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Master's Thesis of Asian Languages and Civilizations

Hamidian Damage Control
–Occupation of the Ottoman Bank (1896) and
Photographic Propaganda–

압뮈하미드 2세 정권의 정치적 피해 관리:
오스만 제국은행 점거사건(1896)과 사진
프로파간다

August 2022

College of Humanities
Seoul National University
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조백경

Hamidian Damage Control

– Occupation of the Ottoman Bank (1896) and
Photographic Propaganda –

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Submitting a master's thesis of
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Abstract

This thesis traces how the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (r.1876–1909) and his regime constructed photographic propaganda to settle hostile public opinion in Europe after the Armenian massacre in Istanbul (1896). On August 26, 1896, militants of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation forcefully occupied the Ottoman Bank, calling for international intervention to push the Ottoman government to implement reforms in Eastern Anatolia. The hostage standoff infuriated a Muslim mob in Istanbul and triggered mass killings of Armenian civilians in many parts of Istanbul. European governments and press harshly criticized Abdülhamid II for his passive, lukewarm attitude toward the atrocities against the Armenians and even suspected him of secretly instigating the massacre. In the face of Western opprobrium, Ottoman administrators sought to frame the event in a way more favorable to the Hamidian regime and to present the citywide massacre as thoroughly centered on and triggered by the terrorist attack by Armenian revolutionaries, thereby rationalizing, or at least offsetting, the gravity of the subsequent massacres. Accordingly, Ottoman functionaries concentrated on obtaining photographs pertaining to the Armenian attack on the bank and attempted to use them for propagandistic purposes.

The present work examines the attempts of the Hamidian regime to procure and mobilize three types of photographs on the terrorist attack: photographs of the Armenian perpetrators, the hospitalized victims, and the seized bombs that the perpetrators had reportedly planned to use. Attempts to use images of the Armenian revolutionaries were largely unsuccessful. The Ottoman government failed to obtain photographs of the bank attackers who fled overseas; the mugshots of other Armenians in custody turned out to have little impact on the European ambassadors' stance on the Armenian massacres, and the Hamidian regime's plan to use them

seems to have soon fizzled out. In contrast, photographs of the victims of the terrorist attacks were developed into propaganda materials. The captions given to the images reflect the Hamidian government's intention to distance itself from Western accusations regarding the Armenian massacre by reducing the event to indiscriminate, Armenian-perpetrated violence against innocent Ottomans. The photographs also suggest a novel understanding of the state's medical function of providing social well-being and healthiness, which seems to have played a key role in the Ottoman government's justification for limiting its responsibility to rectify the Armenian-instigated chaos.

Nevertheless, the photographs of the hospitalized were not widely distributed. The Yıldız Palace may have disagreed with the photographer's strategy, deeming it dangerous and unpredictable, and abandoned the idea of using the photographs. Aware of the open-ended nature of photographic meaning, Hamidian administrators took extreme caution not to induce unwanted interpretations of the images. Instead, they opted to disseminate photographs of bombs as appalling emblems of Armenian terrorism. The bomb images were considered safer and more reliable propaganda materials than images of wounded patients because bombs were established symbols of radical terrorism in the public imagination of *fin-de-siècle* Europe. The Hamidian government opened an exhibition of the seized weapons and succeeded in having photographs of the weapons published in European illustrated journals. With its safety and reliability verified, photography of weaponry soon became an established subgenre of photographic documentation of violence against the Ottoman state.

Rejecting simplistic interpretations of propaganda photography that relate certain formalistic qualities to a monolithic "ideology" of the Hamidian regime, this thesis attempts to approach the images as semantically fluid and open-ended. To that end, it sheds light on untidy and careless photographs in the Yıldız Photography Archive, which have received little

scholarly attention, and suggests that such defective images were intermediate products or by-products of state photographic projects, reflecting the continual processes of adjusting and negotiating the images' meanings and the regime's strategies.

Keyword: Ottoman Empire, Abdülhamid II, Armenian Question, Occupation of the Ottoman Bank and Istanbul Massacre (1896), Damage Control, Photography.

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List of Abbreviations

BOA (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi; Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives*)

Y.PRK.AZN (*Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Adliye ve Mezahib Nezareti Maruzatı*)

Y.PRK.HR (*Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Hariciye Nezareti Maruzatı*)

Y.PRK.ZB (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Zabtiye Nezareti Maruzatı*)

HR.SYS (*Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi Kısım Evrakı*)

İÜMK (*İstanbul Üniversitesi Merkez Kütüphanesi; Istanbul University Central Library*)

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I. Introduction

This thesis started as a struggle to “make sense” of a strange photograph set I came across in the spring of 2020 while browsing through the Yıldız Photography Collection of the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) in Istanbul University (*Istanbul Üniversitesi Merkez Kütüphanesi*, hereafter İÜMK). The photography set with a head index 779/71 included 60 imperial cabinet card photographs¹ in which one or more people are lying or sitting on a bed, mostly in patient gowns, apparently injured to a degree. At the bottom of every frame is a caption briefly identifying the patients and explaining how they were injured. Reading the captions, I realized that the sitters were the people injured in the Armenian revolutionaries’ attack on the Ottoman Bank and other places in Istanbul in late August 1896. I could easily read the propagandistic nature of these photographs from the captions. The raid on the Ottoman Bank triggered Armenian massacres in Istanbul, and the Ottomans were lambasted in the European press for their barbarism and cruelty. As the captions were also given in French, I assumed that these photographs were for Western audiences and expected to win their hearts by depicting damages to the Empire caused by Armenians.

