CHAPTER 2

HIS MAJESTY'S PAINTER ZONARO: A PROFESSIONAL CAREER BOUND TO POLITICS

M. İnanç ÖZEKMEKÇİ¹

¹Erciyes University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Kayseri, Turkey
e-mail: inancozekmekci@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Using alternative sources to examine the formation of the modern state in the context of Ottoman modernization reveals interesting nuances and enables a more intensive investigation of the topic. The art of painting and the relationship established between the visual arts, artists, and the Palace represent such resources, especially in the 19th century. The Sultan's visibility and the paternalistic discourse built through it created a new basis for political legitimacy in the 1800s. The Hamidian era is a challenging period to position within this framework in the process of Ottoman modernization because the 33 years of Abdulhamid II's reign evinced both continuity and estrangement from previous imperial attempts of modernization. This article discusses how Fausto Zonaro, Abdulhamid II's chief painter, contributed to the institution of the paternalistic discourse during his tenure. More specifically, the study traces the changes in the regime and the power relations in the Empire through Zonaro's experience. Indeed, Zonaro's ascendancy in the Empire occurred under the auspices of a sultan who attempted to organize the construction of the modern state and establish its influence on the public within the structures of the traditional understanding of power relations and legitimacy. Zonaro's professional career and expectations were bound to a relationship based on a conception of patronage that was inapt for his era: in such an association, the fate of the patron would inevitably reflect the destiny of those who received the patronage.

Keywords: Zonaro, Abdulhamid II, art and politics, Ottoman modernization, political symbolism

The Ottoman Ambassador Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi, who traveled through France in 1721, wrote about what he saw before leaving the country: “In the morning, two chamberlains put a large object right before us and said “This is a gift from our king”. They had such a tradition. The king had his portrait made, had the frame decorated with diamonds and sent it to the ambassadors as a gift”. Since it was not considered appropriate to present a portrait of the king as a gift for Muslims, the Ottoman delegation was offered expensive gifts (Mehmet Efendi, 1975, p. 65). Just about a century later, the Ottoman Sultans would have their portraits not only made with Western techniques but they would also either send them along with the missions of the Empire in Europe or would order for them to be hung in the country’s government offices. This kind of transformation could not simply be explained with the concept of Westernization. This was also a reflection of the Empire’s political transformation, in the early 19th century, from a classic patrimonial state into a centralized bureaucratic one that began to adopt modern governmental techniques. It was a rupture through which the Sultans attempted to gain public visibility by having their Western-style portraits painted.

It may be said that this visual rupture began with the Sultans ordering their own portraits to be painted with European techniques and be hung on the wall, a practice which began in the second half of the 18th century. This meant that the image became portable rather than remaining in handwritten books and albums. Similarly, in this era, the portraits of Ottoman Sultans were placed in locket hanging from the branch of a tree similar to the family trees of European dynasties (Renda, 2002, p. 268). The Sultans’ becoming “visible” through newly adopted public ceremonies, domestic or foreign trips, or via the self-portraits realized during the reign of Mahmut II until that of Abdülhamid II was a new way for the rulers to obtain legitimacy from society. This phenomenon occurred within the context of a new state order in which a new kind of relationship was established between the ruler and the governed. Creating a Western-style painting collection within the Palace during the Tanzimat era, either via recruiting painters or purchasing works from the art market, constituted another aspect of this “image policy”. The collection itself, created to be exhibited in the Palace was significant for the creation of the image of a Sultan who cared about art like his Western counterparts.

The painter Zonaro’s career in the Ottoman Empire, which is the main subject of this study, developed under the reign of Abdülhamid II, an important period of rupture as well as continuity characterising the Palace’s modern contact with painting. This continuity and rupture could be found in the political arena as well. Indeed, Sultan Abdülhamit’s autocratic reign was a period in which modernization peaked in terms of the creation of central, modern state institutions, and in which a fracture occurred in the search for the legitimacy of political

power. The Sultans' quest for legitimacy via being visible harked back to a classical power strategy, and Abdülhamid II consciously avoided being publicly visible. This does not mean that Sultan Abdülhamid II was completely rejecting the benefits of art with regards to the representation of power. On the contrary, painting remained important for conveying the meanings embodied by his own power -although it was gradually leaving its place to photography,- expanding the palace painting collection and creating the image of a modern ruler. Zonaro was granted the title of His Majesty's painter during this period. He became part of the Sultan's invisible power pool and rose professionally. The works produced by Zonaro, which will also be discussed in this study, were remarkable in terms of demonstrating the basic elements characterising the period's symbolic power. On the other hand, the professional career of the painter in the Ottoman Empire took shape under the patronage of Abdülhamid and collapsed when this patronage ceased to exist. Zonaro was not allowed to join in the new constitutional regime. This professional career story, which ended with Zonaro's return to Italy, sheds light on late Ottoman power relations.

A Visible Father: the Sultan's Public Portrait

Compared to European feudalism, the Ottoman Empire was a central state where sovereignty was held by the absolute ruler. That is why Machiavelli cited the Turkish Monarchy as an example to his "Prince," whose own person would be the centre of political sovereignty. It was of course not a coincidence that Bodin, also known as the theorist who developed the concept of sovereignty in Western political thinking, described absolute sovereignty by using the example of the "King of the Turks" (Ağaoğulları, 2015, pp. 331, 407-408). Just as the Sultan did not share his power with the privileged nobles, the empire's territorial and production regimes were designed to prevent such class from being born. Moreover, there was no external institution, such as the church, to which the sultan owed his power. In this context, it is possible to say that the pre-modern Ottoman Empire differs from the modern nation-states in three basic characteristics. The first is that the administration was directly managed by a small number of officials that cannot be defined bureaucracy in today's sense. These were the Sultan's servants rather than the civil servants of the modern state, and they lacked the professional, financial and life assurances that modern officers have today. Secondly, in the context of the political relationship between the ruler and his subjects, the responsibilities expected of the state, which was the property of the Sultan, and the tasks expected of those living on that property were different from the relationship established by the modern state. Rather, this relationship was determined to establish social justice in exchange for the subjects' payment of taxes to

the Sultan. Therefore, the Sultan or the state apparatus had no direct relationship with those governed. The relationship was carried out indirectly through the Sultan's servants and through the representatives of the socio-religious group to which each person belonged. In this sense, the classical period of the Ottoman Empire was like a social organism in which everyone knew his social position and the effort to change it was not welcome. Thirdly, the indirect political relationship also meant that not all those governed were equally subject to common and standard rules because of the different treatment for each different group. The logic of classical Ottoman rule was based on a scheme built on this relationship – a circle of justice, as it was called- that provided the Order of the World (*Nizam-ı Alem*).

In this context, the Classical Ottoman political system, upon which at least in theory the Sultan had absolute sovereignty, was based on a sharp distinction between those who governed and who were governed.¹ The Sultan's power was reinforced by the fact that he almost never appeared physically in public- that is, the distance between them was maintained as much as possible, because getting close to the people was considered the sign of the destruction of the state (*istinas-ı nas alameti iflas*) (Oktay, 2007, p. 223). Even in ceremonies with a certain degree of publicness, the Sultan's visibility was limited, watching the ceremonies from a distance from his mansion (Faroghi, 2006, p. 194).² We also know that the Sultan listened to the *Divan-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Council) meetings from behind a caged window without being physically seen by its members.³ On the other hand, getting close to the subjects meant not only a spatial closeness, but also being seen as an individual who physically resembled them. Gaining public visibility as an individual having human qualities meant that the Sultan, to whom were attributed divine qualities such as being omnipotent and omnipresent, had lost his "mystery". This "mystery" reinforced the understanding of politics as a privileged area, one not accessible to everyone.

However, in the 19th century, the Sultan's visibility and the paternal power discourse built through it would form the new basis for political legitimacy. This century was a time when absolute monarchies against rising modern nation-states were trying to support their regimes with methods they took from their rivals. Undoubtedly, one of the most important methods was the visibility of the Sultan and carrying state sovereignty out in a more public way through

1 For an example of the discussion about the characteristics of the Ottoman political regime see: (İnalçık, 1992, pp. 49-72).

