, August 4, 1835 and *Preßburger Zeitung*, August 11, 1835. On October 13, 1835, the *Wiener Theater–Zeitung* announced that the complete poem in Arabic letters would appear in the *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* publication series.
23 “I had hoped in vain to acquire the slightest literary information from the Turkish ambassadors who passed through here, or changed. All of them were educated at best in the chancery style, but otherwise they were highly ignorant in everything concerning literature, even if, like Fethi, they were very proud of their superficial command of Persian, or, like his successor Rifaat, of his chancery style”. See Hammer–Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XLIV. Buch 155.–158 1/2. Heft, 1871 (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript-44.pdf>, scan 13).
24 Hammer–Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XLI. Buch 146.–149. Heft, 1771 (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typo-script-41.pdf>, scan 29)
25 That is today’s Palais Schönburg in Rainergasse in Vienna’s fourth district.
26 Weeks before, the newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* reported that Ahmed Fethi would bring the Emperor “a splendidly embroidered armchair decorated with precious stones” as a gift at this audience. See *Wiener Zeitung*, July 13, 1835.
27 Hammer–Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XLI. Buch 146.–149. Heft, 1772 (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/>

And he continues at this speed: When he decamped from Vienna in September 1835, all the newspapers wrote that, following Mahmuds II’s order, he had thoroughly informed himself about modern advances in the West:

“The inhabitants of the imperial city have repeatedly witnessed how much Fethi Ahmed Paşa endeavored to fulfill this latter mission. None of the numerous scientific and charitable institutes flourishing there, none of their art and teaching institutions, technical collections no less than natural history collections, remained unvisited by the aforementioned ambassador. His attention was especially directed to the military and the institutions and auxiliary means involved in the subject of military science; thus he visited not only the military institutes, engineering and artillery schools, depots and armories located here [i. e. in Vienna], but also the Imperial and Royal Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt, the Maximilian towers in the vicinity of Linz, the Imperial and Royal foundries and mines in Mariazell and Eisenerz”.²⁸

The great interest of the Paşa is always emphasized, which, thanks to good interpreters and the basically friendly relations between the two countries, great pains were taken to satisfy: He is given plans, sketches, instructions and notes to take to Istanbul.

It is quite obvious that this first stay in Vienna was very formative for Ahmed Fethi and thus laid the foundation for numerous later activities in Istanbul—be it the founding of the first museum, the modernization of the military in the course of his office as director of artillery, or his efforts to advance and modernize medical education, for which he also invited doctors to the Ottoman Empire thanks to his contacts in Austria.

When Ahmed Fethi came to Vienna for a second time in September 1836, he traveled with an entourage of nine people via Venice and Klagenfurt. This time he arrived as a permanent representative of the Porte, not as a special envoy; he was, of course, still well remembered by the Viennese population and was able to draw on the network of contacts he had made the previous year. During this second stay, he lodged at Palais Esterházy in Vienna’s Laimgrube neighbourhood.²⁹

Ahmed Fethi was a generally popular diplomat, a socialite who occupied a firm place in Viennese social circles and was a welcome guest everywhere, with an air of the exotic about him. He loved invitations and receptions, both as a guest and as an animated host. In Turkish sources there is a reference made to invitations by Ahmed Fethi which were so ostentatious that the fish served there had had emeralds inserted in place of their eyes (Sunay 2020: 751 and Öz 1949:4, n. 1). Hammer-Purgstall reports that in December 1836, on the occasion of Sultan Mahmud’s birthday, he received the entire diplomatic corps together with their wives,³⁰ and in January 1837 he hosted a grand and

[Typoscript–41.pdf](#), scan 30).

²⁸ *Wiener Zeitung*, September 28, 1835 and many other newspapers.

²⁹ Also known as Palais Kaunitz and Albrechtsburg; the structure, a garden palace, was demolished in 1970 for the construction of a new high school. Apparently, a crescent moon had been placed on the building’s facade, for the journal *Der Humorist*, March 29, 1837 writes: “We want to go up to the Laimgrube, admire the Esterhasi Palais, and look at the crescent moon of Ferik Achmet”.