The problem with this interpretation was that these photographic scenes were too crude and untidy for political propaganda material. Even at a quick glance, I noticed that these photographs were produced in haste. The photographer apparently made minimal effort to control the components in the photographic scene. Many sitters look idly blank or stare uncomfortably right into the lens with awkward poses. One photograph even shows an

¹ “Imperial cabinet card” refers to a card-mounted photograph style of 7 x 10 inches. It was adopted globally as one of the standard commercial sizes for photographs in the early 1890s.



Figure 1. “Mehmed Abdullah from Arapkir, police officer of Beyoğlu. He was hit with a bullet in the left hand while passing the Galata quay.” İÜMK 779/71-024.

unknown person loitering at the right corner, accidentally appearing in the scene (Figure 1). Why would the Hamidian government, notorious for its obsession with its image management, use these disorderly and careless photographs to win over European audiences? More perplexing was that I could not find any of these images reproduced in contemporary sources. Were they not propaganda materials? Were they not used at all?

Such “bad” photographs have seldom received academic interest in Ottoman historiography, even though they comprise a great proportion of the extensive photography archives of the Ottoman Empire. Studies on Ottoman photography have largely revolved around a few well-controlled and canonical photographs, photo-albums, and photographers, although many scholars have endeavored to push the limits of the photographic “canons.”²

² William Allen, “The Abdul Hamid II collection,” *History of Photography* 8:2 (1984), 119–145; Allen,

Particularly problematic was that many studies have tended to see photographs as finished visual totalities with fixed meanings and overlooked the complex photographic practices, where meanings undergo incessant changes. Only recently have scholars started to address this problem and called for a more nuanced and historicized understanding of photography across and beyond the Ottoman realms. Representative of this recent change is Zeynep Çelik, Edhem Eldem, and Bahattin Öztuncay's edited volume, *Camera Ottomana*.³ The editors criticize those limited sources privileged by scholars, which they say "hardly qualify as convincing representation of the immense mass of photographic production in the Ottoman Empire,"⁴ and aim to depart from the overly conceptual and formulaic approaches that have prevented historians from properly understanding the vast amount of photographs that defy clear categorization. Other studies on photographic mediums within Ottoman and global consumer cultures, such as postcards and illustrated journals, have further enriched our understanding of the "popular" dimension of Ottoman photography.⁵ Shifting scholarly focus from production to the (popular) consumption of photographs, the authors demonstrate how people understood, attached meanings to, and reinterpreted photographs. Such studies have focused on the photographic "end-products" in visual economies. While the thesis is heavily indebted to these studies, it attempts to go a step further by examining photographs in the

"Analyses of Abdul-Hamid's Gift Albums," in Carney E. S. Gavin (ed.), *Imperial Self-Portrait* (Harvard University, 1988), 33–37; Muhammad Isa Waley, "Images of the Ottoman Empire: The Photograph Albums Presented by Sultan Abdülhamid II." *The British Library Journal* 17.2 (1991), 111–27; Engin Özendes, *Abdullah Frères: Osmanlı Sarayının Fotoğrafçıları* (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1998).

³ Zeynep Çelik, Edhem Eldem, and Bahattin Öztuncay (eds.), *Camera Ottomana: Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire, 1840–1914* (Koç University Press, 2015).

⁴ Zeynep Çelik and Edhem Eldem, "Introduction," in *Camera Ottomana*, 12.

⁵ Edhem Eldem, "The Search for an Ottoman Vernacular Photography," in Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (eds.), *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East* (De Gruyter, 2017). 29–56; Michèle Hannoosh, "Practices of Photography: Circulation and Mobility in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean." *History of Photography* 40.1 (2016), 3–27.

making—that is, somewhere between production and consumption. I propose that the photographs of the wounded people were “aborted” materials of photographic propaganda. Such unused photographs enable us to see beyond the surfaces of Ottoman “official” photography.

To that end, I privilege messy archives above well-curated photo albums and collections. Archives are full of “intermediate” and by-products of photographic projects, reflecting the process in which their photographic meanings and strategies were being adjusted and negotiated. Scholars have largely refrained from mentioning the messiness of Ottoman photography archives,⁶ with only a few exceptions, such as Ahmet Ersoy’s recent work. Ersoy demonstrates that defective images, which were produced for diplomatic gift albums but did not make it to these albums, were nevertheless carefully given captions and compiled in the Abdülhamid’s Yıldız photography archive:

But it is significant that ... even blatantly flawed images ..., which would have been readily discarded in a regular studio setting, were duly processed, and absorbed within the habitual practice of bureaucratic knowledge management. ... For the archivists, ... the defective image was data retained for its own sake. This urge to preserve, compile and stock fits squarely into the universal logic of the modern archive, where redundancy and excess of information constitute the very norm.⁷

⁶ Earlier works discussing the Hamidian photography archive barely comment on the huge incoherency and messiness within the archive, mentioning simply the photographs’ diversity in terms of topics and subjects. See, for example, Nancy C. Micklewright, “Personal, Public, and Political (Re)Constructions: Photographs and Consumption,” in Donald Quataert (ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1500–1922: An Introduction* (State University of New York Press, 2000), 278.