2 See also: (Tansuğ, 1994).

3 Leslie Pierce shows that from the reign of Murat II, the Sultan's public visibility decreased. In particular, with the legal code adopted by Mehmet II the Sultan's visibility was increasingly restricted to both the symbolic area and the de facto management mechanism (Pierce, 1993, p. 174). In this context, presenting himself to the outside world as a powerful Emperor with his portrait while becoming gradually invisible is an interesting case.

the various symbols representing this sovereignty. Symbols that emphasized the sovereignty of the Sultan and conveyed it to the subjects were of course not a new phenomenon. In fact, Lewis highlights that Friday sermons or minting coins during the Sultan's ascension to the throne were among his means of communication with his subjects (Lewis, 1996, p. 9). We can add to these the Sultan's seal and monumental architectural works that reflected the power of the state. However, such means of communication were symbols expressing sovereignty indirectly (Stephanov, 2014, p. 476).

Moreover, making people feel the power through such symbols was sufficient for an era when the political relationship was indirect and conducted through intermediaries. However, it is necessary to mention that the pre-modern era did not possess the technical facilities in which the symbols of direct or indirect sovereignty could constantly be presented to the people occupying a vast geography. We need to ask why the Ottoman Sultan was in need of demonstrating his sovereignty publicly and physically through the symbols, and of reminding his subjects who the sovereign was. A first answer to this question was the gradual weakening of the central power at the heart of the *Nizam-ı Alem* system. In particular, the local notables (*Ayan*) at the periphery, who gradually began to develop the capacity to move autonomously from the Palace and, following the French Revolution, the non-Muslim subjects that began to direct their allegiances towards their ethnic communities as nationalism began to spread within the Empire and became a threat against the sovereignty of the center. Alongside a social and political environment where there was no concept of compulsory military service, the deterioration of the military power of the Empire and the dysfunction of agricultural relations on which it was based should be added as additional determining factors. The second factor that constituted the need for further emphasis on sovereignty was the realization that Western superiority was achieved not only simply through having military power, but by the modern state mechanism that made this power possible. As Şerif Mardin underlined, Ottoman envoys discovered that the West had taken "a protective measure that would increase the efficiency of the subjects into the usual policy of the state" (Mardin, 2004, pp. 83-84). This means that spaces that had extremely limited relations with the state in the traditional order were transformed into spaces that had a one-on-one relationship with it.

The population in the modern state is not described in compartments, but rather as a social body on which projections are made according to the needs of the state for the future, not a composition in which people are expected to fulfill the tasks traditionally attributed to them as appropriate and relevant to the compartments they are in. Within this framework, the ruler who had derived his dominance from divine laws would become an absolute monarch whereas

the subjects living as his property would be transformed into “the people”. Individuals from this population must have had a sense of collectivity transcending their local and group ties so that they could be mobilized on behalf of the state.

In such a context, the Sultan had to necessarily make his power publicly visible and establish himself as the focus of loyalty in terms of being the sovereign of the state. The way to do this was to encode sovereignty and political power as a paternal relationship, and to equip the Sultan with the image of a sovereign who would protect and care about the welfare of his people. In return for working like a father in order to achieve the well-being of his children, the only thing that the Sultan expected from his people was obedience, loyalty and diligence. From this point of view, by making significant efforts to become publicly visible, the Ottoman Sultans carried the same concerns of their coeval monarchies, which responded to separatist tendencies and had to preserve their power against the rebelliousness of their politically ambitious or hostile subjects. Thus, becoming visible by these means appeared as a political investment for the continuity of power.

It was not a coincidence that Sultan Selim III, who was the first to try and gather political power to the center, was also the first one to get his self-portrait painted in 1793, in order to show who the sovereign was. In this sense, it is possible to say that Selim III was the first Sultan who noticed the potential of visibility to represent the existence of the Empire, especially in a world of changing politics and order (Renda, 2002, p. 269). It is also said that the Sultan gave Kapıdağlı Konstantin the task to replicate this painting in order to send it to high-ranking civil servants and also to Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor of France. According to Renda, some archival documents prove that Selim ordered portraits in European style and used them to strengthen the Image of the Ottoman dynasty by distributing them in and out of the Empire (Renda, 2002, p. 269).

The Sultan portraiture and the palace's relationship with the art of painting were of course not a new phenomenon. The portrait of Sultan Mehmet II painted by the Italian artist Bellini following the conquest of Istanbul is a very well-known example (Renda, 1999, pp. 7-17). With the portrait, the Sultan intended to show the outside world that he was a new sovereign who carried the Roman Imperial legacy on. Moreover, till the end of the eighteenth century, it had been an important tradition to involve painters in the patronage system at the Palace in order to portray the Sultans and remarkable events. These paintings, however, were neither realistic in representing the Sultan's physical characteristics nor were they works produced for public display.⁴

4 For the portraiture art in the Ottoman classical era see: (Necipoğlu, 2000).

There were the obvious effects of the Orthodox Islamic view which did not welcome figurative representation in art. A fixed and codified iconography was adopted in the visual representation of the sultans in miniatures because the main concern in this representation style was to underline the Sultan's belonging to the dynasty, rather than depicting what he looked like (Necipoğlu, 2000, pp. 31, 36). What is important in traditional legitimacy is to maintain tradition and keep it alive. That is why in the miniatures, due to his being the current sustainer of the dynasty that preserved the tradition, the Sultan himself was represented as a figure without any distinct individual qualities.

The Western-style Sultan portraiture or his lineage paintings appeared from the second half of the 18th century, yet they were not intended to be displayed publicly out of the Palace. The new Western-style Sultan portraits were too big to be hung on the wall, that is to say, the art became portable rather than being preserved within manuscripts or albums (Renda, 2002, p. 268). From this point of view, we can assert that the Sultan's suppressed individuality under the role attributed to him of being an invisible actor carrying a monarchical tradition became visible primarily within the walls of the Palace itself.

The abovementioned domestic and foreign distribution channels of Selim III's portrait show that the political message that the Sultan desired to convey through visual representation had two main axes. The first was the outside world, especially Europe, and the primary message given here was that the Empire was a powerful and modern state embodied by the Sultan himself. Although the way in which the Sultan reflected his sovereignty on the outer world varied, depending on time and the course of diplomatic events, the major concern was to prove that the Empire was still strong and in the process of modernization. It is necessary to mention foreign public opinion here as this was the target audience, and that the power of the written press to shape public opinion began to be realized especially after the mid-nineteenth century (Karateke, 2011, pp. 296-299).

Since the beginning of Sultan Mahmut II's reign, the audience for the Sultan's display of sovereignty were the government officials first, and then the people. From the perspective of the sovereign Sultan, representation was at least as significant as character itself (İnce, 2017, p. 444). Similar to the fact that rulers were "engaged in image problems" in a world where dynasties began to learn more about each other ever than before, publicized visibility of the sultan either physically or through an artistic representation occupied a significant place in this new and direct administrative relationship.

With the profile of an “enlightened monarch”, Mahmut II was the first Sultan who became physically visible to his subjects (Berkes, 1978, p. 167). Through his travels throughout the country, between 1830 and 1837, he created the image of a powerful but human and earthly ruler and of a paternal Sultan who heard his public’s grievances and approached them enthusiastically (Kırlı, 2009, p. 292). The Sultan’s birthday and the anniversary of his ascension to the throne began to be celebrated both in the capital, in the provinces, and abroad. In these ceremonies, the portrait of the Sultan was displayed publicly (Stephanov, 2014, p. 476).

