

## The First of the Modern Ottomans

The eighteenth century brought a period of tumultuous change to the Ottoman Empire. While the Empire sought modernization through military and administrative reform, it also lost much of its influence on the European stage through war and revolt. In this book, Ethan L. Menchinger sheds light on intellectual life, politics, and reform in the Empire through the study of one of its leading intellectuals and statesmen, Ahmed Vâsîf.

Vâsîf's life reveals new aspects of Ottoman letters – heated debates over moral renewal, war and peace, justice, and free will – but it also forces the reappraisal of Ottoman political reform, showing a vital response that was deeply enmeshed in Islamic philosophy, ethics, and statecraft. Tracing Vâsîf's role through the turn of the nineteenth century, this book opens the debate on modernity and intellectualism for those students and researchers studying the Ottoman Empire, intellectual history, the Enlightenment, and Napoleonic Europe.

**Ethan L. Menchinger** is currently a lecturer at the University of Michigan. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien and Freie Universität, Berlin, and a visiting scholar at the University of Toronto.

“Situating the historian Vâsîf within the revolving core of Ottoman modernity, Ethan L. Menchinger gives us a thoroughly researched and often entertaining book that uncovers the links between the Ottoman worldview, literary culture, and international power politics. This is an engagingly written, sympathetic portrait of a man at once immensely gifted and deeply flawed – an impressive work of new scholarship.”

*Douglas A. Howard, Professor of History, Calvin College*

“Although there are a few good biographies of well-known Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals, intimate accounts of Ottoman individuals have not proliferated in modern scholarship. Ethan L. Menchinger’s *The First of the Modern Ottoman* is therefore a very welcome and well-executed contribution to this genre. The book is an eloquently written reconstruction of the life of a relatively obscure bureaucrat, diplomat, and court historian whose life spanned one of the most eventful and transformative periods for Ottoman society: the end of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries. It is the story of an ambitious but unconnected youth from Baghdad who developed himself into a member of the elite class of bureaucrats invested in resuscitating a failing empire.

Menchinger bases his study on thousands of pages of personal writings by the historian – both published works and manuscripts from the Ottoman archives – and makes effective use of sources in a number of languages. He thus admirably manages the difficult task of recreating the details of Vâsîf’s professional career: the offices he held, his duties, his diplomatic missions, even his day-to-day activities at various periods. However, the study is more than just a personal professional history of this bureaucrat; it successfully weaves the progress of his career into an account of a speedily changing political climate, a modernizing empire, and a rapidly transforming zeitgeist. The work also evokes the human side of Vâsîf: his rather selfish, uncollegial character; his easy alienation of his peers; the philosophical questions in his mind; his outlook on life; and how he coped with the onset of modern times.

The study as such is required reading for all who want to understand the intellectual history of the period. Through depicting the inner workings of Ottoman bureaucracy in times of war and peace, as well as the intellectual preoccupations of its bureaucrats, Menchinger provides a good glimpse of a reforming empire through the lens of one of its functionaries, as steps toward an Ottoman modernity were being taken.”

*Hakan Karateke, Professor of Ottoman Turkish Culture, Language and Literature, University of Chicago*

“This is the return of narrative history and the genre of biography with a vengeance, but a sweet vengeance at that. Based on painstaking research in scores of manuscripts and archival documents, it tells the story of the prolific and rather odious Ottoman chancery officer and court historian, Ahmed Vâsîf (d. 1806). We follow Vâsîf and watch him cook up justifications for Ottoman compromises and territorial losses and provide validations for reform initiatives from the assemblies of Baghdad, to the chancery offices of Kars and Van, to the royal court at Istanbul, to the army camps of Shamen, to the negotiation tables in Bucharest, to the opera houses of St. Petersburg, to the parks of Madrid, to exile in Lesbos, and to the residential neighborhood of Çamlıca. In the process, Vâsîf arrives at a historiographical and philosophical outlook that reconstitutes the Ottoman polity from a divinely ordained exceptional and unilateral order to a reciprocal and necessarily bilateral state based on human will. In short, this is a coming of *modern* age story, which is a must read for Ottomanists and comparativists alike.”

*Dana Sajdi, Associate Professor of History, Boston College*

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# The First of the Modern Ottomans

*The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasif*

ETHAN L. MENCHINGER

*University of Michigan*



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*For Natalia*

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John Rylands Library in Manchester; the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris; the Robarts and Thomas Fisher Rare Book Libraries in Toronto; the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna – I wish to thank their respective staffs for cheerfully (and accurately) filling my requests. The Biblioteca Nacional de España, Thomas Fisher Library, and National Portrait Gallery, London, also kindly gave me permission to reproduce images in their collections.