³⁰ Mahmud II was the first Ottoman sultan whose birthday was celebrated “in the European way” (“Avrupa devletlerinde cari olan usulü[...]).” Olgun (2018:113) notes that for the first major birthday celebration in 1838 in Istanbul, Ahmed Fethi Paşa, Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Serasker Halil Rifat Paşa, and Kaptanıderya Ahmed Fevzi Paşa were consulted because they knew how such an occasion was orchestrated in France, England, Austria, and Russia. However, Mustafa Reşid Paşa, then ambassador in London, was one of the first diplomats to celebrate the Sultan’s birthday abroad as early as 1836. Olgun made no mention of the fact that a reception had also been held in Vienna in that same year.

sumptuous ball— the first to be held in Vienna by a Turkish diplomat. Since he had no wife in Vienna, Princess Metternich substituted for the lady of the house at these two major social events.³¹ Ahmed Fethi always treated Mrs. Metternich with great respect, presenting her with oriental fabrics and shawls, and having long, recurring discussions with her about the issue of turbans and fez.³² But there were other ladies he admired, such as the beautiful Countess Wickenburg, whom he had met during his first stay in Vienna and for whom, to show his adoration, he organized an elaborate dinner.³³ Unfortunately, however, he was not able to communicate easily with the ladies: When he paid his respects to the Princess of Wasa, whom he particularly admired, it was without an interpreter and they could not converse, since he spoke only a few words of French; so they sat facing each other in silence for some considerable time. The princess recounted this scene, and it became a talking point in Viennese salons, even reaching Metternich’s ears.³⁴ All in all, the Paşa was very fond of the Viennese ladies and enjoyed flirting—for the noble ladies of Viennese society he had flowery compliments and generous gifts ready, and, as Hammer-Purgstall observes, he was also very convinced of his effect on women. When a lady gifted him a model of St. Stephen’s Tower as a souvenir of Vienna, he interpreted this as an allusion to his virility, and when he and Hammer visited the observatory in the Urania together, he only wanted to be shown Venus, because this was his personal lucky star.³⁵

Although he was uninterested in literature, he wrote a verse on Viennese women and their alleged false-heartedness:

Ne deñlû lutf[u] çok olsa inanmasa³⁶ yok Bec yâre

Ki hercâyî–tabî’atdûr katı mâ’ildûr ağıyâre

نه دنگو لطف بوق اولسه انامسه بوق نج یاره
که هر جای طبعتر قتی مائلدر اغیاره

“Even if they are very graceful, do not trust the Ladies of Vienna,

Because they are of a flighty nature and tend to turn to rivals”.³⁷

The Viennese press unanimously reports that the Turkish ambassador had a great interest in European art. In addition to factories, he visited numerous artists’ studios, acquired a taste for painting, music and theater, and “attended all the theaters as well as public musical academies and evening entertainments”.³⁸ Ahmed Fethi was obviously enthusiastic about the Viennese music scene. It was a time when Johann Strauss was virtually adored like a pop star and regularly staged concerts in the salons in Hietzing, near Schönbrunn. On August 21, 1835, the journal *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* writes about one such concert on a hot summer night:

³¹ Hammer–Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XLII. Buch 150.–152 1/2. Heft, 1819. (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript–42.pdf>, scan 32) and XLIII. Buch 152 1/2.–154. Heft, 1839 (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript–43.pdf>, scan 18).

³² Ibid, 1838.

³³ Passim.

³⁴ Ibid. 1839. It is not known how well Ahmed Fethi had ever known French, if at all. Serap Sunay notes in her research of his estate register that he owned surprisingly few books in Western languages. She compares this situation with that of his contemporary Mehmed Emin Ali Paşa (who, incidentally, was his second secretary in Vienna), who left behind considerably more foreign-language books, and concludes that the two men had a very different worldview (Sunay 2020:770). It is possible, however, that the reason simply lies in Ahmed Fethi’s lack of knowledge of foreign languages.