Influenced by the other monarchies of his time, Sultan Mahmud realized that public visibility was remarkably important in establishing modern centralized state institutions and in obtaining loyalty to the state as represented by his body. After carefully examining the tsar’s portrait hanging in a Russian ship during his visit in 1829, the Sultan ordered medallions to be prepared on which he was depicted with his Western uniforms. Known as The Imperial Portrait (*Tasvir-i Hümayun*), these medallions became significant objects showing their owner as close and loyal to the Sultan (Eldem, 2004, p. 126). Hanging the portrait of the Sultan on the walls of public offices was both a European custom and also suitable to the “modern monarch” trend (Deringil, 2007, p. 57). However, it meant much more than this. All this cultural conflict was coming out of a political and cultural struggle between the actors of the classical state order, who were beyond the control of the center in the course of time, and the reformers aiming at centralization and modern state formation. Even transferring the Sultan’s portrait from the Palace to another public space and the place where it would be exhibited show us the power relations of the time. Witnessing one of these ceremonies, Pardoe recounts the carrying of the Sultan’s portrait to the barracks as follows:

“We were wondering about the Sultan’s attitude in this ceremony because as his portrait was sent to Üsküdar, some of his military guards had groused explicitly about such sort of violation of the Islamic principle that strictly prohibits any visual representation of human beings. What was more, this sin had been committed pompously and ostentatiously and the same reverence had been shown to the picture as it was for the Sultan himself. They complained that they were becoming infidels and heretics. (...) Moreover, it was also a matter that some of the military contingents were constituted by the sons of the janissaries. They could not be expected to have very positive feelings towards the person who had eliminated their fathers; it was inevitable for them to take advantage of this opportunity in order to spread their hatred. In this way, they would have the opportunity to reveal their feelings of hatred in the name of the Prophet and to impose the needs of religion. (...) Finally, the expected moment came. (...) Then, the Sultan’s carriage opened among the infantry soldiers who walked in a double row. (...) Inside the carriage was His Majesty’s

portrait wrapped carefully in green tulle. The Sultan's young son-in-law Said Pasha was leading the carriage. He had a cavalry uniform on him and was riding a thoroughbred Arabian horse. Behind him, the Army Commander and Halil Pasha were following. And behind them all was a troop of the cavalry regiment" (Pardoe, 2010, pp. 492-493).

The practice of portraying the Sultan and the distribution of the portrait as a symbol of power, which now extended even to the far-away parts of the Empire, was maintained throughout the Tanzimat era. For instance, three large portraits of Sultan Abdülmecid brought to Cairo were taken to the castle to be exhibited, then hung in major public offices (Onaran, 2019). This is a remarkable example with regards to how the center tried to prove its sovereignty through the visibility of the Sultan in a province where modern bureaucracy was institutionalized by Mehmed Ali Pasha, who had appeared to be a rival to the center. The connection between the physical existence of the Sultan and his visual one in the portraits was provided by the ceremonial respect displayed during its move from the Palace to other relevant places. Those people who could not even imagine what the Sultan looked like in the classical period had now a concrete image which they could direct themselves to and display their loyalty.

As Renda points out, the function of Sultan Mahmud's modern portraits was to institutionalize the radical reforms he had just made and introduce them to his subjects so that they may be internalized by them. In the new iconography that emerged during this period, the Sultan was depicted standing as was common in the portrait of European rulers, holding a sword or a royal decree representing his power and reforms (Renda, 2000, p. 500). It shows us that the Sultan was the main political actor, both owning the right to use force by means of his sword and of codifying the new order with his edicts.

Reforms for the creation of a modern state institution were thus highlighted through crystallizing power via creating an image of the power behind these reforms as the sovereign power. Moreover, we can infer from Pardoe's account that the Sultan's portrait functioned as a way to measure the level of opposition of those whose social power had been undermined by the reforms of the Sultan himself, and somehow to monitor them. Indeed, in the anecdote mentioned, those who were complaining about the portrait were the sons of Janissary soldiers who had been disbanded by the Sultan. Similarly, Sultan Mahmud had sent his portrait to SheikhuIslam Yasincizade Abdülvahab Efendi, but the reactions of the high-level ulama caused his dismissal (Stephanov, 2014, p. 137). At this point, we should keep in mind the fact that the ulama were organized under a hierarchical institution by the Sultan and were deprived of their revenues after the establishment of the Ministry of Foundations (Zürcher, 2000, p.

65).⁵In short, as the new order was institutionalized under the Sultan's rule; it became a tool for determining the degree to which the actors of the old order would consider this transformation legitimate and would adapt to this. The Sultan himself probably shared Pardoe's curiosity, who wondered about the public reaction to the ceremony.

The modern visibility of sultans continued to increase in the period of the Tanzimat under the reigns of Sultan Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz. In this period, the Sultan's portraits reached monumental sizes. Portrait art during the Tanzimat period reflected the Westernization of the Empire and its symbolic power. Indeed, although monarchical patronage of the art and artists was an old tradition in general, it can be asserted that the content of this patron relationship began to transform with the beginning of the Tanzimat era. For instance, with the transferral of the centre of power from Topkapı Palace to Dolmabahçe under the reign of Abdülmecid, hanging paintings on the walls was a novelty (Köksal& Uslu, 2018, p. 621) both with regards to the works that decorated the palace, as well as making a painting collection with this aim by employing foreign painters as court painters or purchasing them from the market. Again in this period, the Manas brothers were given the task, at the Ottoman Embassy in Paris, to make portraits to be sent to other Ottoman embassies (Renda, 2002, p. 273). Thus, we can argue that the Sultan's making himself and his state visible through portrait production was adopted as a public policy at a more institutional level during this period. This was particularly functional for the Ottoman diplomacy, which sought to provide support against Russia by being considered a European state during the Crimean war. As it is known, the Ottoman Empire was recognized as a European state at the Paris Conference, which took place after the Crimean war. Although he had never been to Europe, it was not a coincidence that paintings showing Sultan Abdülmecid alongside European rulers⁶ were made: it was rather the reflection of a conscious political image.

The connection of the Ottoman Palace with the painters reached a peak with the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz and collecting a work of art became a conscious act. Having visited the Paris International Exhibition on his European trip in 1867 and having also seen the art collections in Paris, London and Vienna, Sultan Abdülaziz invited many painters to Dolmabahçe palace to create a similar collection (Renda, 2002, p. 274). Again, pictures for the palace collection were purchased regularly from the Goupil Gallery in Paris (Köksal& Uslu, 2018, p. 621). Undoubtedly, the Palace's main concern here – apart from its embracing Western aesthetic pleasures - was to claim equality with other dynasties and palaces in Europe by creating a

5 See also: (Heyd, 1997, pp. 13-56).

6 See also: (Turan, 2014, pp. 361,387).

similar cultural capital as them. Created to be exhibited at the palace especially for foreign diplomats and guests, this collection was also intended to show foreigners a glorious past through the art of painting, and how deeply rooted its tradition was. Among them, the works portraying events in Ottoman history, which Sultan Abdülaziz commissioned to Chelebowsky, are the most known. In this sense, the relationship established with the art of painting became more comprehensive, considering its significant place not only for symbolizing political power but also for the construction of a state and a homeland concept embodied in the palace.

The Invisible Power of Abdülhamid II and His Painter Zonaro

Sultan Abdülhamid II is a challenging figure to position within the Ottoman modernization process. This is because his 33 years of monarchy involve both a continuity with and rupture from previous attempts at imperial modernization. On the one hand, administrative centralization and modern bureaucracy formation in the Empire that had begun during the reign of Mahmud II further penetrated into the periphery by the effective use of telegraphs, railways and steamships. Therefore, there was continuity in the sense of a formation and institutionalization of modern state organization (Zürcher, 2000, p.117-119). However, the reign of Abdülhamid was also a period in which the basic political power strategy within the state went in a different direction both inside and outside. As it has been mentioned before, the emergence of public opinion and its construction of a common collectivity via press and education took place before the Hamidian period. Indeed, the pre-Tanzimat Sultans' efforts aimed at centralization resulted in the culmination of power -not in terms of sovereignty but of the use of power- of the Sublime Porte bureaucracy. From the second half of the 19th century, an Ottoman public opinion emerged that was shaped against this authoritarian bureaucratic power and based on the idea of people's representation – i.e. an opposition to both the state bureaucracy and the absolute sovereignty of the Sultan. It was in the 1860s when the term public opinion (*efkar-ı umumiye*) became an explicit element of Ottoman political terminology (Kırlı, 200, p. 286). In a sense, the political power, which had indirectly based its legitimacy on the public since the 1830s, now faced the demands of that public which became quickly politicized and desired to be the main political actor. In this respect, Sultan Abdülhamid's distinctive feature when compared to his predecessors was that he set a new governance strategy to accumulate all the political power in his hand. At the heart of this strategy was channeling the loyalty of people not to a common homeland, nation or state, which could transcend or be perceived independently from the sultan's existence, rather to the ruler, thought to have gathered all these concepts within himself. Especially

after the demographic change that took place as a consequence of the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877-78, this strategy distinctly appeared in the increasing references made with regards to the caliphate in order to legitimize political power.⁷ In this pursuit of legitimacy, there was an effort to prevent the public's interest in politics, considering that the holiness of the Sultan as caliph would also make him untouchable. In order to achieve this, the strict control of the press and the entire public opinion, which became the new decisive actors in politics, constituted another rupture in the Hamidian era through censorship and a daily report system directly bound to the Sultan himself. In this respect, it can be said that Sultan Abdülhamid used the traditional political legitimacy that operated through sanctity as a tool to protect the monarchy's sovereignty against the politicization of the people that arose through modern state organization.