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## Note on the Text

### TRANSLITERATION AND SPECIAL TERMS

This study uses a modified Modern Turkish script to render Ottoman Turkish names, titles, terms, and constructs. In general, I adhere to the original orthography and indicate long vowels with a circumflex (Â, â, Î, î, Û, û); I omit the glottal consonants *‘ayn* (‘) and *hamza* (’), which are unvoiced in Turkish, except where absolutely necessary, as in the transliteration of key technical terms. For non-specialists, the following letters may be unfamiliar:

- C, c pronounced “j” as in “jam.”
- Ç, ç pronounced “ch” as in “cheese.”
- Ğ, ğ this “soft g” is mostly unvoiced and lengthens the preceding vowel.
- I, ı pronounced like the first syllable in “early.”
- Ö, ö pronounced as in the German “schön” or the French “seul.”
- Ş, ş pronounced “sh” as in “shoe.”
- Ü, ü pronounced as in German or the French “tu.”

For Arabic and Persian names and terms, I have followed the transliteration system employed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES), which uses diacritics to more accurately reflect the script. In all cases I have preferred, where they exist, Anglicized versions of place names and titles like “sultan,” “Sufi,” and “ulema.” To make the text more accessible to non-specialists, I have also tried to translate terms and quotations into idiomatic English. While this may arguably reduce scholarly “accuracy,” interested readers are free to consult original texts

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in my 2014 doctoral dissertation. All other special terms are listed in the glossary. Unless otherwise noted, source translations are my own.

#### NAMES AND DATES

A study like this one as a rule contains many personal and place names. To reduce confusion, I have added a *Dramatis Personae* to the front matter with information on major figures in Ahmed Vâsîf's life and career and arranged it alphabetically. The reader will find place names on the maps.

For ease of access, I have favored Anno Domini (AD) dating in the text proper according to the Gregorian calendar. The notes list dates in both AD and in the Muslim lunar hijri or Anno Hegirae (AH) system. I use the following abbreviations for hijri months:

M	Muharrem/Muḥarram
S	Safer/Şafar
Ra	Rebiülevvel/Rabî' al-awwal
R	Rebiülâhir/Rabî' al-âkhir
Ca	Cemâziyelevvel/Jumâdâ al-awwal
C	Cemâziyelâhir/Jumâdâ al-âkhir
B	Receb/Rajab
Ş	Şaban/Shabân
N	Ramazan/Ramaḍân
L	Şevvâl/Shawwâl
Za	Zilkade/Dhû al-qa'da
Z	Zilhicce/Dhû al-hijja

#### CURRENCY

It is hard to accurately convey value in a pre-modern society. The Ottoman Empire was agrarian, without a full cash economy, and did not have a unified system of currency in the eighteenth century. Local and foreign coinages circulated freely, while the century saw runaway inflation in the wake of the Ottoman-Russian wars. That said, some words on Ottoman coins and their equivalencies will give the reader a basic sense of value.

The smallest unit of Ottoman coin was the silver asper or *akçe*. However, the *akçe* had become so devalued by the late seventeenth century that it gave way in daily exchange to the more valuable *para*

and to the silver piaster or *kuruş*. The exchange rate for these denominations was set at one *kuruş* = 40 *para* = 120 *akçe*. The relative value of Ottoman to European currency is more complex. In 1768, for example, a Venetian ducat was worth about four *kuruş* and a British pound sterling eight *kuruş*. By Ahmed Vâsîf's death in 1806, the *kuruş* had slipped to about eight to the ducat and fifteen to the pound sterling. Vâsîf at the height of his career probably earned no more than 15,000 *kuruş* a year, or some 1,000 pounds. To put this into perspective, recall that Jane Austen's eligible bachelors Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy had yearly incomes of 5,000 and 10,000 pounds each and that they lived in a far wealthier country. Due to lower prices, Vâsîf's buying power with 15,000 *kuruş* was likely higher than a British contemporary with 1,000 pounds. See Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 163, 168.

## FINAL NOTE

In the last stages of this study, I acquired a new dissertation on Vâsîf submitted at Istanbul University, a critical edition of part of his chronicle: Hüseyin Sarıkaya, ed., "Ahmed Vâsîf Efendi ve *Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr*'i, 1209–1219/1794–1805" (Istanbul University, 2013). Since Sarıkaya's archival work on Vâsîf largely reproduces my own, I cite him only where we disagree or where he has uncovered documents that eluded me.