³⁵ Hammer–Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XLI. Buch 146.–149. Heft, 1773., (= <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript–41.pdf>, scan 31).

³⁶ Maybe a misprint of *inanması*?

³⁷ *Wiener Zeitschrift*, September 5, 1835.

³⁸ *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Originalblatt für Kunst, Literatur, Musik, Mode und geselliges Leben*, November 4, 1835.

“[...] and indeed a more colorful picture of life is hard to imagine. The presence of Feryk Ahmed Fethi Paşa with his fantastically costumed entourage certainly adds to this charm, even if the Viennese eye is accustomed to oriental appearance and costume due to the many Turkish and Greek families living here. The ambassador of the Porte [...], obviously astonished by the pleasant freedom of our public lifestyle, which is advantageously distinguished from life at any other diplomatic residence by the popular connection of the nobility, now enjoys all the pleasures that are offered in the countless *points de réunion*. Thus, the day before yesterday, at midnight, he appeared in the large garden of the inn “Zur [goldenen] Birne”, which is equipped with a magnificent salon, surrounded by more than five thousand people from all social classes, who were brought together by the splend ball held for the benefit of our above-mentioned waltz virtuoso [i.e. Johann Strauss]”³⁹

One sign of Ahmed Fethi’s popularity is certainly the fact that several artistic works were dedicated to him: Johann Strauss composed the “Ball Rackettenwalzer” for him and Josef Lanner the waltz “Die Osmanen” (Eğecioğlu 2010:22). Also, the booklet published by I. Pfeiffer “Sylphide. Taschenbuch für Damen” was dedicated by the Viennese publisher I. F. Mechtlar to Ahmed Fethi Paşa.⁴⁰ When the Mayor of Vienna, Leeb, received him for a tour around the Vienna Armory, an Ottoman poem which Hammer-Purgstall had composed for this occasion was recited in his honor:⁴¹

İki defa gelüb ‘asker-i islâm
Beçüñ fethi degül imiş der imkân
Sipehsalâr-i sâliş Fethi Pâşâ
Kulübuñ fethini éderler idmân

“The muslim soldiers came twice,
But they were not able to conquer Vienna.
Fethi Paşa, the third commander,
Exercises the conquest of the hearts”.



39 „[...] und in der That läßt sich ein bunteres Leben kaum denken. Die Anwesenheit Feryk Ahmed Fethi Pascha’s mit seinem phantastisch kostümierten Gefolge erhöht diesen Reiz natürlich, wenn auch das Auge der Wiener an orientalische Gestalt und Tracht durch die vielen türkischen und griechischen Familien, die hier leben, gewöhnt ist. Der Botschafter der Pforte [...] genießt nun, in Erstaunen, wie man sieht, über die gefällige Freiheit unseres öffentlichen Lebens, das durch das populäre Anschließen des Adels von jedem andern Residenzleben sich vorteilhaft unterscheidet, aller Vergnügungen, die sich in den zahllosen *points de réunion* bieten. So fand er sich vorgestern um Mitternacht in dem, mit einem prächtigen Salon geschmückten, großen Gasthausgarten zur Birne ein, umwogt von mehr als fünftausend Menschen aus allen Ständen, die das, zum Benefiz unseres oben genannten Walzervirtuosen [d.i. Johann Strauß] veranstaltete, glänzende Ballfest zusammenführte.“

40 *Der Österreichische Zuschauer. Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und geistiges Leben*, December 6, 1837: “Dedicated to Sr. His Excellency Ahmed Fethi Paşa, the vizier, mushir [=müşir], holder of the First Class Badge of Glory by the publisher”. Incidentally, the book was mercilessly reviewed in this magazine. Unfortunately, the book could not be found, and it cannot be said whether I. Pfeiffer was the well-known Austrian world traveler Ida Pfeiffer.

41 *Wiener Zeitschrift*, August 22, 1835.