⁷ Ahmet Ersoy, “The Sultan and His Tribe: Documenting Ottoman Roots in the Abdülhamid II Photographic Albums,” in Bahattin Öztuncay and Özge Ertem (eds.), *Ottoman Arcadia: The Hamidian Expedition to the Land of Tribal Roots (1886)* (Koç University Press, 2018), 41.

There is nothing wrong with having defective photographs in an archive. Rather, it reflects the fundamental logic of the modern archive to preserve even “redundancy and excess.” Also implied in this observation is that Ottoman photographic projects, which necessitate different processes of photo shooting, data acquisition, and compilation, involved multiple agents, whose intentions and attitudes did not always coincide. Photographs in the Ottoman archive were not merely direct materializations of the sultan’s will but multilayered media, produced and mobilized by actors with different understandings of the subject.

Ersoy’s observation is indeed insightful, but he does not go so far as to inquire about the afterlives of these rather defective images. Although most ended up in the archive without being used for other purposes, others were given a second chance. As Deniz Türker points out, photographs were “commonly stored [in the Yıldız Photography Archive] as loose-leaves in preparation for their reuse, often detached from their indexes, the written or printed documents that they initially complemented.”⁸ As will be demonstrated, this was exactly the case with the wounded people’s photographs taken in 1896.

1. Raid on the Ottoman Bank and Istanbul Massacre

On August 26, 1896, armed *Dashnaktsutyun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) militants forcefully took over the Ottoman Bank in Galata. Taking bank employees and customers hostage, they called for international interventions to push the Ottoman

⁸ Deniz Türker, “‘Every Image is a Thought’: Nineteenth-Century Gift Albums and the Hamidian Visual Archive,” in *Ottoman Arcadia*, 66.

government to implement reforms in Eastern Anatolia. They sent letters to the European embassies warning that “[l]e temps des jeux diplomatiques est passé” and threatened to blow up the building if their demands were not met.⁹ At the same time, other members of the Federation started shooting firearms and launching bombs in other regions of the city. Hostility between the bank occupants and Ottoman soldiers continued for hours, but Ottoman attempts to break the deadlock were of little avail. Only after European ambassadors intervened did proper negotiation begin; they acceded to the revolutionaries’ demand for refuge in France. The occupation of the Ottoman Bank triggered mass killings of Armenians in many parts of Istanbul. Even though the occupation itself did not last long, infuriated mobs attacked Armenians indiscriminately, resulting in thousands of deaths in only a few days.¹⁰

In the earliest stage of the event, revolutionaries’ attack was generally disapproved in the European press.¹¹ Nevertheless, as the news of the citywide massacre spread, the tables turned. Sultan Abdülhamid was harshly criticized for his passive and lukewarm attitude toward the atrocities against the Armenians and even suspected of secretly instigating the

⁹ “The Armenian Revolutionary Committee to the Embassies,” Correspondence No. 25, Inclosures 1 and 2, in House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Turkey No. 1 (1897): Correspondence respecting the Disturbances at Constantinople in August 1896* (Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1897), 13–15.

¹⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, *“They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide*. (Princeton University Press, 2017), 125; İlkay Yılmaz, “Anti-Anarchism and Security Perceptions during the Hamidian Era,” *Zapruder World: An International Journal for the History of Social Conflict* 1 (2014), <http://www.zapruderworld.org/content/ilkay-yilmaz-anti-anarchism-and-security-perceptions-during-hamidian-era>. There is hardly a consensus among scholars on the Armenian death toll of the Istanbul massacre. Figures vary from as low as 2,000 to as high as 8,000. Edhem Eldem points out that despite the varying figures, the number of deaths is overwhelmingly higher than that of the injured in all figures. This indicates, as Eldem explains, that people attacked the Armenians not in passive self-defense but with a very clear intention to take Armenian lives. Edhem Eldem, “26 Ağustos 1896 ‘Banka Vakası’ ve 1896 ‘Ermeni Olayları’.” in Fahri Aral (ed.), *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri, Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 127–128, 143. A contemporary document from the Ottoman Ministry of Police, unsurprisingly, gives a much lower death toll of 1,286. BOA. YPRK. ZB. 17/45, in Ferhat Kütükülü, *Bölücü Terör ve İhtilal Örgütlerine Bağlı Ermenilerin İstanbul Ayaklanmaları: Arşiv Belgeleri, 1895–1896* (Kuşak Ofset Matbaası, 2009), 238.

¹¹ François Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II: Le sultan calife*. (Fayard, 2003), 275–276.

massacre. Former British Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone referred to the sultan as “the great assassin” and condemned both Ottoman and British inaction in the atrocities,¹² stirring up a widespread public response.