This new political orientation also manifested itself in a new foreign political strategy, by which the Sultan now introduced himself as the protector of all Muslims against the outside world. Abdülhamid II's aim to address Muslims outside the Ottoman Empire through the caliphate institution revealed the concept of pan-Islamism as a defense against the pan-nationalist movements that emerged at the time (Deringil, 1991, p. 52). The way that the Ottoman Empire, which felt under threat with regards to the "Eastern Question" since the beginning of the 19th century, presented itself as a political actor that wanted to be taken seriously in the international political arena changed its direction in the Hamidian period. It was a period in which the Empire sought legitimacy against the outside world, but it began to do so through emphasizing the caliphate. Despite the aims of controlling the internal public and of intimidating the Western world, this new strategy did not prevent the Sultan from highlighting the fact that he was a modern ruler. The Sultan was also well aware of the importance of foreign public opinion in international politics since his ascension to power. During the 1877-1878 Ottoman- Russian war, the anti-Turkish campaign run by liberals in Britain prevented the government of that time from supporting the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, a strong anti-imperial public opinion flourished in Europe regarding the Crete crisis and the suppression of the Armenian incidents in Adana. In Georgeon's words, the image that the Western public had of the Empire and Abdülhamid II was that of a barbaric people, a fanatical religion, a medieval Empire led by an illegitimate despot. In this case, Abdülhamid II would also need to construct an image policy in order to appear as an enlightened ruler as part of his policy of persuasion and propaganda as the Western public opinion was full of false ideas about Islam and the Ottomans (Georgeon, 2006, pp. 317-319). Abdülhamid II would

7 About the new understanding of politics and image by Abdülhamid see: (Turan, 2017, pp. 394-401).

try to construct the image of a “modern monarch” as well as demonstrate to be much more so than his predecessors.

However, Abdülhamid II acted “as if he did not exist in the Empire”; he led a secluded life in his palace without excursions, public inaugural ceremonies, travels to the country or abroad (Georgeon, 2006, p. 147). His invisibility was not only physical among the public, but also extended to the press and art, and his representation was forbidden. This invisibility of the Sultan symbolically expressed that the era of the Tanzimat had also come to an end. Nevertheless, as Şükrü Hanioglu correctly points out, the Hamidian period was not:

“a simple reversion to the patrimonial, pre-Tanzimat style of government. To be sure, the sultan yielded paramount authority; he often made arbitrary decisions; he emphasized personal loyalty to the sovereign, and he reduced the Sublime Port to subservience. But at the same time he clearly sought to be more than the uppermost link in an inefficient chain of patronage. (...) he was, in other words above the law-the actions of all other bureaucrats (...) were bound by the law” (Hanioglu, 2008, p. 128).

At this point, however, a dilemma arose for Abdülhamid II. On the one hand, the influence of the modern central state on the periphery continued at great speed, on the other, the Sultan lacked the legitimacy that his predecessors derived from being publicly visible. He wanted to create a modern Sultan profile despite the “Terrible Turkish or Red Sultan” labels attached to him, while he was caught up in a challenge created by himself, such as breaking away from the internal and external public (Deringil, 1998, p. 18). Therefore, the Sultan chose to make his existence felt by the public without being visible in order to fill the “legitimacy gap” through a symbolic system that could “create a vibration of power around himself” (Deringil, 1998, p. 18). In short, the bonds established with the public were transformed into a communication performed through symbols which were significantly supported by the Islamic characteristics of the Empire and the Caliphate. As a matter of fact, portraying the sultan came to a halt in this period and instead, calligraphic signs bearing the phrase “Long Live the Sultan” were hung on the walls of state offices (Deringil, 2007, p. 57).

It is possible to trace the Hamidian regime’s continuities with and ruptures from the past in the Palace’s relationship with painting and painters as well. With regard to continuities, it can be easily asserted that Abdülhamid II was as aware of the importance of “image” in political communication as his predecessors were. This was carried out, on the one hand, by giving political messages associated with sovereignty to domestic and foreign publics through certain symbols and ceremonies. But at this point, it is necessary to keep in mind that in this period visibility and forms of representation and power had shifted to the field of

photography.⁸ The Sultan had realized the mass communication power of photography. It was an easy instrument to portray an image and for propaganda activity (Georgeon, 2006, p. 320). Although he asked his own painter to make portraits of his daughter Refia Sultan and his son, Şehzade Abdürrahim Efendi, Sultan Abdülhamid's attitude towards drawing his own image was extremely strict. This attitude was also valid for photography (Pinquet, 2012, p. 146). At a first glance, this was because of a strict traditional Islamic interpretation of aniconism. There should have been harmony between the worldwide Islamic discourse and its reflection in practice:

“When I was charged with the task to be the Sultan's court painter in 1896, I was informed that I should not paint His Excellency the Caliph Sultan because of his religious authority and there would be unpleasant consequences if I did not comply with the ban. For me, being a sultan's painter and not being able to paint him seemed rather unusual and a sort of humiliation. I bowed to the task and never thought about it again, as the exciting events of my new life turned me upside down (Zonaro, 2008, p. 295).

However, this had much to do with the ruling strategy, which took its legitimacy from the sanctity adopted by the Sultan. As a matter of fact, the memoirs of the Sultan's chief painter show us that the Sultan's image was prevented from becoming public with a strict censorship applied both to publications within the Empire and to the circulation of publications from abroad. Moreover, it was forbidden to foreign guests to use binoculars to better see the Sultan in Friday ceremonies, “with the idea that a lens may be hidden in the binoculars”. (Zonaro, 2008, p. 295). Foreign magazines that printed the portrait of the Sultan were either using his youth pictures, and in that case they were not being allowed to enter the Imperial borders, or they were just sketching something completely imaginary (Zonaro, 2008, p. 295).

The arrival of the Italian painter Zonaro in Istanbul in 1891 occurred at a time when the Sultan began to implement strict measures to oversee public space. In his early years in the city, he was quite suspicious as a foreign painter who painted the city's public spaces (Zonaro, 2008, pp. 84, 119, 127). He is considered to be a member of the orientalist painting movement that lasted from the late 18th century to the early twentieth century. Caught up in the charm of the East, the painter decided to move to Istanbul, especially under the influence of Edmondo de Amicis and Théophile Gautier's books about Istanbul and again at the suggestion of his wife-to-be Elisa (Öndeş & Makzume, 2010, pp. 25, 28). However, Zonaro's moving to Istanbul cannot be described simply as the desire of a painter to experience an Oriental adventure. Firstly, he was probably aware of the new art market developing in the city since

8 See also: (Gavin, 1988)

the end of the 19th century. Besides, the personal relationships he established during his career in Istanbul that led him to be the Sultan's painter show that he was capable of "reading" political balances and patronage networks in the Empire. Indeed, he was not the first Italian painter recruited at the Palace. From this perspective, I believe that Zonaro came to Istanbul conscious of the patronage and art relations in the city and knew that he could develop a successful career thanks to them.⁹ As a matter of fact, in his memoirs Zonaro clearly expressed that what he had been waiting for in the city was the Turkish diplomacy surrounding him with kindness and grace (Zonaro, 2008, p. 65). Having experienced financially difficult times during which he had sold low-priced city pictures he painted for European travellers to earn his living, he managed to establish a personal network made of foreign diplomats and native high ranking bureaucrats (Zonaro, 2008, pp. 58-63, 73).