When visiting Josef Trentsensky’s lithographic institute he is also presented with an Arabic verse with suitable content, also written by Hammer-Purgstall.⁴²

But it is not only newspaper reports and various dedications that remain as traces of Ahmed Fethi in Vienna—there are at least two images of him which he sat for during his first stay.

The advertisement shown in the introduction to this article is promoting a portrait of Ahmed Fethi with the reference “lithographed by Schramm”. It is possible that this refers to the well-known Viennese painter Johann Heinrich Schramm, who painted numerous portraits of celebrities, preferably in watercolor. However, it is not known whether he also painted Ahmed Fethi.⁴³

Another picture appeared in a supplement to the *Wiener Theaterzeitung* and shows Ahmed Fethi with Prince Gustav Wasa and his adjutant.⁴⁴



A verse composed by Hammer-Purgstall for Ahmed Fethi Paşa on the occasion of his visit to a Viennese printing house.



Ahmed Fethi Paşa with Prince Wasa, *Wiener Theater-Zeitung (Bäuerles Theaterzeitung)*, November 4, 1835 (Courtesy of Esra Birgen Jah).

There are two men in the background who evidently belonged to Ahmed Fethi’s entourage but their identity is not known. However, one might assume that they were his secretaries Enveri Efendi and Ali Efendi, who used to accompany him. The picture was painted near the Glacis while the ambassador was attending a military show. The Theaterzeitung emphasizes that the image was considered good by Ahmed Fethi and approved for publication and that it did indeed look very much like him. Numerous other newspapers and magazines commented on this lithograph and complimented the Theaterzeitung for this supplement.⁴⁵

42 *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Originalblatt für Kunst, Literatur, Musik, Mode und geselliges Leben*, November 4, 1835. This newspaper article also explains the puns and double meanings that are contained in the poem to the readership.

43 Johann Heinrich Schramm (1810–1865), well-known portrait painter; (*ÖBL* 1997, 11:169). We were not able to locate this portrait.

44 *Wiener Theater-Zeitung (Bäuerles Theaterzeitung)*, November 4, 1835.

45 For example, *Der Österreichische Zuschauer. Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und geistiges Leben*, November 11, 1835, and also *Carinthia. Zeitschrift für Vaterlandskunde, Belehrung und Unterhaltung*, December 12, 1835 and *Vereinigte Laibacher Zeitung*, December 12, 1835.



Ahmed Fethi Paşa
Gouache portrait, 1836
Moritz Michael Daffinger (1789-1849)

Private collection
Courtesy of Ömer Koç
with special thanks to Esra Birgen Jah

A third portrait was probably painted during his second stay in Vienna and is the work of the Austrian painter Daffinger;⁴⁶ the Ottoman note gives the year as 1256 of the Hijra (=1836).

When Ahmed Fethi Paşa leaves Vienna for the second time not a single newspaper mentions it. This is amazing, since usually each and every step he took, no matter how small, was commented on. Yet the Austrian press did not give up on him after his departure and continued to follow him faithfully until his death. All of his numerous career advances are reported—from promotions to honorary gifts to awards to salary increases. The interested Viennese public is even privy to events in his private life. His marriage to Atiye Sultan in 1840, his wife's pregnancy and the birth of a daughter in 1842, the great fire in the Istanbul district of Fındıklı in 1848 during which his mansion burned down,⁴⁷ and also a spectacular theft when his “private Circassian” (Leibtscherkesse) fled with jewelry and jewels valued at 20,000 piastres.⁴⁸

It seems that Ahmed Fethi Paşa is present at all activities at the Porte involving foreigners. A few examples of the events that were prominently reported by the Austrian press and demonstrate Ahmed Fethi's tireless involvement were:⁴⁹

Archduke Johann visits Istanbul in October 1837; his visit and sightseeing program is recounted in detail. Ahmed Fethi Paşa is also present at the audience with the Sultan, guides the Archduke through the palace gardens, and escorts him to his ship on the day of his departure.⁵⁰

When the extraordinary Austrian envoy Baron von Koller arrives in Istanbul by steamship in March 1855, he is received by the staff of the Austrian Internuntiate. Ahmed Fethi Paşa provides magnificently harnessed horses and escorts the guest to the embassy building.⁵¹