## Dramatis Personae

- Abaza Paşa, Mehmed (??-1771/72): Soldier and vizier. Fought in the 1768–1774 war at Bender, Falça, and Kartal. Mutinied in Crimea, fled to Anatolia, and was executed. Vâsîf’s patron.
- Abdülhamid I (1725–1789): Son of Ahmed III and twenty-seventh sultan of the Ottoman line. Reigned from 1774 to 1789.
- Argyropoulos, Yakovaki (1774–1850): Phanariot. Translator and interpreter born in Istanbul. Worked for years at the Sublime Porte.
- Ârif Efendi, Dürrîzâde Mehmed (1740–1800): Jurist and judge from an eminent ulema family. Served as *şeyhülislâm* twice, in 1785/86 and from 1792 to 1798.
- Âsım Efendi, Ahmed (1755–1819): Poet, littérateur, and historian. Famed as the Turkish translator of two lexicons, one from Arabic, one from Persian. Served as court historian from 1808 to 1819. Vâsîf’s jealous rival.
- Âşîr Efendi, Mustafa (1729–1804): Judge, jurist, and scholar. Served as *şeyhülislâm* from 1798 to 1800. The brother Ahmed Azmî Efendi and Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi and Vâsîf’s friend.
- Âtîf Efendi, Ahmed (??-1806): Scribe and high-ranking bureaucrat. Chief scribe in 1798.
- Ayşe (??-??): One of Vâsîf’s younger daughters. Married either Seyyidâ Efendi or Sâlih Efendi.
- Azmî Efendi, Ahmed (??-1821): Scribe and ambassador. Followed Ahmed Resmî Efendi to Berlin in 1763/64 and was ambassador to Morocco (1787) and Prussia (1791/92). Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi’s brother.
- Bâhir Efendi, Abdürrezzâk (1730–1780): Scribe, bureaucrat, man of letters. Held high office and served as chief scribe from 1772 to 1774 and from 1779 to 1780. Vâsîf’s friend and patron.

- de Bassecourt, Francisco González, conde del Asalto (1726–1793): Spanish nobleman. Capitan general of Barcelona and Cataluña during Vâsîf's embassy.
- Boulogny y Paret, Juan (1726–1798): Spanish statesman and diplomat. Served as envoy and ambassador in Istanbul from 1779 to 1793.
- Callimaki, Scarlat (1773–1821): Phanariot noble. Grand dragoman of the Porte from 1801 to 1806. Was prince of Moldavia three times (1806, 1807–1810, 1812–1819) and prince of Wallachia in 1821.
- Canikli Paşa, Ali (1720/21–1785): Soldier and Trabzon notable. Held military commands in the 1768–1774 war and led failed expeditions to Crimea in 1778/79. Wrote the *Rare New Stratagem*.
- Charles III of Spain (1716–1788): Duke of Parma and Piacenza, King of Naples and Sicily, King of Spain. Enlightened despot who ruled Spain from 1759 to 1788, enacting reform.
- Dürrî Efendi, Mehmed (??-1795): Chancery scribe and reformer. Negotiated the Treaty of Sistova and served as chief scribe in 1794/95. Author of the *Choice Desire to Correct Disorder*.
- Dürrîzâde Efendi, Ataullah (1729–1785): Judge and jurist. Named *şeyhülislâm* in 1783. Implicated with Grand Vizier Halil Hamid Paşa in a plot to dethrone Abdülhamid I, deposed, and exiled. Perhaps poisoned.
- Edîb Efendi, Mehmed (??-1801): Scribe, poet, and historian. Served as court historian from 1787 to 1790 and again from 1791 to 1793. Vâsîf's rival.
- Enverî Efendi, Sadullah (1736?–1794): Scribe and court historian. Held office in the Ottoman bureaucracy. Vâsîf's chief rival as court historian, which post he held five times (1769–1774, 1776–1783, 1787–1791, 1791–1793, and 1794).
- Esmâ Sultan (1726–1788): Daughter of Ahmed III, sister of Abdülhamid I, and wife of Muhsinzâde Mehmed Paşa. Tightfisted. Took Vâsîf's landed income in 1774.
- Fâiz Efendi, Ahmed (??-1807): Reformer and scribe. Selim III's longtime privy secretary and Vâsîf's patron. Murdered in the 1807 rebellion.
- Feyzî Efendi, Süleyman (??-1793/94): Chancery scribe and vizier. Chief scribe twice from 1779 to 1781 and 1787 to 1788. Later “turned paşa” and was a provincial governor. Vâsîf's friend.
- Gazi Paşa, Hasan (Cezayirli) (??-1790): Influential Grand Admiral and vizier. Won fame during the 1768–1774 war as a naval hero and served as Grand Admiral from 1770 to 1790. Grand Vizier in 1790.