Zonaro, His Majesty's Painter and His Contributions to Symbolic Political Power

The rigorous artist, known in Italy as the painter of delicacy, was called, in Istanbul, the painter of power too (Zonaro, 2008, p. 239). If the Sultan wanted to establish his power without being visible, then what was Zonaro supposed to do as His Majesty's painter? Zonaro's task as an Imperial painter naturally was to satisfy the Sultan's personal wishes. But he was not always painting portraits. Primarily, he was functional towards the Sultan's interest in promoting his image as the owner of a painting collection and a personal painter and therefore being able to show him as an art lover and a modern personality. In Zonaro's memoirs, it is said that visitors accepting invitations and attending various events in Yıldız Palace were personally taken on a tour by the Sultan: "It seems that the Sultan has done so to prove to Europe that he protects and supports art" (Zonaro, 2008, p. 239). On the other hand, the image compositions by Zonaro were utilized in the Yıldız Porcelain Factory, located in the Palace complex which foreigners visited through official tours and where porcelain souvenirs were prepared for them as well. In some other cases, His Majesty's painter had different duties assigned to him. For instance, it was decided that one of his watercolors would be printed on silk handkerchiefs to be sold in an aid exhibition for the benefit of the families of war veterans and martyrs following Dömetek War (Öndeş & Makzume, 2010, p. 44). It was Zonaro's duty to decide which paintings should be hung on the walls of Şale Mansion, where German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm would stay during his visit to Istanbul. Zonaro,

9 Since the *Tanzimat*, European artists had been organising various events in order to gain appreciation of the newly rising *Tanzimat* bureaucracy and the palace environment. This was not only true for painters, but also for musicians. The atmosphere that the great piano virtuoso Liszt described in his letters to his friends after the Istanbul concerts was encouraging for the artists (Turan, 2011, pp. 22-25). See also: (Egecioglu, 2012).

having placed paintings of various painters on the mansion's walls before the Kaiser's visit, learnt that some of the paintings were removed by order of the Sultan the next day because of political concerns as German-Russian relations were not good at that time. Accordingly, the paintings of Russian painters in the Ottoman Palace would not have a positive effect on the Kaiser (Zonaro, 2008, p. 184). Undoubtedly, the Imperial symbolism contained a diplomatic sophistication that spread across all fields.

Being the personal painter of the Sultan did not prevent him from making a financial gain through his own personal works. It can even be said that the painter's personal art and his personal reputation in the national and international spheres was an easier and less expensive occupation than working for the sultan, who was his patron, in terms of the image he was expected to create. Zonaro's house, where he organized exhibitions, became a popular place for local and foreign high-level officials in the city. On the wall of his building there was a plate with the inscription "His Majesty's Painter (*Ressam Hazret-i Şehriyari*)". For example, Mehmed Sadık, one of the writers for the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine who visited the house, described the exhibition to his readers as a symbol of human intelligence and the value that Western nations attached to art, and of course highlighted the fact that Zonaro was the painter of the Sultan (Öndeş & Makzume, 2010, p. 49; Zonaro, 2008, p. 179). Moreover, the foreign exhibitions in which Zonaro took part and the related news published in the foreign press contributed much to the official image policy of the Empire. For example, in the Spanish *La Ilustracion Artistica* magazine, an article addressing the painter in 1899 praised not only Zonaro's artistic skills but also his contribution as an imperial painter of the change and evolution of the Turkish people who wanted to be part of the contemporary world by leaving the Sharia traditions (Öndeş & Makzume, 2010, pp. 53-54).

As mentioned earlier, Zonaro's relationship with Yıldız Palace was also linked to the bureaucratic environment he had associated with after his arrival to the city. Zonaro's first connection with the Palace was established thanks to the Director of Ceremonies (*Teşrifat-ı Umumiye Nazırı*) Münir Pasha's advice about making paintings to be presented to the Sultan. He would be awarded the fourth-grade of the Mecidi imperial medal in 1893 for his first works presented to the Palace. Three years later, Zonaro began to work on the painting Ertuğrul Cavalry Regiment. The reason for the creation of this painting was a possible strategy he adopted, consisting in - even if he does not express this in his memoirs - indirectly influencing the Palace in order to gain the patronage of the Sultan through this. Zonaro's choice of such a theme to obtain the Sultan's patronage shows that he was conscious of the patronage tradition and that he was also good at decoding this tradition in terms of the existing codes

of power. When Russian Ambassador Nelidov asked him what he would do after he finished this painting, Zonaro did not give a clear answer, replying only with a smile and saying “who knows” (Zonaro, 2008, p. 119). Understandably, the Palace closely followed the artist who was depicting this important military troop of the Empire (Zonaro, 2008, p.119, 131). After the painting was completed, the work was presented to the Sultan after the advice of Russian ambassador Nelidov and the Director of Ceremonies Münir Pasha. Zonaro was rewarded with a first grade Mecidi imperial order this time. In addition, he was appointed as the Imperial Painter with an imperial decree in 1896. This position remained vacant since the death of Luigi Acquarone, an Italian painter like him.

The establishment of the Ertuğrul Cavalry Regiment, the theme of the picture, had a distinct symbolic importance for Abdülhamid and for the expression of his sovereignty. First of all, the Ertuğrul Regiment was a part of the Friday Salutation ritual, one of the rare occasions during which Abdülhamid was seen outside the Palace. Entirely composed of Turks and founded by Abdülhamid II, this cavalry regiment oversaw the Sultan’s personal protection in the public space. Therefore, the regiment depicted had an important symbolic value due to the mission of protecting the sovereignty of the Sultan. The formation of the Ertuğrul regiment originated from Abdülhamid II’s attempt to remythologize the foundation of the Empire by creating an Ottoman cult through Ertuğrul Gazi, who was considered the founder of the dynasty. Named after “the father of the founding father”, this military unit was equipped with white horses as the ones ridden by Mehmed when conquering İstanbul and the soldiers wore Western uniforms. During the reign of Abdülhamid, and in particular for the creation of the official founding myth for the state, Ertuğrul’s tomb in Söğüt was repaired and commemorations were held every year for him. Again, in these ceremonies, the “original Ottoman tribe” Karakeçilis entered Söğüt in their Central Asian nomadic clothes, chanting “we are soldiers of the Ertuğrul Regiment... we are ready to die for Sultan Abdulhamid” (Deringil, 1998, p. 32).

In a reception given for celebrating the anniversary of the enthronement of the Sultan, which held an important place in the symbolic and ceremonial world of Abdülhamid, this painting was gifted to the President of the French Parliament, Paul Deschanel. *Il Veneto* newspaper announced the event by describing this painting as “a gift from a strong sultan to symbolize respect for a strong nation” (Öndeş & Makzume, 2010, p. 57). Therefore, it can be said that the painting served exactly the intended purpose as it was gifted to an important diplomat and the public was informed about it. After this painting, which was exhibited in the French Parliament building at the time, the Sultan ordered the repainting of the same picture.

The Ertuğrul Cavalry Regiment currently exhibited at the Dolmabahçe Palace is the second painting that Zonaro made in 1901.

In his first painting, Zonaro had placed ordinary people in front of the soldiers parading on the bridge. In the foreground of the picture, there was a bare-footed boy holding a stick in his hand like a rifle and imitating the soldiers, and a group of gypsies. Zonaro tried to construct the composition around its ordinariness. There was a contradiction between the ordinariness in the picture and what a picture should include in order to be accepted by the Palace. In fact, examining the work before its presentation to the Sultan, the Director of Ceremonies Münir Pasha warned Zonaro and asked him whether there was a way to “dress the bare-footed boy beautifully” stating that the sultan did not like poverty at all, and could not think that there were people walking around barefoot. Although the painter did not accept this, he promised to make changes in the painting if the Sultan himself wanted it (Zonaro, 2008, p. 145). Such a detail was considered negative because it could damage the paternal image of the Sultan and all the positive features associated with it, even if it was only symbolic. However, it should be a holistic and glorious image, not the usual one. In his memoirs no mention is made of the changes made to the painting dated 1901 although two remarkable details are apparent. The first is a Western couple watching the cavalry regiment, which is the self-portrait of Zonaro and his wife Elisa. And the other belongs to a Muslim woman, -possibly a mother- her hand pointing towards the regiment as she shows it to her child.

Thus, Ertuğrul Cavalry Regiment's crossing on the bridge was portrayed as if it were during a ceremonial performance. The Friday Salutation was, in fact, a touristic performative event the political and strategic importance of which was already well-known to Abdülhamid and was popular among the Western tourists and foreigners in the city. Therefore, in the new version of the painting, it was meaningful to focus on a Western couple following a ceremony that reflected military glory, just as the Sultan would wish. The new figure of the child that replaced the barefoot children represents the future generation, which is expected to have political values such as loyalty to the state, obedience to power. And the mother figure in the painting represents the women who are expected to transfer these values to the family - that is, to actuate ideological reproduction (Yuval-Davis, 2016). Another symbolic detail that catches the eye in the painting is the child wearing the navy outfit. Although it became common for children to wear uniforms since the Tanzimat period, it is known that the “navy fashion” started to spread among children after Celaledin Efendi, Sultan Abdülhamid II's son, had dressed in this style (Okay, 1998, p. 81). In the light of all these, this work by Zonaro speaks the symbolic language of the Sultan. The symbolic meaning of the painting is not limited to

this, and the perspective in which Zonaro placed the cavalry regiment is also important in this context. The Galata Bridge was a place that Zonaro generally liked to use in his paintings. In this painting, the painter used a perspective by which he could locate the New Mosque and the Beyazıt Tower, a little further away on the right. It is possible to say that the cavalry regiment is moving from the old city in the fog and a glorious past represented by monuments, to the future, to the new city, Pera. It appears as a military unit from the “old city”, which had been the location of the “old power” - perhaps, in a sense, the historical heritage of an Eastern empire – moving to Yıldız Palace, which was located next to the spatial and cultural area of the West.

