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## Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire

The commonly accepted wisdom is that nationalism replaced religion in the age of modernity. In the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, the focus of Selim Deringil's book, traditional religious structures crumbled as the empire itself began to fall apart. The state's answer to schism was regulation and control, administered in the form of a number of edicts in the early part of the century. It is against this background that different religious communities and individuals negotiated survival by converting to Islam when their political interests or their lives were at stake. As the century progressed, however, and as this engaging study illustrates with examples from real-life cases, conversion was no longer sufficient to guarantee citizenship and property rights as the state became increasingly paranoid about its apostates and what it perceived as their "denationalization." The book tells the story of the struggle for the bodies and the souls of people, waged between the Ottoman state, the Great Powers, and a multitude of evangelical organizations. Many of the stories shed light on current flash-points in the Arab world and the Balkans, offering alternative perspectives on national and religious identity and the interconnections between the two.

**Selim Deringil** is Professor of History at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. He is the author of *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (1999).

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*Ras Beirut*

*21 November 2011*

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PLATE 1. Richard Guyon/Hürşid Paşa's gravestone in the British Military Cemetery in Haydarpaşa, Istanbul. The inscription in Hungarian reads: "Here lies Count Richard Guyon. Turkish Paşa, Son of France, Born in England, Hungarian Nationalist. Deceased 1856". (Photograph courtesy of Ahmet Boratav)

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PLATE 2. The inscription on the headstone reads as follows: “George Kmetty (İsmail Paşa) 1813–1869. Lieutenant-General of the Ottomans. Defender of Kars. Chief of the forces in Syria. In whom Hungary mourns a brave commander in her National War 1848–49. This granite covering his mortal remains is erected by the command of The Sultan”. (James Stuart Curl, *Kensal Green Cemetery: The Origins and Development of the General Cemetery of All Souls, Kensal Green, London, 1824–2001* [London, 2003], p. 259. (Photograph and reference courtesy of Tom Garnett)

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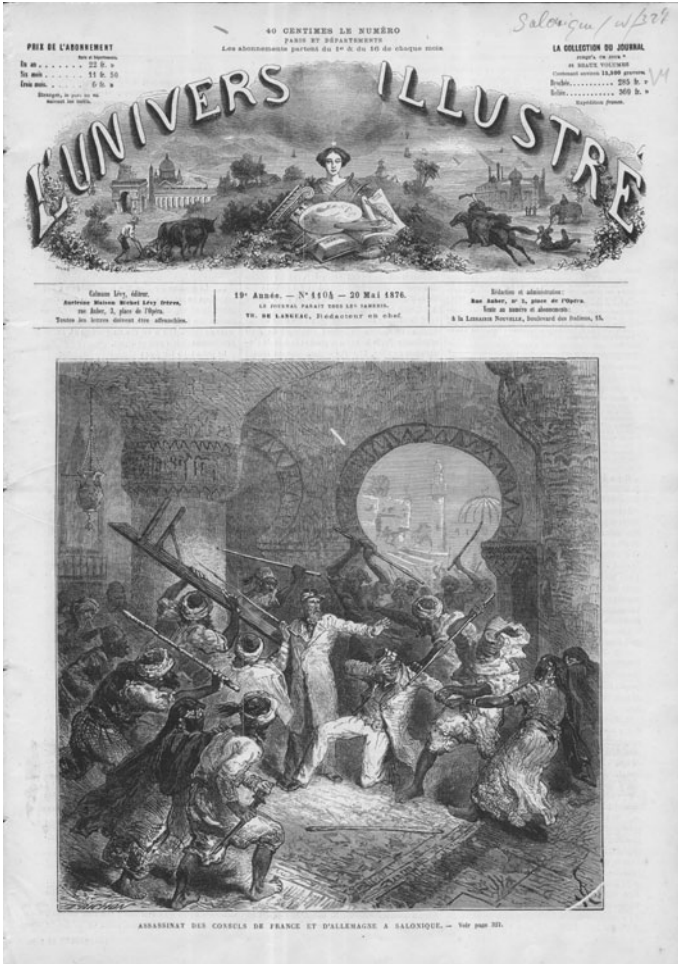


PLATE 3. “*L'Univers Illustré*, 20 May 1876. “The assassination of the Consuls of France and Germany, Salonica.” The obviously orientalized depiction of the scene of the murders nonetheless comprises some accurate details, such as the metal bars torn from the windows of the mosque that were used as murder weapons. (Edhem Eldem Collection)

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PLATE 4. "L'assiette au beurre Turc", 16 August 1902. "Le grand saigneur..." The vicious satire of the wording and the depiction of Abdülhamid II as a ruthless slayer of Christians is typical of his image in the West. (Edhem Eldem Collection)



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PLATE 5. Statue of Joseph Bem on the Duna Rackpart in Budapest. The legend at the base of the statue reads: “I will take that bridge or fall!”, referring to the critical battle that took place on 9 February 1849 between the Hungarian national army (the *honvéds*) and Habsburg imperials in Piski, Transylvania. The bridge in question was the bridge spanning the river Sztrigy. (Photograph courtesy of Szabolcs Pogonyi)