When the first public annual examinations were held in the Galata Medical School in 1840, the Sultan, numerous statesmen, and, of course, Ahmed Fethi and the Austrian physician Dr. Bernard were present. Ahmed Fethi assures Bernard that he will take over the direction of this institute.⁵² During a stay in Vienna in 1838, he had not only found provided Bernard but also a second prominent physician, Jakob Anton Neuner; the latter was charged with setting up the first quarantine station in the Ottoman Empire.⁵³

Ahmed Fethi apparently maintained good contacts with the Austrian Internuntiate and was always ready to help, whether in receiving guests from Austria or in arranging for Austrians visiting the empire to perform certain honorable services: In the spring of 1857, the young Styrian flutist Wilhelm Humpl, who was residing at the Internuntiate as a guest, gave a private concert in a *köşk* in Tophane attended only by the Sultan, Ahmed Fethi, and a chamberlain.⁵⁴

46 Moritz Michael Daffinger (1789–1849), Wiener Porträt- und Blumenmaler. See Daffinger Moritz Michael (ÖBL 1957, 1:166).

47 *Die Presse*, September 13, 1848.

48 *Salzburger Zeitung*, May 10, 1855.

49 One definitely gets the impression that Ahmed Fethi Paşa is always involved when it comes to Austrians. However, it must be borne in mind here that the Austrian press naturally writes primarily about events related to Austria.

50 *Österreichischer Beobachter*, November 1, 1837 (and several other newspapers).

51 *Innsbrucker Nachrichten*, March 6, 1855

52 *Populäre österreichische Gesundheits-Zeitung*, November 30, 1840. The physician Karl Ambros Bernard (1810–1844), was sent to Istanbul in 1839 together with Dr. Neuner on behalf of the Sultan to organize the Galata Medical School based on the model of the Josephinum in Vienna (ÖBL 1945, 1:75).

53 *Steiermärkische Zeitschrift*, vol. 2, 1844.

54 In appreciation, the Sultan presents him with a diamond studded snuff box. *Grazer Tagespost*, April 29, 1856.

In 1857, when Ahmed Fethi’s son marries a daughter of the Sultan, the well-known Austrian pyrotechnician Anton Stuver is invited to give a few demonstrations of his firework craft for the festivities.⁵⁵

When the Austrian Major Franz Ritter von Hauslab came to Istanbul in 1839 to deliver gifts from the Imperial Court to Sultan Abdülmecid and to visit a number of military institutions, of course Ahmed Fethi was his companion. The two men had become friends during Ahmed Fethi’s time in Vienna, where Hauslab served as his companion on many excursions and also took a journey through Upper Austria and Styria with him.⁵⁶

Ahmed Fethi is also a frequent guest at social gatherings at the Internuntiatore in Istanbul. For a number of years, whenever the newspapers report on Emperor Ferdinand’s grand saint’s day celebration at the Internuntiatore, they always mention that Ahmed Fethi Paşa is raising a toast to the Austrian Emperor.⁵⁷ His sympathy and, in particular, his open mindedness did not exclude religious celebrations: for example, he sent a detachment of his men as stewards to the great Corpus Christi procession in Istanbul in 1856 in support of the Austrians. The *Sonntags-Blatt* reported on this, praising him lavishly for his helpfulness, together with the remark that he had and his band of musicians had even helped out at the same celebration the previous year.⁵⁸

When Ahmed Fethi fell ill in the fall of 1857 and finally died of a pulmonary disease in February 1858, there was hardly an Austrian newspaper that did not report his death. This was a very painful loss for the Sultan, since his second confidant, Muştafa Reşid Paşa, had also died the previous month. Newspapers report that ‘Abdülmecid roamed the Dolmabahçe Palace yelling “Aman, aman”! all day long, redecorated his chambers, and even had the parquet floors painted black.⁵⁹ The funeral itself is also described in great detail, in particular the striking fact that apparently not a single European played a part in the funeral of this great friend of Europe.⁶⁰