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- Gravina y Nápoli, Don Federico (1756–1806): Spanish seaman. Captain of the *Santa Rosa*, which returned Vâsîf to Istanbul in 1788. Later an admiral. Died from wounds at Trafalgar.
- Gül Ahmedpaşazâde Paşa, Ali (1706/7–1769): Vizier and soldier. Rose through the palace to become Grand Admiral. Later exiled and a provincial governor. Vâsîf's first patron.
- Hâfız Paşa, İsmail (1757/58–1807): Vizier. Served a term as Grand Vizier in 1806.
- Hakkı Bey, Mehmed (1747–1811): Vizier and governor. Suppressed rebels in Rumelia in late 1790s. Target of Vâsîf's resentment.
- Hamid Paşa, Halil (1736–1785): Scribe, reformer, and vizier. Chancery product who served as chief scribe in 1780. Later was Grand Vizier from 1782 to 1785 and set out to reform the military. Dismissed, expropriated, and killed in 1785 for an alleged plot.
- Hanîfe (??-mid-nineteenth century): One of Vâsîf's younger daughters. Married Ahmed Feyâzî Efendi.
- al-Harbûtî, Ebûlbekâ Hasan (??-??): Baghdadi teacher and scholar. Vâsîf's father.
- Hayrî Efendi, Mehmed (1734?-1789): Scribe and poet. Held high office in the chancery and served as chief scribe three times (1781, 1785/86, 1788/89). Drowned in the Boze river. Author of poetry edited by Vâsîf.
- Italinskii, Andrei Yakovlevich (1743–1827): Russian diplomat. Served for many years as ambassador in Istanbul. Negotiated with Vâsîf in 1805/6.
- İvazpaşazâde Paşa, Halil (1724?-1777): Grand Vizier during the 1768–1774 war. Blamed for the rout at Kartal and dismissed in 1770.
- İzzet Paşa, Mehmed (1723–1784): Courtier and vizier. Rose to become Grand Vizier in 1774/75. Not to be confused with Safranbolulu İzzet Mehmed Paşa, Grand Vizier from 1794 to 1798.
- Koca Yusuf Paşa (??-1800): Georgian by birth. Soldier and vizier. Protégé of Gazi Hasan Paşa who was Grand Vizier from 1786 to 1789 and 1791 to 1792. Led the army during the Maçın defeat and boycott.
- Küçük Hüseyin Paşa (1758/59–1803): Georgian or Circassian by birth. Became Selim III's court chamberlain and later Grand Admiral. Led the naval expedition against the French in Egypt. Vâsîf's patron.
- Mabeynci Ahmed Efendi (??-1807): Court chamberlain and confidant to Selim III. Vâsîf's patron and one-time neighbor. Murdered in the 1807 rebellion.

- Mekkî Efendi, Mehmed (1714–1797): Judge, jurist, and scholar. Was *şeyhülislâm* in 1787/88 and 1791/92. Wrote works of exegesis, law, theology, and poetry. Vâsîf's friend.
- Moñino y Redondo, José, conde de Floridablanca (1728–1808): Spanish noble, statesman, and reformer. First minister under Charles III and leader of an Enlightened reform program.
- Mourouzi, Demetrius (Beyzâde) (1768–1812): Phanariot noble. Son of Constantine Mourouzi, Grand Dragoman and prince of Moldavia. Brother of Alexander Mourouzi, Grand Dragoman and prince of Moldavia and Wallachia. Colluded with Italinskii.
- Müftizâde Efendi, Ahmed (??-1791): Jurist and judge. Influential religious figure during the 1780s. Served as *şeyhülislâm* in 1786/87.
- Muhsinzâde Paşa, Mehmed (1704–1774): Soldier, vizier, and governor. One of few capable viziers during the 1768–1774 war. Served twice as Grand Vizier (1765–1768, 1772–1774) and pushed for a negotiated peace.
- Münib Efendi, İbrahim (??-1786): Chancery scribe. Served as chief scribe in 1774 after Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi's dismissal. Signed the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca with Ahmed Resmî Efendi.
- Mustafa III (1717–1774): Son of Ahmed III and the twenty-sixth sultan of the Ottoman line. Reigned from 1757 to 1774. Older brother of Abdülhamid I and father of Selim III.
- Nesîm Efendi, İbrahim (??-1807): Courtier and statesman. Influential confidant of Selim III who served as corresponding secretary and the Grand Vizier's steward. Murdered in the 1807 rebellion.
- Nûrî Bey, Halil (??-1799): Scribe and historian. Replaced Vâsîf as court historian in 1794, serving till his death.
- Obreskov, Aleksei Mikhailovich (1718–1787): Russian diplomat. Resident envoy at Istanbul from 1751 to 1768. Negotiated with Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi and Vâsîf on two occasions.
- Râgîb Paşa, Mehmed (Koca) (1698/99–1763): Scribe, poet, vizier. Important eighteenth-century man of letters and administrator. Chief scribe from 1741 to 1744. Served as Grand Vizier from 1757 to 1763. Famed as a stylist, letter-writer, and poet.
- Râîf Efendi, İsmail (??-1784/85): Scribe. Served twice as proxy chief scribe (1768/69–1772/73, 1774) and once in full (1774–1776). Briefly taken with Vâsîf.
- Râîf Efendi, Mahmud (??-1807): Scribe and reformer. Traveled to London between 1793 and 1797 and served as chief scribe from 1800 to 1805. Wrote *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l'empire*