It was not the first time that the Hamidian regime was attacked for Armenian massacres and general mistreatment of its Armenian subjects. Abdülhamid II was often referred to with the derogatory sobriquet “the red sultan” and portrayed as a bloodthirsty sovereign, particularly after the consecutive Armenian massacres in 1894–1896 (“Hamidian massacres,” named after sultan Abdülhamid II). However, the massacre in Istanbul after the Ottoman Bank takeover received the most Western attention. While most of the massacres in 1894-1896 took place in Eastern Anatolian *vilayets*, such as Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Van, the massacre in late August 1896 unraveled in Istanbul, which was “under the watchful eyes of European Embassy and Press.”¹³ When Abdülhamid sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Baron de Calice, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, to ask about the significance of the event, Calice replied that “hitherto half [of] Europe had been incredulous about the massacres which had taken place in the provinces, but that now they had occurred in the capital everybody would realize the truth and the fact that the Turkish Government was no longer in a position to maintain order, even in Constantinople, or to protect Christians.”¹⁴ It was clear that Armenian massacres in Istanbul would have far greater repercussions on the Western public than previous massacres.

¹² “The Armenian Massacres,” *The Times* (September 16, 1896).

¹³ Sinan Dinçer, “The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896),” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 10.4 (2013), 21.

¹⁴ “Mr. Herbert to the Marquess of Salisbury,” Correspondence No. 12 (August 29, 1896) in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 7; “Baron Calice to Mr. Herbert,” Correspondence No. 26, Inclosure 3 (August 29, 1896) in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 22.

Furthermore, the Ottoman Bank was largely understood as an institution representing Western political and capitalist interests.¹⁵ For that reason, the revolutionaries' attack on the bank was particularly disturbing to the West. While Dashnak resorting to a terrorist attack was repeatedly disavowed as an abominable crime, public opinion in Europe was clearly unfavorable to the Hamidian regime and sympathetic to the Armenian causes.¹⁶ However, this did not make the Ottoman situation any better. Great powers had little reason to extenuate the Hamidian passivity or connivance. On the contrary, they believed that the Ottoman inability or unwillingness to resolve the Armenian question would ultimately endanger their imperial interest in the Ottoman Empire; Britain and Germany even discussed a plan to dethrone the sultan militarily to stabilize the situation.¹⁷

In the face of Western opprobrium, Ottoman administrators sought ways to frame the event in a way more favorable to the Hamidian regime—to present the whole event as thoroughly centered on the terrorist attack of Dashnaks and thereby rationalize, or at least offset, the gravity of the following massacres. In the past two decades, the Hamidian regime's attitude to, involvement in (or intentional lack thereof), and interpretation of the massacres have received considerable attention from historians of the Armenian question. Eldem attempts a critical rereading of Ottoman documents about the Ottoman Bank takeover in 1896 and the ensuing Armenian massacres, the veracity of which was widely denied by historians,

¹⁵ The Ottoman Bank, despite being the “state bank” of the Empire, was administrated by a committee nominated by the founders in Paris and London from its establishment in 1863. Ottoman Bank Archives, Legal Affairs Files, Certified copy of the 4 February 1863, agreement, February 1307/1892, cited in Edhem Eldem, “The Imperial Ottoman Bank: Actor or Instrument of Ottoman Modernization?” in Kostas P. Kostis (ed.), *Modern Banking in the Balkans and West-European Capital in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Ashgate, 1999; reissued in Routledge, 2018), footnote 3.

¹⁶ Georgeon, 300–301; Edhem Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (Ofset Yapımevi, 1999), 238–239.

¹⁷ Georgeon, 301–304. Carter V. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity* (Yale University Press, 2010), 144.

except for proponents of a denialist interpretation. Instead of ruling them out, Eldem masterfully reads these sources against the grain and suggests that even the documents intended for internal use betray Hamidian attempts to formulate “a cautious and defensive fiction (*temkinli ve savunmacı bir kurgu*)” for conceptualizing the massacres in a way less harmful to the regime.¹⁸ Also analyzing the Ottoman official rhetoric on the Hamidian massacres, Edip Gölbaşı draws parallels with the Turkish government’s official conceptualization of the Armenian massacres that blamed Armenians for provoking Muslims to use violence.¹⁹ Similarly, Ali Sipahi²⁰ and Owen Miller²¹ trace the formation of an official narrative on Armenian massacres in Harput (1895) and Sasun (1893–4), respectively.

How, then, did the Hamidian government try to diffuse its interpretation of the massacres to Western dignitaries and the public press? In this thesis, I attempt to demonstrate the way the Hamidian regime used photography as a tool to reinforce the official conceptualization of the Armenian massacres. Although a crucial part of Ottoman image-

¹⁸ Edhem Eldem, “26 Ağustos 1896 ‘Banka Vakası’ ve 1896 ‘Ermeni Olayları’.” in Fahri Aral (ed.), *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri, Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 125–152.

