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 Vâsif.

Vâsif’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 Vâsif’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 Vâsıf 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 Vâsıf'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 Vâsıf: 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 Vâşîf (d. 1806). We follow Vâşîf 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 Çamlica. In the process, Vâşîf 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
The First of the Modern Ottomans

The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasi̇f

ETHAN L. MENCHINGER

University of Michigan
For Natalia
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I first “met” Ahmed Vâsıf in the fall of 2006 while writing an undergraduate thesis at the University of Toronto. That I am now his biographer many years later is due to the timely aid and generosity of more people and institutions than I can fairly thank. I wish to own my debt first to Gottfried Hagen and Virginia Aksan, who read the full study both in its first guise as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan and later as a book manuscript. Their help and sensible criticism have been invaluable. Michael Bonner and Rudi Lindner, too, helped to shape this book with their feedback. The Department of Near Eastern Studies and Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan, funded the first stages of my research in Turkey. The program “Europe in the Middle East – the Middle East in Europe” at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin gave me time and support as a 2014/15 fellow to rethink, rewrite, and visit libraries across continental Europe. Much of the revision itself took place at the Graduate School for Muslim Cultures and Societies, Freie Universität, to whose staff and students I owe special thanks. Finally, a 2015 Summer Fellowship from the American Research Institute in Turkey let me finish the research where it began, Istanbul, while a 2015/16 visiting affiliation in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, brought it full circle.

This book would have been impossible but for the help of many good librarians and archivists. The Hatcher Graduate Library in Ann Arbor; the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; the Newberry Library in Chicago; the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi, Istanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Millet Kütüphanesi, and Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul; the British Library in London; the
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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.

No lesser thanks must go to colleagues and friends who aided this project along its way. Virginia Aksan lent me key microfilms from her personal library. Kemal Beydilli, Mustafa Bilge, and Seyfi Kenan at the İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi (İSAM) in Istanbul shared their hospitality, advice, and deep knowledge of Vâsif and eighteenth-century sources; Kemal Bey, too, provided files that made this book possible. Noah Gardiner secured a rare manuscript for me in Cairo, Günhan Börekçi, Kahraman Şakul, Will Smiley, and Aysel Yıldız sent other documents, and Victor Ostapchuk lent the guidance of a true hoca. Maria Marsh and her team at Cambridge University Press also worked on my behalf with efficiency and enthusiasm, while two anonymous readers helped to improve the final product markedly. I would most of all like to thank my family, however – Dad, Mom, Stefan, Olivia, my extended family, and my in-laws Mama, Батько, і Ляриса – who have always supported me. Lastly, to my wife Natalia go the greatest thanks for her years of love and encouragement. It is to her that I dedicate this book.
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, Ü, 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, i  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.
Note on the Text

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 Vâsıf’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/Muharram
S Safer/Safar
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/Shâbân
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 Vâsî’s death in 1806, the kuruş had slipped to about eight to the ducat and fifteen to the pound sterling. Vâsî 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, Vâsî’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 Vâsî submitted at Istanbul University, a critical edition of part of his chronicle: Hüseyin Sarıkaya, ed., “Ahmed Vâsî Efendi ve Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâîkü’l-Ahbâr’ı, 1209–1219/1794–1805” (Istanbul University, 2013). Since Sarıkaya’s archival work on Vâsî 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. Vâsıf’s patron.


Ârif Efendi, Dürrızade Mehmed (1740–1800): Jurist and judge from an eminent ulema family. Served as şeyhülislâm twice, in 1785/86 and from 1792 to 1798.

Âşim 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. Vâsıf’s jealous rival.


Ayşe (??-??): One of Vâsıf’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. Vâsıf’s friend and patron.

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Bouligny y Paret, Juan (1726–1798): Spanish statesman and diplomat. Served as envoy and ambassador in Istanbul from 1779 to 1793.


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.


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.


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 (Cezaýirli) (?-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.


Hakkı Bey, Mehmed (1747–1811): Vizier and governor. Suppressed rebels in Rumelia in late 1790s. Target of Vâsıf’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.


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.


Mabeynci Ahmed Efendi (??-1807): Court chamberlain and confidant to Selim III. Vâsıf’s patron and one-time neighbor. Murdered in the 1807 rebellion.
Dramatis Personae


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.


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.