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PLATE 6. Grand Vizier Reşid Paşa,  
circa 1848. (Edhem Eldem Collection)



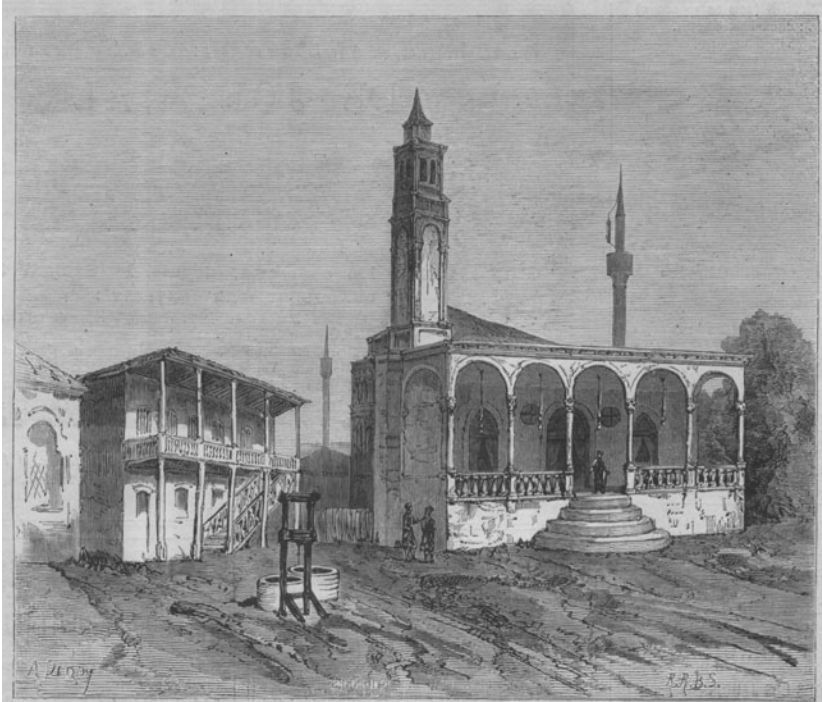
PLATE 7. Sultan Abdülmecid I. (Edhem  
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SALONIQUE. — Cour de la mosquée où a eu lieu le massacre.  
Les consuls ont été entraînés dans la maison à gauche et tués au premier étage, sur le balcon. (Croq. de M. J. Vieux.)

PLATE 8. Drawing of the actual mosque, the “clocktower mosque”, in which the consuls of France and Germany were murdered in Salonica in May 1876. The caption reads: “The consuls were dragged into the building on the left and murdered on the terrace.” The drawing was made by Pierre Loti. The “clocktower” appears to be a sundial on the tower. (Edhem Eldem Collection)

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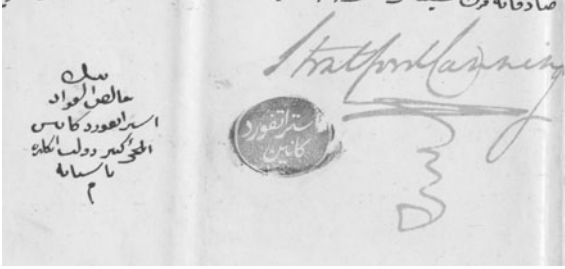
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PLATE 9. Stratford Canning's official seal and signature in Ottoman script. He signs himself as: "Your servant, pure of heart, Stratford Canning, Ambassador of the State of England at The Gate of Felicity". The date is 1826. (From a letter by Stratford Canning to Mehmed Reşid Pasha, 4 June 1826, in Edhem Eldem, "From Blissful Indifference to Anguished Concern: Ottoman Perceptions of Antiquities, 1799–1869", in Zainab Bahrani, Zeynep Çelik, and Edhem Eldem (eds.), *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753–1914* [Istanbul, 2011]).

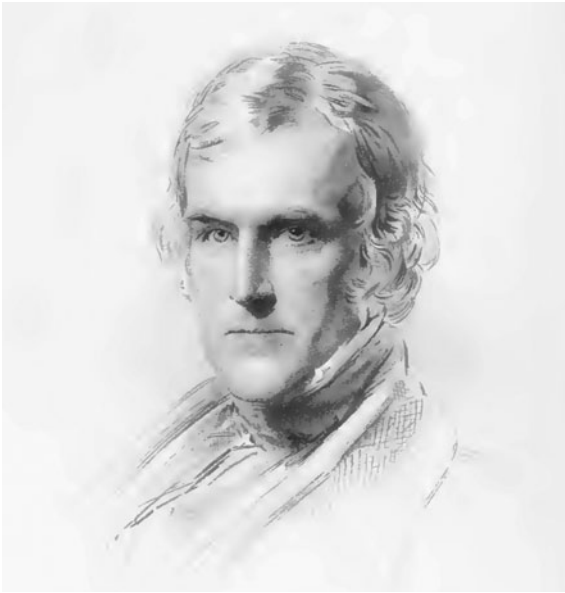


PLATE 10. Portrait of Stratford Canning. (Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning*, vol. 2 [London, 1888], frontispiece)