¹⁹ Edip Gölbaşı, “The Official Conceptualization of the anti-Armenian Riots of 1895–1897. Bureaucratic Terminology, Official Ottoman Narrative, and Discourses of Revolutionary Provocation.” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 10 (2018), 33–62; Armenian genocide denialism(s) constitutes the axis of Turkish government’s official discourse on the Armenian question in the Ottoman past. Its proponents reject the notion of the “Armenian Genocide” in 1915–1917, with their perspectives varying from refusal to acknowledge the occurrence of mass killings to denial of genocidal intentions of the wartime Young Turk government. For analyses and historical overviews of Turkish denialisms on genocide, see Richard G. Hovannisian, “Denial of the Armenian Genocide 100 Years Later: The New Practitioners and Their Trade.” *Genocide Studies International* 9.2 (2015), 228–247; Doğan Gürpınar, “The Manufacturing of Denial: The Making of the Turkish ‘Official Thesis’ on the Armenian Genocide between 1974 and 1990.” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18.3 (2016), 217–240.

²⁰ Ali Sipahi, “Narrative Construction in the 1895 Massacres in Harput: The Coming and Disappearance of the Kurds.” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 10 (2018), 63–95.

²¹ Owen Miller, “Rethinking the Violence in the Sasun Mountains (1893–1894).” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 10 (2018), 97–123.

making and political “damage control”²² in the Hamidian era, photography has largely been neglected in the historiography of the Armenian question and massacres. This thesis aims to bring this medium to light and to improve our understanding of Ottoman strategies to engage with the Hamidian massacres. By focusing on how different actors participated in attempts to obtain/produce propagandistic photographs, formulate, and limit the fluid meanings of photographs, and decide which image(s) to disseminate to the Western public, I suggest that these photographs were semantically open-ended images, whose meanings were constantly accrued or removed across time. In doing so, I reject simplistic interpretations of propaganda photography that relate certain formalistic qualities vis-à-vis a monolithic “ideology” of the Hamidian regime.

2. Structure of the Thesis

In the first part of the thesis, I briefly discuss the obsession with damage control that characterized Ottoman politics in the Hamidian era (1876–1909) and Ottoman efforts to mobilize photography for damage management. In Chapters III to V, I navigate the Hamidian administrators’ attempts to acquire photographs that could serve to support the Ottoman conceptualization of the Armenian massacres and their concerns surrounding the possible impact of using (or not being able to use) such images. As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman strategy was to shine a spotlight on the revolutionaries’ attacks, evoking it as the cause of the Armenian massacre that ensued. Thus, Ottoman administrators concentrated on obtaining

²² I follow Selim Deringil’s use of the term “damage control,” which refers to Ottoman endeavors to mitigate damage from infamies in public and diplomatic circles. See Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire: 1876–1909* (Tauris, 1999), 135–149.

photographs pertaining to the revolutionaries' violence, including those of the perpetrators (Chapter III), the hospitalized victims (Chapter IV), and the seized bombs (Chapter V).

In Chapter III, I demonstrate the endeavors of Hamidian functionaries to obtain and mobilize the images of the Armenian perpetrators. Such attempts were largely unsuccessful. The functionaries failed to obtain photographs of the bank attackers who fled overseas, and the mugshots of other Armenians in custody turned out to have little impact on the European ambassadors' stance on the Armenian massacres. In Chapter IV, I examine state reports submitted by Mazhar Bey on the hospitalized victims of Armenian terrorism and demonstrate that these served as base materials to give narratives to photographs. Moreover, by comparing the photographic captions and state reports, I attempt to reconstruct the timeline of this photographic project. Based on this timeline, I suggest that the patients were photographed for potential propaganda material without a concrete plan of dissemination at the time of the photo shoot. I argue that these photographs, on the one hand, reflect a deep anxiety in the earliest phase of the event and reluctance to see it as a massacre, which was prevalent among the Hamidian ruling elites. On the other hand, the photographs reflect a novel understanding of the state's medical function of providing social well-being and healthiness, which seems to have played a key role in the Ottoman government's justification of limiting its responsibility to rectifying the Armenian-instigated chaos. In Chapter V, I examine photographs of the bombs that Ottoman police seized and attempt to trace the photographs' public appearances. Keen on the open-ended nature of photographic meaning, Hamidian administrators took extreme caution not to induce unwanted interpretations of the images. They opted to disseminate the photographs of bombs, which were considered a safer and more reliable option as propaganda materials than images of wounded patients. It is unclear how much impact these photographs had on the Ottoman image in the European press. However,

photography of weaponry became an established subgenre of photographic documentation of the violence against the Ottoman state.