Râif 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. Vâsıf’s erstwhile ally and enemy.
Râtit Efendi, Ebubekir (1750–1799): Scribe, courtier, and influential reformer under Selim III. Traveled to Vienna as ambassador between 1791 and 1792.
Reşid 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.
Ruffin, Pierre-Jean-Marie (1742–1824): French orientalist and diplomat. Envoy in Istanbul while Vâsıf 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 Vâsıf several times.
Silâhdar Mehmed Paşa (1735/36–1781). Courtier and vizier. A palace confidant of Abdülhamid I who was Grand Vizier from 1779 to 1781. Vâsıf’s patron.
Tatarc Efendi, Abdullah (1730/31–1797): Scholar, judge, and reformer. Influential voice under Selim III and rival of Mehmed Râşid Efendi. Friend to Vâsıf, with whom he was exiled in 1794/95.
Ümmü Gülsüm Hanım (?, ?): Vâsıf’s wife and the mother of his children. Perhaps related to Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi’s family.
Dramatis Personae

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

Ziyyâ 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 Mekki Efendi.
Chronology

Ca. AH 1147 = 1735
Ahmed Vâsıf is born in Baghdad.

Ca. AH 1175 = 1761/62
Vâsıf pursues his studies in Aleppo.

AH 1180 = 1766/67
Vâsıf travels to Anatolia and studies in Van and Kars; he meets Gül Ahmedpaşazade Ali Paşa and accompanies him to Sivas as a treasury scribe.

AH 1183 = 1769
Gül Ahmedpaşazade Ali Paşa joins the imperial army on the Danube. Vâsıf follows in train to Bender, where in October, his master puts down a mutiny and dies.

AH 1184 = 1770/71
Vâsıf becomes Abaza Mehmed Paşa’s private secretary. He witnesses major Ottoman defeats at Falça, Kartal, and Ismail and is captured by the Russians.

AH 1184/85 = 1770/71
Vâsıf 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. Vâsıf then visits Istanbul and seeks patronage, attaching himself to Abdürrezzâk Bâhir Efendi.

AH 1185/86 = 1771/72
Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa makes Vâsıf a clerk in the correspondence office at the rank of bureau chief. Peace talks at Foksani collapse. Vâsıf travels to the Russian camp to renew a truce with Field Marshal Rumiantsev and is rewarded.
AH 1186/87 = 1772/73  Vâsıf 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. Vâsıf 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 Vâsıf out of favor and without post or income.

AH 1193 = 1779  Abdürrezzâk Efendi becomes chief scribe a second time and Vâsıf writes a gloss on al-Zamakhshari’s *Exceptional Aphorisms*. In October, he gains a post as first fortifications officer.

AH 1194 = 1780  Abdürrezzâk Efendi, Vâsıf’s patron, falls out with the Grand Vizier and dies.

AH 1195 = 1781  Vâsıf 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 Vâsıf the director of the outer documentation office.

AH 1197 = 1783  The Crimean Crisis erupts. Vâsıf is named court historian for the first time and begins to compile a chronicle.

AH 1198 = 1784  Vâsıf 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 Sâmi, Şâkir, and Subhî in the autumn.

AH 1199 = 1785  Halil Hamid Paşa is dismissed, exiled, and killed. Vâsıf adds to his chronicle while repudiating the late Grand Vizier and cultivating

AH 1200 = 1786
Vâsıf is made temporary head of the suspended payments office. He fights with Râşid over the operation of the press and is ousted. In December, Râşid has him sent away from Istanbul as ambassador to Spain.

AH 1201 = 1787
Vâsıf 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
Vâsıf 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. Vâsıf serves in the treasury in Istanbul, where he is promoted to the head of the Anatolian accounts office.

AH 1204 = 1790
Selim makes Vâsıf his proxy court historian and asks him to record the events of the royal accession.

AH 1205 = 1791
Vâsıf 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, Vâsıf is sent away to Belgrade.

AH 1206 = 1792
In April, Selim recalls Vâsıf to Istanbul but, still angry, leaves him without a post. Vâsıf devotes himself to study and claims to be impoverished.

AH 1207 = 1793
Vâsıf most likely writes the *Perplexities in Vassâf’s Vocabulary* and edits Mehmed Hayrî’s poetry. He gains a name for himself as a poet, as well. In May, Vâsıf 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
Râşîd Efendi feuds with Tatarcîk 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.
AH 1217 = 1803
In September, the historian replaces Mustafa Râsih Efendi as chancellor.