Zonaro’s other painting the Attack (*Hücum*), in which he depicted the Ottoman-Greek War of Dömeke in 1897, is as remarkable as the Ertuğrul Cavalry in terms of the political symbolism it bears. Apart from being the first victory that the Empire won after a long time, the war provided the Sultan with an important political advantage by which he could reuse the Islamic title of Gazi and alleviate the trauma of the war of 1877-1878 (Georgeon, 2006, p. 387). The painting was ordered directly by the Sultan himself when the first news of victory arrived from the front. The Sultan attributed so much importance to this painting that he had allocated a separate mansion in Yıldız Grove for Zonaro to work on it. In the work is depicted the moment of the attack by an Ottoman troop in the bayonet thrust position, directed by cavalries. Dead Greek soldiers in their evzons lie in front of the attacking Ottoman troop.

Today, Zonaro’s Attack is not the only work related to the Battle of Dömeke on display at the envoy reception room in Dolmabahçe Palace. Exhibited along with Zonaro’s work, the “story” of the German painter Theodor Rocholl’s Battle of Domakos painting, dated 1898, is also important for this study. Despite the fact that some time had passed since the victory of the Dömeke war and Zonaro’s painting had already been realised, Theodor Rocholl, known for his illustrations for German newspapers, was invited and asked to produce paintings of the victory. This invitation also coincided with Kaiser Willheim’s second visit to İstanbul, and the paintings to be made by Rocholl were to be exhibited on the occasion of the reception for the Kaiser’s honor (Christensen, 2017, pp. 37-38). The victory of Dömeke was an important symbol of Ottoman-German relations, as it was the result of the Ottoman army being trained and modernized by German officers. A scene in which Ottoman soldiers successfully repulsed the attack of the Greek army is depicted in the painting. However, the Palace had refused to purchase some of the paintings it had commissioned to the artist with this war as the subject on the grounds that they were expensive. After some of his paintings were rejected, the painter’s name was not included among the invited guests at the reception in honor of Kaiser.

Christensen reveals that the reason why the paintings were not bought was not only financial, and that in fact the pictures were rejected due to the image criteria that the Sultan would have liked to be followed. One of the paintings that were not purchased was *Prayer of the Turks at the Grave of the Perished at Domokos*¹⁰ The painting depicts a funereal prayer performed by the soldiers en masse for those who lost their lives in the war. Even though the war had been won, any reference to or detail about defeat was not in accordance with the symbolic language of the Sultan. Christensen explains this as follows:

“In placing the Ottoman soldier, and hence the Ottoman state, within a life-death continuum, and hence in time, Rocholl unknowingly tapped into one of Abdülhamid’s deepest insecurities. Painting, like rhetoric, had to affirm the vitality and longevity of the state” (Christensen, 2017, p. 38).

Thanks to *The Attack* painting, Zonaro was rewarded with an Ottoman order and was granted an apartment in Akaretler, a central neighborhood in İstanbul. Considering that the painting was published in *Servet-i Fünun* and aroused great interest (Zonaro, 2008, p. 182), it can be said that the symbolic message that Zonaro’s work wished to convey successfully reached the public. In 1903, Zonaro painted the passing of the Imperial Pilgrimage Caravan (*Surre Alayı*) from the Yıldız Palace to the Holy Land, as a gift to Abdülhamid. In return for this gift, he ensured that his son would be accepted to the Imperial school with a scholarship.

The legitimacy struggle through the glorification of the past in the quest for a golden age helps us to understand the visual references made to the conquest of Istanbul during the final years of the Empire. Abdülhamid asked Zonaro to remake Bellini’s portrait of Mehmed II the Conqueror. Thus, the Imperial tone found in the original portrait was recreated by an Italian painter and the bond between the past and present was represented and reestablished. By referring to Mehmed II, who had conquered Istanbul and transformed the state into an empire, Abdülhamid was trying to establish himself as “the continuation of the imperial heritage”. Two more paintings about the conquest of Istanbul by Zonaro should be mentioned. Despite being a reproduction of the original portrait, it was important to own that symbol at home rather than abroad. When Sultan Abdülhamid requested paintings with historical themes, Zonaro completed two works. One portrayed Mehmed II walking from Edirne to Istanbul with his army and the other depicted his entrance to Istanbul from Topkapı after the conquest.

10 The original name of the painting is “*Gebet der Türken am Grabe der Gefallenen von Domokos*” and today it is exhibited in the Hofgeismar city museum in Germany.

When Absolute Power Became Limited: The End of Zonaro's Ottoman Career

While Zonaro depicted the political climate after the promulgation of liberty in July 1908, he expressed the following thoughts on the political culture that formed the background of Turkish modernization:

“There is only room for one party in Turkey; there is no opposition: Those who oppose are either in prison, under pressure or in exile. For this reason, when there is a change, precautions are taken radically, all that belongs to the past is spoiled and destroyed. Censorship is gone. Scary caricatures of former ministers, printed pictures of the revolutionary heroes Niyazi and Enver Bey are seen everywhere in the Capital ” (Zonaro, 2008, p. 182).

The works and symbols that a Sultan's artist produced through his relationship with political power would inevitably change as the regime evolved from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. It was now necessary to convey the new political regime to the masses through new symbols and to “invent” new traditions. Perhaps one of the breaking points in the constitutional order was when Zonaro had the opportunity to portray Sultan Abdülhamid thanks to the new regime. After seeing that some “strange” paintings titled “The First Sultan of Constitutionalism” in both Turkish and French were being sold on the Galata Bridge, the painter directly asked the Sultan for permission to make his portrait: “Your people want your portrait, and I hope to be able to do something worthy of His Majesty and His glorious state...” (Zonaro, 2008, p. 297).¹¹ The approval of the Sultan, who had established all his power through the strategy of not being publicly visible, was a breaking point and it had a symbolic meaning. Politically, the sovereign state was no longer an institution that would be imposed on its own. Contrary to the sovereign in Mahmut II's portrait, the depiction of the Sultan now meant making the portrait of a “ruler” of the people, upon which sovereignty was based. Behind making this change visible was a desire to reflect the change itself. Although the fate of the original portraits is uncertain, the portrait photos captured by Elisa's lens leave the impression that Zonaro's Abdülhamid portrait was far from magnificence compared to previous Sultan portraits.

11 According to Erol Makzume, Zonaro had completed three paintings when Sultan Abdulhamid was deposed. One of them, handed over to the Palace, is missing and was probably demolished during the dethronement of the Sultan or lost during the Reign of Sultan Resat. The other two paintings were taken by Zonaro with him when he left the country (Makzume, 2005). “Tablolar Zonaro'nun değil, Kürkciyan'ın” [“The Paintings are not Zonaro's, but Kürkciyan's”, *Hürriyet*, 15.02.2005. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/tablolar-zonaro-nun-degil-kurkciyan-in-38696661> [Accessed: 2.05.2020]