II. Hamidian Damage Control and Photography

Abdülhamid ascended to the throne in 1876, when the image of the Ottomans in Europe was deteriorating to an unprecedented degree.²³ The catalyst was the Bulgarian revolt in April, in the suppression of which Ottoman *Başıbozuk* (irregular militia) massacred Bulgarian civilians. Anti-Turkish sentiments were further fueled by the pamphlet *Bulgarian Horrors and the Questions of the East* (1876) by William Gladstone. Not only did Gladstone denunciate the Turkish race as “great anti-human specimen of humanity,” but he also harshly attacked the foreign policy of Benjamin Disraeli’s cabinet.²⁴ Criticizing Disraeli’s “ostentatious protection [of] Turkey” as “a strange perversity,” Gladstone urged abandoning the traditional policy line of protecting Ottoman sovereignty as a deterrent against Russian expansionism.²⁵ Gladstone’s pamphlet and his barnstorming speeches immediately sparked vociferous public outrage in Britain. Public opinion turned fiercely against the cabinet, effectively limiting Disraeli’s room for maneuver in diplomacy.²⁶ When Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, Disraeli was forced to declare the neutrality of Britain; a long-time

²³ Nazan Çiçek, “The Turkish Response to Bulgarian Horrors: A Study in English Turcophobia,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42.1 (2006), 87–88.

²⁴ William E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (J. Murray, 1876), 13. Abdülhamid was still a prince when the pamphlet was published but acceded to the throne in less than a week.

²⁵ Gladstone, 40–42.

²⁶ The pamphlet instantly became a bestseller after publication, with 40,000 copies sold in a week and 200,000 by the end of the month. Robert J. Blake, *Disraeli* (St. Martin’s Press), 598; Benjamin Fortna, “The Reign of Abdülhamid II,” in Reşat Kasaba (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 4: Turkey in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 42–47.

ally and chief protector of the Ottomans decided to stand out of the war.²⁷ Only after the total defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of Edirne did it become apparent that Britain had intervened, pressuring the Russians to negotiate a truce.²⁸ The war ended in disaster for the Ottoman Empire, depriving it of almost half of its territory in the Balkans.²⁹

This experience left Ottoman ruling elites with a bitter lesson: even public hostility beyond the Ottoman border could lead to dire consequences for the Empire. Unsurprisingly, image management was given tremendous importance in the Hamidian state machinery. To monitor the Western public on a daily basis, the Foreign Press Directorate (*Matbuat-ı Ecnebiye Müdüriyeti*) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) collected more than 100 newspapers from Britain to Serbia and Bulgaria.³⁰ These articles served not only as windows to learn about the Western public but also as potential resources for defending the Ottoman image. For example, when the massacre of Armenians in Eastern Anatolia sparked public criticism, Abdülhamid “serviced an illustrated article from the French penny press about ‘a black man lynched by the American mob’, in an attempt to expose the ‘double standards’ of the western world critical of his policies.”³¹ The Ottoman government also

²⁷ Marvin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (Macmillan, 1985), 74–76. Nevertheless, British neutrality did not mean a complete switch to a hands-off Eastern policy. To secure Britain’s neutrality, Russia had to assure Britain that its major interest points in the region would be unhindered. Edin Radušić, “The Ottoman Wrong Horse? The Question of Bosnia and Hercegovina in the Last Phase of the Eastern Crisis,” in Peter Sluglett and Hakan Yavuz (eds.), *War and Diplomacy: the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (University of Utah Press, 2011), 174–176.

²⁸ Walter F. Bell, “Russo-Ottoman War, 1877–1878,” in Richard C. Hall (ed.), *War in the Balkans: An Encyclopedic History from the Fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (ABC-CLIO, 2014), 256–258.

²⁹ Fortna (2008), 47.

³⁰ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire: 1876–1909* (Tauris, 1999), 136–137; Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton University Press, 1980), 255–258.

³¹ Ersoy (2016), “Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving Everyday Life and Historical Space in Ottoman Illustrated Journals.” *History of Photography* 40.3 (2016), 339.

endeavored to influence Western public opinion by sponsoring and bribing journalists, as well as, when deemed necessary, blackmailing them.³² Bureaucrats in the Foreign Press Directorate even produced articles themselves and sent them to Ottoman diplomats abroad to have these articles inserted into major European journals.³³

Abdülhamid made use of a variety of media, from theater to world fairs for image management,³⁴ with photography being among the most extensively exploited. He attributed great importance to photography, saying that an image “can evoke political and emotional significance (*siyasi ve hissî manaları*) even a hundred pages of writing cannot express.”³⁵ In other words, he considered photographic images as effective carriers of political and emotional messages and had his bureaucrats collect a massive number of photographs throughout his reign.³⁶ These photographs were windows through which the sultan could see the Empire and the world outside and a means of disseminating the images favorable to the regime and Ottoman Empire. Yıldız Palace, where the sultan resided, became a “hub of interlocking networks of information” into which photographs, newspapers, and journals

³² Deringil (1999), 136–141; Georgeon, 275–276.

³³ For example, when the Ottoman Empire was harshly criticized for the Armenian massacre in Urfa, the Directorate forwarded defensive articles to Stefanaki Karatodori Effendi, a minister plenipotentiary in Belgium. Karatodori managed to have them published in *L'Indépendance Belge*. Houssine Alloul and Roel Markey, “Please Deny These Manifestly False Reports”: Ottoman Diplomats and the Press in Belgium (1850–1914),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48.2 (2016), 280.

³⁴ Ersoy (2016), 339.

³⁵ Engin Özendes, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1919* (Haşet Kitabevi, 1987), 22.