AH 1218 = 1803/4
Selim commissions the Final Word to Refute the Rabble in defense of his reforms. Vâsif also works with Mahmud Râif Efendi on the New Atlas Translation.

AH 1219 = 1804/5
Vâsif 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 Vâsif’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, Vâsif 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.DVNS.NMH</td>
<td>Nâme-i Hümâyûn Defterleri, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>AE.Abd</td>
<td>Ali Emiri, Abdülhamid I collection, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>AE.Slm</td>
<td>Ali Emiri, Selim III collection, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.RSK.d</td>
<td>Bâb-ı Asâfi, Rüüs Kalemî Defterleri, BOA</td>
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<td>ATLAS</td>
<td>Mahmûd Râîf, Cedit Atlas Tercümesi</td>
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<td>AUDETCAF</td>
<td>Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi</td>
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<tr>
<td>BnF</td>
<td>Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris</td>
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<td>BOA</td>
<td>Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul</td>
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<td>C.ADL</td>
<td>Cevdet Adliye collection, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.DH</td>
<td>Cevdet Dahiliye collection, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.HR</td>
<td>Cevdet Hariciye collection, BOA</td>
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<td>C.MF</td>
<td>Cevdet Maarîf collection, BOA</td>
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<td>C.ML</td>
<td>Cevdet Maliye collection, BOA</td>
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<td>C.TZ</td>
<td>Cevdet Timar collection, BOA</td>
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<td>D.BŞM.d</td>
<td>Bâb-ı Defterî, Başmuhasebe Kalemî Defterleri, BOA</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td><em>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI²</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAZAVÂT</td>
<td>Vâsîf, <em>Gazavât-ı Hüseyîn Paşa</em>. ÖN Cod. H.O. nr. 205</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOW</td>
<td>Franz Babinger, <em>Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke</em></td>
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<td>HADİKAT</td>
<td>Osmanzâde Tâib, <em>Hadikâtî‘îl-Vüzêrâ</em></td>
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<td>HAT</td>
<td>Hatt-ı Hümâyûn collection, BOA</td>
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<td>HULÂSAT</td>
<td>Abdullah Uçman, ed., <em>Sekbanbaşi Risalesi, Hulâtât el-Kelâm î Red el-Avam</em></td>
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<td>İA</td>
<td>İslâm Ansiklopedisi</td>
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List of Abbreviations

I.DH  İrade-i Dahiliye collection, BOA
IJMES  *International Journal of Middle East Studies*
İÜ  İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul
İÜEF  İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi
KINÂLIZÂDE  Knâlizade Ali Çelebi, *Abîêk-i Alâ’î*
KK.ı  Kâmil Kepeci Defterleri, BOA
MEHÂSÎN 1  Vâsif, *Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü’l-Abbâr*. İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesi Kütüphanesi, nr. 355
MEHÂSÎN 2  Vâsif, *Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü’l-Abbâr*. İÜ TY nr. 5978
MEHÂSÎN 3  Vâsif, *Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü’l-Abbâr*. İÜ TY nr. 5979
MEHÂSÎN 4  Vâsif, *Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü’l-Abbâr*. İÜ TY nr. 6013
MEHÂSÎN 6  Vâsif, *Mehâsinü’l-Âsâr ve Hakâikü’l-Abbâr*. TSMK Hazine nr. 1406
MERSH  *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*
MHM.ı  Mühimme Defterleri, BOA
NEVÂBIG  Vâsif, *Terçüme-i Şerîb-i Nevâbigü’l-Kelim*. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev nr. 387
RÂHIBNÂME  Vâsif, Râhibnâme. TSMK Hazine nr. 386
SEFÂRETNÂME  Vâsif, *Sefâretnâme-i Vâsif*. TSMK Hazine nr. 1438, fols. 327b-354b
SO  Mehmed Sürreya, *Sicill-i Osmâni*
SSA  İstanbul Müftülüğü Şer’iyye Sicilleri Arşivi, Istanbul
TESLİYETNÂME  Vâsif, Tesliyetnâme. TSMK Hazine nr. 1625
TOEM  Târihi Osmanlı Encümeni Mecluusa
TSMA  Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi Arşivi, Istanbul
TSMK  Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
ÖN  Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna
OTAM  Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırmaları ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi
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