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- Ottoman* and the *Handbook of Geography*. Murdered in the 1807 rebellion.
- Râşid Efendi, Mehmed (1753/54–1798): Scribe, poet, and printer. Held high chancery office and was chief scribe three times (1787–1791, 1792–1794, 1797–1798). Reestablished and operated the imperial press. Vâsif’s erstwhile ally and enemy.
- Râtib Efendi, Ebubekir (1750–1799): Scribe, courtier, and influential reformer under Selim III. Traveled to Vienna as ambassador between 1791 and 1792.
- Repnin, Nikolai Vasilevich (1734–1801): Russian statesman and soldier. Successful general in the 1768–1774 and 1787–1792 wars. Ambassador to Istanbul in 1775/76.
- Reşîd Efendi, Mustafa (??-1819): Scribe, courtier, and adviser to Selim III. Held many high offices, including steward to the Grand Vizier, head of the New Revenue treasury, and proxy chief scribe.
- Resmî Efendi, Ahmed (1700–1783): Scribe and reformer. Elder statesman during the 1768–1774 war who signed the Treaty of Kaynarca. Wrote *A Summary of Admonitions*.
- Ruffin, Pierre-Jean-Marie (1742–1824): French orientalist and diplomat. Envoy in Istanbul while Vâsif was chief scribe. Collector of manuscripts and professor of Turkish and Persian.
- Rumiantsev, Petr Aleksandrovich (1725–1796): Russian field marshal. One of the best generals of the eighteenth century. Led the Russian army in the 1768–1774 war and met with Vâsif several times.
- Selim III (1761–1808): Son of Mustafa III and twenty-eighth sultan of the Ottoman line. Reform-minded and author of the “New Order” reforms. Deposed in 1807 and murdered in 1808.
- Silâhdar Mehmed Paşa (1735/36–1781). Courtier and vizier. A palace confidant of Abdülhamid I who was Grand Vizier from 1779 to 1781. Vâsif’s patron.
- Tatarcık Efendi, Abdullah (1730/31–1797): Scholar, judge, and reformer. Influential voice under Selim III and rival of Mehmed Râşid Efendi. Friend to Vâsif, with whom he was exiled in 1794/95.
- Ümmü Gülsûm Hanım (??-??): Vâsif’s wife and the mother of his children. Perhaps related to Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi’s family.
- Yenişehirli Osman Efendi (??-1784): Chancery scribe. Served as chief scribe in 1768/69. Led failed peace talks during the 1768–1774 war and obstructed Vâsif.

## Dramatis Personae

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Yusuf Ağa, Mühürdâr (??-1807): Cretan by birth. Influential courtier and steward to Selim III's mother Mihrişah Sultan. Leader of a faction opposed to Vâsif and his patrons.

Ziyâ Paşa, Yusuf (??-1819): Georgian by birth. Grand Vizier from 1798 to 1805 and again in 1809. Led the military expedition against the French in Egypt and Syria.

Züleyhâ (??-mid-nineteenth century): Vâsif's eldest daughter. Married either Seyyidâ Efendi or Sâlih Efendi and was later part of a scandal with the daughter of Mehmed Mekkî Efendi.

## Chronology

- Ca. AH 1147 = 1735 Ahmed Vâsîf is born in Baghdad.
- Ca. AH 1175 = 1761/62 Vâsîf pursues his studies in Aleppo.
- AH 1180 = 1766/67 Vâsîf travels to Anatolia and studies in Van and Kars; he meets Gül Ahmedpaşazâde Ali Paşa and accompanies him to Sivas as a treasury scribe.
- AH 1183 = 1769 Gül Ahmedpaşazâde Ali Paşa joins the imperial army on the Danube. Vâsîf follows in train to Bender, where in October, his master puts down a mutiny and dies.
- AH 1184 = 1770/71 Vâsîf becomes Abaza Mehmed Paşa's private secretary. He witnesses major Ottoman defeats at Falça, Kartal, and İsmail and is captured by the Russians.
- AH 1184/85 = 1770/71 Vâsîf is a prisoner-of-war in St. Petersburg. In the fall of 1771, Catherine II frees and sends him back to the Ottoman camp with peace proposals. Vâsîf then visits Istanbul and seeks patronage, attaching himself to Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi.
- AH 1185/86 = 1771/72 Grand Vizier Muhsinzâde Mehmed Paşa makes Vâsîf a clerk in the correspondence office at the rank of bureau chief. Peace talks at Foksani collapse. Vâsîf travels to the Russian camp to renew a truce with Field Marshal Rumiantsev and is rewarded.

## Chronology

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- AH 1186/87 = 1772/73 Vâsîf joins Abdürrezzâk Efendi at the second round of peace talks in Bucharest during the winter of 1772/73, serving as secretary to negotiations. His position as secretary to the left-wing cavalry is reconfirmed, while talks fail in the spring.
- AH 1188 = 1774 Mustafa III dies. Vâsîf joins the final campaign of the war and is at the battle of Kozluca in June. He is trapped at Şumnu with the remnants of the army when peace is declared, and he negotiates with Rumiantsev at Jassy that fall.
- AH 1188–93 = 1774–79 A factional realignment takes place at court, leaving Vâsîf out of favor and without post or income.
- AH 1193 = 1779 Abdürrezzâk Efendi becomes chief scribe a second time and Vâsîf writes a gloss on al-Zamakhsharî's *Exceptional Aphorisms*. In October, he gains a post as first fortifications officer.
- AH 1194 = 1780 Abdürrezzâk Efendi, Vâsîf's patron, falls out with the Grand Vizier and dies.
- AH 1195 = 1781 Vâsîf is passed over for office in the yearly round of appointments.
- AH 1196 = 1782 The chancery product Halil Hamid Paşa becomes Grand Vizier. In September, he makes Vâsîf the director of the outer documentation office.
- AH 1197 = 1783 The Crimean Crisis erupts. Vâsîf is named court historian for the first time and begins to compile a chronicle.
- AH 1198 = 1784 Vâsîf works as galley scribe in Galata. He and Râşid Mehmed Efendi buy İbrahim Müteferrika's old printing press and refurbish it, publishing an edition of the chronicle of Sâmî, Şâkir, and Subhî in the autumn.
- AH 1199 = 1785 Halil Hamid Paşa is dismissed, exiled, and killed. Vâsîf adds to his chronicle while repudiating the late Grand Vizier and cultivating