³⁶ The sheer volume and diversity of the photographs that bureaucrats collected and archived under the Hamidian regime, currently housed in the Rare Works Library at Istanbul University, demonstrates the Sublime Porte’s preoccupation with photography. The archive consists of more than 36,000 photographs, including images from the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, of Château de Saint-Cloud west of Paris, portraits of Emperor Daoguang (r. 1820–1850) of Qing, X-rays of Ottoman soldiers, and an idyllic scene of children playing on boats in Singapore, to list only a few.

constantly flowed.³⁷

At times, these photographs materialized into grand photographic projects. In 1893, the sultan decided to display photographs at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago to counter the prevalent Orientalist, exoticized representation of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, which he considered extremely harmful to imperial honor and dignity. Commissioning a photo album series for Chicago, he remarked that “[m]ost of the photographs taken [by European photographers] for sale in Europe vilify and mock Our Well-Protected Domains. It is imperative that the photographs to be taken in this instance do not insult Islamic peoples by showing them in a vulgar and demeaning light.”³⁸ Closely supervised by the Yıldız palace, this album set was arranged as a photographic conglomeration of various images organized around the theme of Ottoman modernity.³⁹ After the exhibition, the Ottoman Empire donated the albums to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. and almost identical albums to the British Museum a year later.

However, such a large-scale photographic project was rather episodic. By contrast, illustrated journals, which had experienced rapid growth around the globe since the 1870s,

³⁷ Ersoy (2016), 339–340; According to Erin Hyde Nolan, Abdülhamid himself physically handled court-commissioned album prints in the archive, while the extent to which the sultan was involved in acquiring and publishing such photographs is uncertain. Erin Hyde Nolan, “The Gift of the Abdulhamid II Albums: The Consequences of Photographic Circulation.” *The Trans-Asia Photography Review* 9.2 (2019), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0009.207>.

³⁸ Quoted in Deringil, 156. “Well-Protected Domains (*Memalik-i Mahruse*)” was a phrase used by Ottomans to denote the imperial territory.

³⁹ To illustrate, photographs of Ottoman landscapes and Greco-Roman antiquities suggested the imperial territory and its historical legacies, and institutions such as factories and hospitals implied Ottoman industrial development. For more detailed analyses on these albums, see Michelle L. Woodward, “Between Orientalist Clichés and Images of Modernization: Photographic Practice in the Late Ottoman Era.” *History of Photography* 27.4 (2003), 363–374; Nolan, “The Gift of the Abdülhamid II Albums”; William Allen, “Analyses of Abdul-Hamid’s Gift Albums,” in Carney E. S. Gavin (ed.), *Imperial Self-Portrait* (Harvard University, 1984), 33–37.

were the main arena of quotidian “image wars,” which Ottoman authorities struggled to influence throughout the Hamidian era. With the boom of visual journalism, images in newspapers became “the central site of struggle between truth and sensation, information and entertainment, ‘decency’ and an uncensored state.”⁴⁰ Images had the power to dramatically amplify the impact of news on the public, of which Ottoman authorities were keenly aware. The Directorate of Domestic Press (*Matbuat-ı Dahiliye Müdüriyeti*) in the Ministry of Interior (*Dahiliye Nezareti*) screened out journal drafts before publication, and state censors could force the use or removal of (un)wanted illustrations and photographs.⁴¹

However, when it came to the foreign press, such watertight control was impossible. The Hamidian regime had little leverage over foreign journals, and highly influential figures and journalists were largely immune to Ottoman manipulation.⁴² Sensational photographs dangerous to the regime occasionally made it into Western illustrated journals, accompanied by words appealing to a photographic truth claim that suggested the photographs were “undeniable evidence” of Ottoman mischief.⁴³ Although the Hamidian regime failed most of the time in preventing such photographs from being published, it endeavored to exert power

⁴⁰ Amanda Frisken, *Graphic News: How Sensational Images Transformed Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), 16–17.

⁴¹ Eldem, “Powerful Images: The Dissemination and Impact of Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1870–1914,” in *Camera Ottomana* (2015), 131–137; İpek Yosmaoğlu “Chasing the Printed Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1913,” *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 21.1/2 (2003), 15–50; Fatmagül Demirel, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansür* (Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007), 43–104.

⁴² Eldem (2015), 129–130.

⁴³ To illustrate, an article in *La Vie Illustrée* with a photograph purported to show Ottoman soldiers posing behind severed heads of Macedonians remarked that “the Sublime Porte cannot contest their authenticity since a photographic plate cannot lie,” Henri de Weindel, “Les Atrocités Turques en Macedoine—Quelques Documents,” *La Vie Illustrée* 228 (February 27, 1903), quoted in Eldem (2015), 124–125; In another article, the photograph of captured Macedonian insurgents chained together with the corpse of another insurgent was accompanied by a caption saying, “the tragic photograph we publish today evinces the Ottoman’s cruel decision to display them on streets.” “Prisonniers Vivants et Morts, Exposes Ensemble dans les Rues,” *La Vie Illustrée* 222 (January 16, 1903).

