Nineteenth-century Ottoman politics was filled with casual references to public opinion. Having been popularised as a term in the 1860s, the following decades witnessed a deluge of issues being brought into ‘the tribune of public opinion’. Murat R. Şiviloğlu explains how this concept emerged, and how such an abstract phenomenon embedded itself so deeply into the political discourse that even sultans had to consider its power. Through looking at the bureaucratic and educational institutions of the time, this book offers an analysis of the society and culture of the Ottomans, as well as providing an interesting application of theoretical ideas concerning common political identity and public opinion. The result is a more balanced and nuanced understanding of public opinion as a whole.

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The Emergence of Public Opinion

State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire

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Canım annem Nesrin Deniz Acar’ın aziz hatırasına.
It is evident in history that rulers can assert themselves at will against any individual and only public opinion can restrain them. In some countries, public opinion is always open and declared, but in others it is latent, and emerges only when provoked to the extreme. In every state, consequently, rulers are acutely apprehensive of its power.

— Cevdet Pasha (From a report written to Sultan Abdülhamid in 1892)
Contents

List of Figures \hspace{1cm} page viii
Note on Transliteration, Place Names, and Dates \hspace{1cm} x
Acknowledgements \hspace{1cm} xi

Introduction \hspace{1cm} 1
1 Historical Background \hspace{1cm} 23
2 A Bureaucratic Public Sphere \hspace{1cm} 72
3 The World of İsmail Ferruh Efendi \hspace{1cm} 110
4 The Schooling of the Public \hspace{1cm} 134
5 The Emergence of a Reading Public after c. 1860 \hspace{1cm} 174
6 ‘The Turkish Revolution’ \hspace{1cm} 222

Conclusion \hspace{1cm} 250
Bibliography \hspace{1cm} 255
Index \hspace{1cm} 313
Figures

I.1 An Ottoman Newspaper titled Efkâr-i Umumiye (Public Opinion) from the late nineteenth century.  page 16
1.1 A batt of Abdülhamid I on the disturbance of peace with Russia.  32
1.2 Mustafa IV’s batt warning about the government bluster taking place in different coffeehouses of Istanbul and demanding the restraint and detention of those responsible.  34
1.3 The cover of Eşek (Donkey), a humour magazine.  36
1.4 Mahmud II’s batt demanding punishment for janissary supporters.  52
2.1 A photo of Scaliari Bey (Kleanti Skalyeri) in his full masonic costume in 1878.  94
3.1 A 1853 depiction of Keçecizade Mehmet İzzet Molla, one of the pioneers of Ottoman realism.  117
3.2 The inventory of books left by İsmail Ferruh Efendi.  121
4.1 A view of the Ottoman Darülfünun positioned between Hagia Sophia and Blue Mosque.  145
4.2 Ahmed Vefik Pasha, one of the lecturers of Darülfünun and the first translator of Molière to Ottoman Turkish.  150
5.1 A page from a statistics register prepared by Mehmed Behiç Bey.  176
5.2 The private secretary of Midhat Pasha, reading him daily newspapers.  189
5.3 An image of Bihruz Bey, the hero of Araba Sevdası.  206
5.4 Namık Kemal when he was the editor-in-chief of İbret, c. 1872–1873.  211
List of Figures

6.1 A contemporary picture showing the demonstrations of madrasa students. 231
6.2 The cover of Vakit a day after the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz. 234
6.3 A contemporary image of Murad V. 236
6.4 A rather disturbing image of ex-Sultan Abdülaziz just before he committed ‘suicide’ on 4 June 1876. 238
6.5 The Deposition Fetva of Sultan Abdülaziz. 239
6.6 A scene from the unsuccessful raid organised by a secret society under the leadership of Ali Suavi. 249
Note on Transliteration, Place Names, and Dates

Terms in Ottoman Turkish rendered in the Arabic script are transliterated according to the orthographical conventions. Modern conventions in the transliteration of personal and place names are retained. Gregorian equivalents of both Muslim Hicrî and the Rumi dates are provided either in parentheses or after a solidus.
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