xxvi Chronology

- Gazi Hasan Paşa. Vâsîf and Râşîd publish an edition of the chronicle of İzzî.
- AH 1200 = 1786 Vâsîf is made temporary head of the suspended payments office. He fights with Râşîd over the operation of the press and is ousted. In December, Râşîd has him sent away from Istanbul as ambassador to Spain.
- AH 1201 = 1787 Vâsîf leaves for Spain after long preparations. He tours Barcelona, Valencia, and La Granja, where in September, he is received by Floridablanca and Charles III.
- AH 1202 = 1788 Vâsîf winters in Madrid, makes social rounds, and meets the Englishman William Beckford. He continues to observe the Spanish kingdom. He returns home in April and writes an embassy report, but finds himself removed from office.
- AH 1203 = 1788/89 The empire is at war with Austria and Russia. Abdülhamid I dies and is replaced by his nephew, Selim III. Vâsîf serves in the treasury in Istanbul, where he is promoted to the head of the Anatolian accounts office.
- AH 1204 = 1790 Selim makes Vâsîf his proxy court historian and asks him to record the events of the royal accession.
- AH 1205 = 1791 Vâsîf is called to the war front in March. He serves Koca Yusuf Paşa as a courier and head of the general accounts office. He also writes a speech for the Grand Vizier and negotiates a truce with Nikolai Repnin, returning to take part in the Maçın boycott. In September, Vâsîf is sent away to Belgrade.
- AH 1206 = 1792 In April, Selim recalls Vâsîf to Istanbul but, still angry, leaves him without a post. Vâsîf devotes himself to study and claims to be impoverished.
- AH 1207 = 1793 Vâsîf most likely writes the *Perplexities in Vaşşâf's Vocabulary* and edits Mehmed Hayrî's poetry. He gains a name for himself as a poet, as well. In May, Vâsîf returns to the

- Anatolian accounts office and becomes court historian for a third time. He submits the first installment of *Charms and Truths*.
- AH 1208/9 = 1794 Râsîd Efendi feuds with Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi and targets his erstwhile partner Vâsîf, whom he accuses of sedition. The historian is dismissed from office and exiled to Lesbos.
- AH 1209/10 = 1795 After a few months in exile, Vâsîf returns to Istanbul and resumes his work in the treasury as director of the Anatolian accounts office. His son Lebîb marries.
- AH 1210/11 = 1796 Vâsîf fails to receive an appointment.
- AH 1211/12 = 1797 In the spring, Vâsîf is made head of the general accounts office.
- AH 1212/13 = 1798 Vâsîf again fails to receive an appointment. The French invade Egypt in July, on which occasion he writes the *Letter of Consolation* for the sultan.
- AH 1213/14 = 1799 Returning to the Anatolian accounts office, Vâsîf gets a snap appointment and promotion to chief of the daily ledger. Halil Nûrî Bey dies in May. Vâsîf replaces him as court historian for a fourth and final term. He begins the second installment of *Charms and Truths* and edits Ebubekir Sâmî Paşa's poetry.
- AH 1215 = 1800 Vâsîf submits the second volume of *Charms and Truths* and is made chancellor. He moves on to the third installment and probably writes the *Book of the Monk*.
- AH 1215/16 = 1801 In February, Vâsîf is discharged as chancellor. His house burns down the next month and he moves to Çamlıca, while Selim commissions him to rewrite the works of Hâkim and Çeşmizâde. Küçük Hüseyin Paşa returns from Egypt that December in triumph.
- AH 1216 = 1802 Selim approves Vâsîf's revisions and has him edit the work of Enverî. The historian also writes the *Gestes of Hüseyin Paşa* and is renamed chancellor.