The production of new symbols of the new regime is seen in the *Hürriyet* (Liberty) portrait, which Zonaro aimed to present in the newly built parliament building at the opening festivities of the Assembly (Zonaro, 2008, p. 302). It is obvious that Zonaro was inspired by Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" (Belge, 2017, p. 124), which used to be the symbol of the French Revolution and later turned into the symbol of the "homeland". As in Delacroix's painting, Zonaro illustrated the concept of freedom entirely in white and as higher, above the men who follow it, guiding them. The woman symbolizing freedom, who holds a branch or a bouquet in her hand, has her hair slightly uncovered and stands over an edge overlooking the Bosphorus and the city - just like the location of the Yıldız Palace. Behind the woman, men, distinguishable from other layers of society by their hats and carrying the green banner of Islam and the Turkish flag, represent the people. The men's hands are stretched forward, as if to overcome an obstacle, like in the barricade in Delacroix's work. The political message that Zonaro wanted to give with the image of the woman, for whom men who have been freed from danger and regained their freedom fought, is clear: the enthusiasm of people who are freed from autocracy and feel ecstatic. However, an interesting aspect here is that the work was presented along with the artist's aforementioned portrait of Abdulhamid in a Zonaro exhibition organized for the benefit of the Hamidiye School. After the declaration of the Constitution, representatives, members of the Committee of Union and Progress as well as the Palace staff participated in this first art event in the Capital. Therefore, the exhibition also included a publicity that enables us to trace the chaos of the period of transition into the new regime. Thalasso, who writes in *L'Art et Les Artistes*, regards the exhibition as the new Turkey's performing two miracles. On the one hand, the Sultan's artist can freely paint liberty, and on the other hand, a prince from the empire can freely participate in the unveiling of the work. Described as an "event with traces of liberalism" by Thalasso, the hopeful atmosphere in this exhibition would soon be replaced by a power conflict among the actors represented in the exhibition that would shape the destiny of both the country and Zonaro himself (Zonaro, 2008, pp. 302-305).

The Constantinople issue of the *Figaro Illustré* Magazine conveyed the political change in the Empire to the Western public by illustrating Zonaro's "New Turkey" painting (dry pastel over paper) on its cover. In this work, Zonaro portrayed the new political state of the country through the image of a woman, as he had done in the Liberty Painting. This time, however, the emphasis on freedom in the work was conveyed through the smiling facial expression of a woman who seemed to lift the veil from her face. Instead of enthusiasm, as in the Liberty Painting, a sense of skeptical relaxation prevails in the artwork. The gaze of the woman is

towards the ground and she seems to stare at an uncertain future. This uncertainty applies not only to domestic political relations, but also to the artist himself, whose fate depended on these relations. When the power of an absolute sovereign, who claims to be the state himself, comes to an end, what will the fate of an artist bound to his patronage be? Moreover, this was not a simple change of political power, it was the establishment of a new form of government that recognized that the people were the source of power, or at least some of it. This was recognized by the declaration of the Constitution and the opening of the Assembly, because of which it was now impossible for the state to grasp the power as the property of the sultan.

In this context, Zonaro's first attitude towards the regime change was relatively more positive. Immediately after the declaration of the constitution, while "respected physicians, foreign teachers and architects were being shown the door", he was regarded as "non-disposable and maintaining his own position" for both the sultan and the constitution (Zonaro, 2008, p. 293). However, he was also aware of the state of uncertainty that his "New Turkey" Painting reflects. "But there was also the Committee of Union and Progress. And it was necessary to be close to the Young Turks" (Zonaro, 2008, p. 299). Although Zonaro was acquainted with the Unionists before the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, it was after the 31 March incident, during which the Sultan was deposed from the throne, that he had the chance to build a direct relationship with the leading members of the committee for his own career.

The sultan's or patron's absence from power brought up alternatives for the artist, whose career depended on this relationship to guarantee his own future. The very next morning after the night when the Movement Army captured Istanbul, during the 31 March Incident, Enver Pasha went to the "Hero of Resne" with his father and promised to pose for "a portrait that would remain as a souvenir to his country." We have already learnt from his memoirs that Enver Pasha had known Zonaro for some time and knew the subjects of his paintings by heart. The artist was close enough to the family to hide Enver Pasha's father in his own home during the 31 March events. In the making of the portrait of the Hero of Liberty, in which he was depicted in uniform with the armed Albanian soldiers behind him, such a sincere relationship was established that Zonaro even hinted that Enver Pasha would be arrested and sent to Salonika on the night of 31 April (Zonaro, pp. 317-320). Of course, we do not have the chance to confirm the accuracy of this event through memoirs, but this narrative shows us how the artist had to act in response to the loss of his patron in the context of new power relations. The fact that Zonaro demanded to make a portrait of the Army Commander of the Movement Army immediately after the 31 March and completed it in his own room in the Ministry of War supports the argument that the artist was clearly aware of the power relations.

Although Zonaro expected that the Union and Progress would not be indifferent to his works of art and that his works of art would be conveyed to a suitable institution connected to this environment (Zonaro, 2008, p. 324), his strategy to maintain his position after Abdülhamid was not successful. Regarding the fate of the Sultan's artist, although Enver Bey indicated that valuable people such as Zonaro were needed to "carry out the development program of Turkey, particularly young Turkey" (Zonaro, 2008, p. 324) and a new position could be created for him, this was not accomplished due to Enver Bey's being deployed to Berlin. Again, when he proposed his professional services to Mahmud Şevket Pasha, he could not get any guarantee (Zonaro, 2008, p. 325). For Zonaro, it was understood that there was only one way to find a protector and continue his professional life through political power: to work under the patronage of the new sultan Mehmed Reşad and to be appointed as his artist. For this purpose, he presented his work named Mehmed II Directing the Ships to War and framed it in flamboyant Eastern Style in anticipation of being re-appointed as the Palace artist. The picture depicts Sultan Mehmed's hauling the navy from the slopes of Kasımpasa to the Golden Horn during the conquest of Istanbul. It is seen that the Sultan, who is on the Imperial iconic white horse, is standing on the shore, conveying his instructions to his entourage, or pointing to something. Galleons hauled with animal carts on the hills are depicted and, in the distance, the domes of Hagia Sophia, the symbol of the Byzantine Empire, are vaguely visible. However, things did not develop as Zonaro had hoped. The Palace paid merely 40 Liras for the painting (Zonaro, 2008, p. 326).¹² The painting, which exalted the past and depicted the combination of imperial power and technical intelligence and which would have likely gratified the artist under the reign of Abdülhamid, was now a commodity that was purchased exclusively for the palace and did not generate excitement. The artist's attempt to gain the protection of the Emperor, similar to the strategy he used when depicting the Ertuğrul Regiment, was no longer useful in the new political climate. It is understood that Zonaro's themes, which used to be important for the symbolic power of the old regime, were far from being meaningful for the new political actors of the new regime. For example, the "10 Muharram Month" painting ordered by Abdülhamid to be given as a gift to Razik Han, the Shiite sect leader, can be discussed within this framework. After Abdülhamid was dethroned, while Zonaro wanted to sell this painting by means of Enver Pasha to the "new owner of the state", i.e. the Committee of Union and Progress, he could not do it. Similarly, years after this event, when the regime changed once again, the Italian artist would write a letter to Mustafa Kemal in November 1927, requesting an evaluation of the works of art in his possession:

12 As Makzume has revealed, the names in Zonaro's wife Elisa's notebook show that the artist strove to find a new patron, from palace employees to the governor of Istanbul and to the sons' of Sultan Reşad.

“My name is worthless, but I hope it won’t be unknown for Your Excellency. In many countries, I have painted pictures of the traditions and beauty of Istanbul and the Bosphorus, of the glorious history of Fatih Sultan Mehmed, the Turkish-Greek war, religions, the army, in short of everything that honors your homeland. “Illustrated Figaro” and “Dersaadet” (magazines) dated February 1907 and all the important newspapers in the world enriched the honor and glory of your country through my hard work and art. But political events have finally forced me to leave the position of “National Ottoman painter”, which I had gained with love, propriety and righteousness. (...) now that I’ve reached an advanced age, I don’t expect to be invited to a mission in Ankara. Many works about the contemporary history of your country and of its nature, and among them the only current picture of Abdülhamid, the lead actor of the era, are here under my possession. Because His Majesty had only deigned to pose before me during the short Constitutional period. (...) I also have paintings of the oversized “Fire Brigades on the Bridge” and “10th Muharram”, and people’s customs and religious traditions were depicted in these. I hope that by taking into account my request and plead, you will give the necessary orders for some of my works to return to their natural places at the Museum of Istanbul” (Bardakçı, 2018).