In connection with the death of the Paşa, several papers mention a very bizarre prophecy that was a topic of great excitement in Istanbul at the time: There was a Hungarian nobleman who had come to Istanbul in the revolutionary year of 1848, joined a dervish order, and wandered the streets of Istanbul barefoot, wearing a dervish cap and mostly intoxicated with hashish, much to the annoyance of the Hungarian diaspora community. Upon the death of Reschid Paşa, he predicted the death of 20 more high-ranking Paşas, first and foremost Ahmed Fethi, and, lastly, a mortal event in the Sultan’s household itself.⁶¹ Since five high-ranking government officials were indeed seriously ill at this time, great value was attached to this prophecy, which gave Ahmed Fethi’s demise yet a further, apocalyptic dimension.

In the numerous obituaries in Austrian newspapers and magazines, no praise is spared. The reformer, friend of Austria, and friend of women is honored accordingly. Only rarely are there subtle allusions suggesting that he was actually a person without any special talents or abilities.

55 *Österreichische Zeitungshalle*, September 6, 1857.
56 *Oestreichische Illustrierte Zeitung*, July 24, 1854.
57 Z.B. *Vereinigte Ofner–Pester Zeitung*, June 23, 1836; *Wiener Zeitung*, June 17, 1844; *Österreichischer Beobachter*, June 14, 1846.
58 *Sonntags–Blatt*, July 13, 1856.
59 *Salzburger Zeitung*, March 11, 1858 (and several other newspapers).
60 *Die Neue Zeit: Olmüzer politische Zeitung*, March 4, 1858 (and several other newspapers).
61 *Kronstädter Zeitung*, March 5, 1858 (and several other newspapers).

Conclusion

The press’ portrayal of Ahmed Fethi’s time in Vienna and Hammer-Purgstall’s memoirs may give the impression of a succession of anecdotal episodes. In fact, however, both sources provide a very clear picture of the contemporary discourse in Austria on the image of Turkey — with a focus on different aspects in each case. For centuries, the stereotype that the population of the Habsburg Empire had of the Turks was that of bloodthirsty, tyrannical barbarians. This was an image of the enemy that was formed not only, but above all, by the fear of a real threat. From around the time of the reconquest of Buda by the Habsburgs in 1686, this image slowly changed, and fear gave way to a new interest, which developed into an enchantment with the exotic and is referred to in German as “Türkenmode” (“Turkish fashion”). This was especially widespread in Western and Central Europe and particularly in courtly milieus. When Ahmed Fethi Paşa visited Vienna, more than four decades, i.e., almost two generations, had passed since the last Austrian Turkish war that ended with the Peace of Sistowa in 1791 (Bernard 2009). Even the 1815 Congress of Vienna in which European matters were reorganized, had no influence whatsoever on Turkish-Austrian relations. It was thus a time when relations between Austria and the Ottomans were both good and relaxed. Both the weakness of the Ottoman state and its need for reform were evident. The former “hereditary enemy” had become an exotic, interesting, and sometimes ridiculed figure.⁶²

The press reports on Ahmed Fethi Paşa are subordinate to this prevailing discourse. There are extensive descriptions of Ahmed Fethi’s efforts to learn as much as possible about modern European institutions and also of his visits to concerts, theaters, and museums. The benevolent, laudatory tone certainly did not fail to have an effect on the readership and the formation of collective opinion toward a changed image of the Turks—the Ottomans as eagerly keen but by now harmless apprentices of the West. Ahmed Fethi, with his open, curious, and unbiased approach was naturally an ideal personality to represent this discourse.

This discourse can also be detected in Hammer-Purgstall’s memoirs, albeit with a somewhat different nuance: Hammer-Purgstall knew Ahmed Fethi very well through the translation services he provided for him; he went on excursions with him and also met him privately on many occasions. While the newspapers report positively on the activities of the Paşa, Hammer is obviously amused by him, so that Ahmed Fethi actually seems a bit operetta-like in his view: not able to speak French, a womanizer, not really educated, without any outstanding talents, but harmless and sympathetic— and presumably precisely for this reason so well liked.