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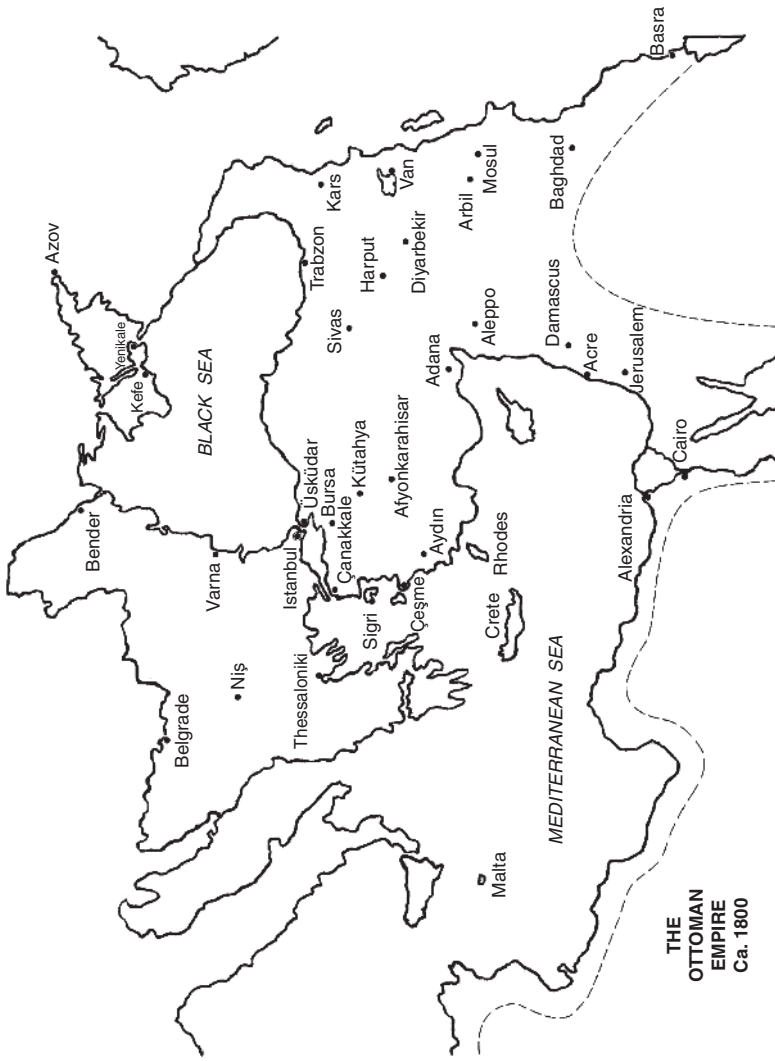
- AH 1217 = 1803 In September, the historian replaces Mustafa Râsîh Efendi as chancellor.
- AH 1218 = 1803/4 Selim commissions the *Final Word to Refute the Rabble* in defense of his reforms. Vâsîf also works with Mahmud Râîf Efendi on the *New Atlas Translation*.
- AH 1219 = 1804/5 Vâsîf prints his revisions of earlier chronicles as the fourth volume of *Charms and Truths*. Selim orders him to compile a fifth.
- AH 1220 = 1805 Selim fulfills Vâsîf's lifelong dream by naming him chief scribe. The historian represents a "French faction" at court, but negotiates a treaty renewal with the Russian ambassador Italinskii, which is ratified in December.
- AH 1221 = 1806 Early in the year, Vâsîf is forced to step down as court historian. His health failing, he moves the empire away from its alignment with Russia and sparks crises during the summer with threats to close the Bosphorus to shipping and the removal of the Phanariot princes. He dies in October, just before war is declared.