Sending this letter, which he signed as “your subject”, to a president shows that Zonaro perceived the events only as a simple change of power, but could not grasp the great mental transformation behind this change and its actual meaning in the concrete political sphere. He probably thought that he should be considered as an artist who transferred the history of a continuous state and nation onto the symbolic plane, creating a memory for the country and introducing the country to the international arena. The fact that he mentioned the seemingly prestigious term “National Ottoman artist”, an oxymoron during that period, to the Republic of Turkey, established upon the rejection of the Imperial heritage, also confirms this. Regarding his recollection of the Sultan and the looting of Yıldız Palace, Zonaro thought that the Committee of Union and Progress had perhaps pillaged Yıldız Palace to make a new one and had done this as the result of suffering a frightening attack. Meanwhile, he asked: “How could one plunder his own house?” (Zonaro, 2008, p. 299)

From the perspective of the actors of the new regime, neither Yıldız Palace nor the accumulation of cultural artifacts was seen as an appropriation on the part of the homeland and state. They probably did not regard what they ransacked as their home, but instead saw it as the fortified site of a despot in their original home. Therefore, Yıldız Palace was a personal place belonging to the Sultan and the elements of that place belonged to the Sultan, not the state. The discussion of the accuracy of such an argument goes beyond the scope of this study. However, Zonaro’s attempts to find a new protector after the 31 March Incident proved fruitless.

Thus, Zonaro now faced the bureaucratic mechanism of a state that was not formulated as “Sultan as the state itself” and the relations that were expected to be established were proceeding in a formal-written manner rather than the traditional one. As Ürekli states, there was no long-term contract with any artist invited from abroad during the Hamidian period and, similarly, Zonaro’s position in the Palace was not a contract, but an Imperial decree that did not determine anything (Ürekli, 2017, p. 35).¹³ In short, Zonaro was closer to being a “servant” to the Sultan in the classical patrimonial state rather than a contemporary civil servant. It would certainly be an option to appoint Zonaro as a civil servant to the state agency, through which he could enjoy more independence compared to the absolute sovereignty of the Sultan. Indeed, “L. F. Mizzi”, who wrote in the *Osmanischer Loyd*, asked if a positive outcome could be drawn from the numerous situations that allowed the famous artist to come and settle in the country. He also added the following: “Isn’t the eighteen years which he spent serving Turkey rather than Sultan Abdulhamid sufficient for us to show him some gratitude and a little respect? (...) He served Turkey and not the Sultan. While he also served Abdulhamid, this does not overshadow the splendor and patriotism of his works “ (Zonaro, 2008, p. 334)

Zonaro also tried to take part in an alternative official post before being officially notified that he had been dismissed. In his petition to the government in May 1909, he demanded to be “employed in a job appropriate to his ability and dexterity”. He asked to retain his salary and take part in certain areas in exchange for living rent-free in the house bestowed by the Sultan. This included making paintings to be ordered by the Sultan or government officials, paintings on the subject of freedom and legitimacy, making portraits of freedom martyrs, officers and high-level civil bureaucracy. The demands in his petition also included establishing an art museum with the works of renowned artists at Yıldız Palace, having students who would graduate from the Fine Arts School to do an internship with him, and to be appointed as an inspector of art education in Ottoman schools (Ürekli, 2017, pp. 226-228). Zonaro’s petition was forwarded to the Ministry of Education, which conveyed the matter to Osman Hamdi Bey, the director of the Fine Arts School, citing that the demands were not in its competence. Osman Hamdi Bey’s response – another important artist of the Abdulhamid era, - showed that the Sultan’s artist was actually labeled as the Sultan’s man rather than an artist.

13 The *irade-i seniye* (imperial decree) is the phrase used for the Sultan’s order for doing or not doing an act (Pakalın, 1993, p. 79).

“I examined the petition for compassion and the help request presented by the artist Monsieur Zonaro. Although it is known that the Sultan used to support his people for the development and advancement of fine arts, I had not heard that he had his own artist. (...) Since I have not seen any of the historical and military paintings that artist Zonaro dedicated to this country, it would not be possible to express my opinion on this matter” (Ürekli, 2017, p. 229).

This response by Osman Hamdi, who then had a personal friendship with Zonaro, gives clues as to why the artist could not find his place in the new regime. Osman Hamdi also used to receive painting commissions by the Palace and was even mentioned as an artist in 1880 (Eldem, 2019, pp. 66-67). Osman Hamdi, who was the director of Fine Arts and the Imperial Museum when the Constitutional Monarchy was declared, maintained this duty in the new regime. The response given on this occasion is meaningful in terms of showing how the appointment of the two artists at the Palace affected their future career. What distinguishes Zonaro from the other artists who had paintings commissioned by the Palace is that he was appointed as His Majesty’s painter rather than the painter of the Palace. As a matter of fact, Osman Hamdi deemed it normal for the artist to receive awards or be encouraged by the Sultan but found it unacceptable for this to turn into a personal service relationship. As Edhem Eldem pointed out, Osman Hamdi was “in a position in which he was cooperative enough to secure his place in the museum, but too independent to be a Pasha in an environment where everyone was trying to make it up to the Palace” (Eldem, 2019, p. 69). This answer also ignores Zonaro’s contributions to symbolic power. It can be argued that Osman Hamdi held off his old friend with the thought that it might affect his own personal career, but the main issue here is that Zonaro was considered by the new regime not only as an artist who did business with the Palace or was blessed by its power, but as a political figure identified with its power. Mery Roberts states that Zonaro produced his own self-portrait like many contemporary painters, but he did so attempting to identify himself with the Ottoman Palace and society (Roberts, 2015, p. 38). Zonaro appeared both in the painting of the Ertuğrul Regiment and in the portrait of the Rifai Dervishes, and in a self-portrait he wore his fez and the insignia that the Sultan had given him. Again, in a Friday Salute photo taken by his wife Elisa, he was among the leading walkers in the row just behind the sultan’s car. This shows us that he was among the “attendants”. The house where he lived for free and used as an exhibition space and his son’s scholarship to the Imperial School were all granted to him by the Sultan. Not only Zonaro but also his wife, Elisa, had the Sultan’s Compassion Order. Hence, in the eyes of the decision-makers of the new regime, Zonaro was not only an artist who contributed to the symbolic power of an absolute Sultan, but also a part of that symbolic power.

In November 1909, six months after Abdülhamid was dethroned, Zonaro was summoned to the palace and informed of his termination. Moreover, he was informed by the Ministry of Finance that he would be able to continue to live in the house bestowed to him by Abdülhamid if he paid six-month rent in return. Understanding that he no longer had a chance to stay in İstanbul, Zonaro decided to return to Italy, and demanded the compensation given to those appointed like him but later dismissed by the CUP. While he was allowed to stay rent-free at the house until he left İstanbul, his request for compensation remained unanswered. Although Zonaro wanted to intervene in the situation through the Embassy, the Embassy did not have any reputation in the eyes of the new regime because it had helped Selim Melhame Pasha, one of the ministers of the Abdülhamid era, escape the country (Roberts, 2015, p. 330). Moreover, the war in Tripoli was at hand, and relations with Italy remained tense. He left Turkey in March 1910.

Conclusion

When Zonaro was appointed as His Majesty's painter, he described his feelings in his memoirs as follows: "So, as an artist, my protector would be the Ottoman Sultan... What difference does it make if there is no President or His Majesty King Umberto to do this" (Zonaro, 2008). However, with the promulgation of the Constitution on 23 July, it became clear to Zonaro that the idea that everything would be the same as long as there was a patron was not so simple. The current conditions were decisive in terms of the artist's career. As a result, Zonaro's rise in the Empire was under the auspices of a sultan who tried to organize the formation of the modern state and its influence upon people within the framework of a traditional understanding of power relations and legitimacy. Zonaro bound his entire professional career and expectation to a patronage relationship that no longer fit into the era. Therefore, the fate of the patron would inevitably be the fate of those under his patronage. Zonaro, on the other hand, was a foreigner. When he came to İstanbul, he was an unrecognized painter in his own country. He was later appreciated in his homeland, but this would develop in parallel with his successful service as the Sultan's painter. But the same period was also a time when the state sovereignty began to be questioned by a generation of graduates of the sultan's schools. To which extent this opposing generation could/should integrate the inheritance of the past and the relations that provided this legacy into the new regime should be discussed. For now, however, let us point out that Zonaro's works and his career story show that the political background is as decisive as the artist's personality and skills in terms of how and by whom the concepts of state, homeland, nation, and sovereignty are defined.

And yet, perhaps as a more striking result, the importance of rights and gains defined on a legal-rational basis should be emphasized in this context, not as based on personal grace and will, but as formal legal relations independent of individuals.

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