The numerous press reports about the Paşa, together with Hammer-Purgstall’s depictions of Ahmed Fethi’s restless performance in the Viennese salons and the effect he had on the aristocratic ladies as a most welcome exotic attraction, allow a vivid social portrait of the 1830s to emerge before our eyes—a time when countesses wore turbans in honor of the Turkish ambassador, when priests composed Arabic poetry, and when Austrian dailies printed Ottoman quatrains in Arabic script on their front pages.

62 For example, there was the stereotype of the “reform Turk”, a figure that went quite far into ridicule. In 1876 Franz von Suppè wrote his operetta “Fatinitza”, in which the reform Turk İzzet Paşa figures prominently.

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<http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:hp>
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from: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript-01.pdf>
to: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/hp/pdf/Typoscript-68.pdf>



Appendix

Ahmed Fethi's letter of recommendation for an Austrian scientist

This document, which is kept in the Diocesan Archives of St. Pölten, was issued in May 1837 by Ahmed Fethi Paşa as a letter of recommendation for the well-known physician and geologist Ami Boué (1794-1881). Ami Boué undertook lengthy research journeys between 1836 and 1838 through the Balkan Peninsula and the European part of Turkey. The result of these jour-neys was a publication in four volumes, entitled *La Turquie d'Europe, ou Observations sur la géographie, la géologie, l'histoire naturelle, la statistique et les moeurs de cet empire*. We do not know when exactly Ahmed Fethi left Vienna, only that it was somewhere in spring 1837. This letter shows that he still was in Vienna in May 1837.

Transcription:

hiive

Devletlü 'ināyetlü 'ātıfetlü re'fetlü veli'ü n-ni'am efendüm hazretleri Avusturya devlet-i fahîmesi teb'asından ve aşılzâdegândan Ami Dubovay nâm tabîb Rumelide kâ'in memâlik-i mahrûse-i hazret-i şâhâneyi ziyâret ü temâşâ ederek der-se'âdete 'azîmet eylemek üzre bu tarafdan hareket eylemiş olmağla mersûmuñ dâhil-i kalem ü hükümet-i destûrâneleri olan Manastıra bi-l-vuşûl-i zât-i 'alîleriyle mülâkâtında hakkında mu'âmele-i cemîle-i dîl-nüvâzive iltifât-i mekârim-sâzîleri bi-dirîğ u şâyân buyurularak mümkün el-huşûl olan niyâz u iltimâsâtınıñ karîn-i is'âf buyurulması husûsı mütemennâ-yi 'âcizânem idüğü ve devlet-i 'alîye ile dost u mu'âhid olan bi-l-cümle düvel-i mütehabbe teb'asınıñ her hâlde himâyet ü şıyânetleri 'ahdnâmeler şerâyiği iktizâsından oldığı rehîn-i 'ilm-i 'alîleri buyruldukda her hâlde emr ü irâde hazret-i men lehü l-emründür fî 5 ş sene 53

Mühür: Ahmed Fethi

Translation:

He

His Highness, my lord – happy, gracious, powerful and merciful benefactor!

As the physician named Ami de Boué, a subject and aristocrat of the highly esteemed country of Austria, set out from here with the destination of the sublime porte, to visit in Rumeli the well-protected domains of his Majesty, the padishah, it is my humble wish, that the aforementioned (Boué), when he arrives in Manastir, which belongs to the office and administration of the grand vizier, and meets the high person, he will be received with utmost politeness and generosity and be treated with the unrestricted beneficence worthy of him, and his wishes and pledges will be generously facilitated as well as possible. The conditions of the treaties require each and any protection and safeguarding of the subjects of all befriended countries, which are on good terms with the Ottoman Empire. When [all this] is left to his exalted knowledge, wish and order are left by all means to the highness who has the [power to] order.

On Safer 5, year [12]53 (= May 11, 1837) - Seal: Ahmed Fethi