## Abbreviations

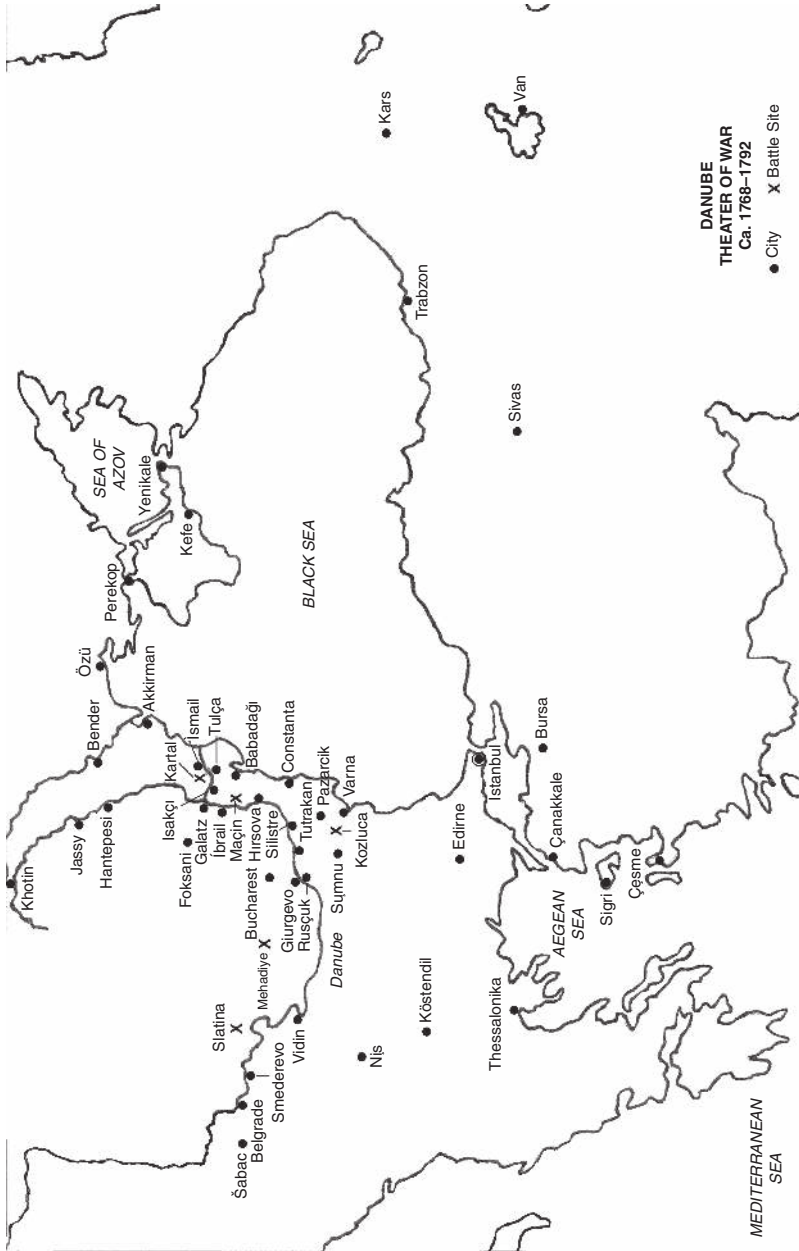
A.DVNS.NMH	Nâme-i Hümâyûn Defterleri, BOA
AE.Abd	Ali Emiri, Abdülhamid I collection, BOA
AE.Slm	Ali Emiri, Selim III collection, BOA
A.RSK.d	Bâb-ı Asâfî, Rûûs Kalemî Defterleri, BOA
ATLAS	Mahmud Râif, <i>Cedîd Atlas Tercümesi</i>
AÜDTCF	Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul
C.ADL	Cevdet Adliye collection, BOA
C.DH	Cevdet Dahiliye collection, BOA
C.HR	Cevdet Hariciye collection, BOA
C.MF	Cevdet Maarif collection, BOA
C.ML	Cevdet Maliye collection, BOA
C.TZ	Cevdet Timar collection, BOA
D.BŞM.d	Bâb-ı Defterî, Başmuhâsebe Kalemî Defterleri, BOA
DİA	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i>
EI <sup>2</sup>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edition
GAZAVÂT	Vâsîf, <i>Gazavât-ı Hüseyin Paşa</i> . ÖN Cod. H.O. nr. 205
GOW	Franz Babinger, <i>Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke</i>
HADİKAT	Osmanzâde Tâib, <i>Hadîkatü'l-Vüzerâ</i>
HAT	Hatt-ı Hümâyûn collection, BOA
HULÂSAT	Abdullah Uçman, ed., <i>Sekbanbaşı Risalesi, Hulâsat el-Kelâm fi Red el-Avam</i>
İA	<i>İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i>

## xxx List of Abbreviations

İ.DH	İrade-i Dahiliye collection, BOA
İJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
İLGÜREL	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . ed. Mücteba İlgürel
İÜ	İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
İÜEF	İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi
KİNÂLİZÂDE	Kınâlizâde Ali Çelebi, <i>Ahlâk-ı Alâ'î</i>
KK.d	Kâmil Kepeci Defterleri, BOA
MEHÂSİN 1	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesi Kütüphanesi, nr. 355
MEHÂSİN 2	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . İÜ TY nr. 5978
MEHÂSİN 3	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . İÜ TY nr. 5979
MEHÂSİN 4	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . İÜ TY nr. 6013
MEHÂSİN 5	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . İstanbul, 1804. 2 vols.
MEHÂSİN 6	Vâsıf, <i>Mehâsinü'l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü'l-Ahbâr</i> . TSMK Hazine nr. 1406
MERSH	<i>The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History</i>
MHM.d	Mühimme Defterleri, BOA
NEVÂBİĞ	Vâsıf, <i>Tercüme-i Şerh-i Nevâbigü'l-Kelim</i> . Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev nr. 387
RÂHİBNÂME	Vâsıf, <i>Râhibnâme</i> . TSMK Hazine nr. 386
RESMÎ	Ahmed Resmî, <i>Hulâsatü'l-İtibâr</i> , trans. Ethan L. Menchinger
SEFÂRETNÂME	Vâsıf, <i>Sefâretnâme-i Vâsıf</i> . TSMK Hazine nr. 1438, fols. 327b-354b
SO	Mehmed Sürreya, <i>Sicill-i Osmânî</i>
SSA	İstanbul Müftülüğü Şer'iyye Sicilleri Arşivi, İstanbul
TESLİYETNÂME	Vâsıf, <i>Tesliyetnâme</i> . TSMK Hazine nr. 1625
TOEM	<i>Târih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası</i>
TSMA	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, İstanbul
TSMK	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
ÖN	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna
OTAM	<i>Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi</i>
Y.EE	Yıldız Esas Evrakı collection, BOA



1. The Ottoman Empire, ca. 1800



2. The Danube Theater of War, ca. 1768–1792



3. Bourbon Spain, ca. 1787/88