to neutralize these image attacks. Whenever articles or images unfavorable to the Ottomans appeared in journals, Ottoman ambassadors in foreign capitals remonstrated with the press or the host country, in coordination with the Foreign Press Directorate in Istanbul. When deemed necessary, ambassadors even filed an official lawsuit against the newspaper.⁴⁴

In rarer cases, Ottomans tried to take the offensive in the “image wars” by preparing material that could counter furious obloquies against the regime and sending it to Western Press. When the Hamidian regime found itself under public crossfire after the Armenian massacre in Istanbul, Ottoman statesmen made a significant effort to produce and disseminate photographs with propagandistic value. Assumably, the extreme siege mentality and defensiveness of Ottoman ruling elites, combined with prevalent fear and distrust of Armenians, led them to take the offensive. As Jelle Verheij points out, intensifying mutual fear between Muslims (i.e., Turks and Kurds) and Armenians in the 1890s, which Verheij calls the “fear factor” of the Armenian massacres, was critical to the aggravation of the situation into full-scale massacres.⁴⁵ That Dashnaks attacked the imperial capital instead of the East Anatolian *vilayets*, where most of the Armenian resistance attacks had taken place, must have greatly amplified the fears of the Hamidian regime in 1896.

III. Attempts to “Capture” the Perpetrators

Only a few days after the bank takeover, the Ottoman government set out to procure

⁴⁴ Demirel, 107–109.

⁴⁵ Jelle Verheij “Diyarbakir and the Armenian Crisis of 1895,” in Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (eds.), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakir, 1870–1915* (Brill, 2012), 85–145; On the emphasis on “the fear factor” during the Hamidian massacres, see also Ali Sipahi (2018).

photographic materials on the incident with potential utility value in framing the incident in favor of (or at least to mitigate harm against) the regime. Among such materials were photographs of the Armenian perpetrators. On August 30, Tevfik Paşa, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nazırı*), ordered the Ottoman diplomat Mavroyeni Bey (Dimitri Mavroyeni) in Marseille to investigate the deported perpetrators' locations.⁴⁶ Mavroyeni Bey reported back from France that he had “taken every precaution to follow His Excellency’s instruction” and was “doing everything possible to photograph them [the Armenian deportees].”⁴⁷

Waiting for Mavroyeni Bey’s mission to progress, the Ottoman center turned its attention to another source already available to them to obtain photographs of Armenian perpetrators. Quelling the situation in Istanbul, Ottoman police had arrested hundreds of Armenians on charges of violence and sedition. Why not use their photographs? When the European ambassadors in Istanbul reprimanded the Ottoman policemen and soldiers for inaction, connivance, and participation in the Armenian massacres, the Ottoman government decided to use the photographs of Armenians in custody. On September 9, 1896, Tevfik Paşa sent an explanatory note to the ambassadors, stating that the Sublime Porte would punish the misdeeds of soldiers and police officers. Tevfik Paşa continues:

The imperial troops and police performed their duty with the greatest discipline and were untiring in their efforts. This is proved by the fact that they were able in two ways to re-establish order and public security in a great city that the Armenian

⁴⁶ Telegraph from Tevfik Paşa to Mavroyeni Bey, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, Telegraph No: 20294/164, 30 August 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri [1879–1918], Cilt I*, Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları (2002), 101.

⁴⁷ Telegraph from Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, Telegraph No: 51, 31 August 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 102.

agitators had reduced to a state of revolution ... One of the criminal methods employed by the Armenians with a view to completely disturbing public security and increasing the panic among the population was to assume Mussulman costume in order to commit their misdeeds. Their Excellencies, the Representatives of the Great Powers, will shortly receive photographs of as many of these individuals as have been arrested.⁴⁸

As seen in the note, the Ottoman government framed the event as a revolutionary scheme by Armenians against the Ottoman order. The note even makes the claim that many Muslims who committed “misdeeds” were in fact Armenians in disguise and proposes photographs of the arrested Armenians to corroborate this claim.

Nevertheless, upon receiving Tevfik Paşa’s note, ambassadors once again prepared a collective note undermining his claims and sent it to the Sublime Porte. The note flatly dismissed the Ottoman arguments, stating that they “do not in any way invalidate the force of the observations which they [the representatives of the Great Powers] were compelled to submit respecting the sanguinary events which followed the outrage committed by Armenian revolutionaries.”⁴⁹ To the European ambassadors, even if there had been Armenian revolutionaries disguised as Muslims, it would not be a valid excuse for condoning the mass killings of Armenians. It became evident that mugshots of Armenian perpetrators would not

⁴⁸ “Tewfik Pasha to the Representatives of the Great Powers at Constantinople,” Correspondence No. 49, Inclosure 1 (September 9, 1896), in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 49–51; “Note adressée le 9 septembre 1896 par la Sublime Porte à l’Ambassade d’Autriche-Hongrie,” Annexe N° 1 à la Dépêche de Constantinople du 16 Septembre 1896, in Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents Diplomatiques, *Affaires Arméniennes: Projet de Réformes dans l’Empire Ottoman 1893–1897* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1897), 289.

⁴⁹ “Collective Note of the Representatives of the Great Powers to Sublime Porte,” Correspondence No. 49, Inclosure 2 (September 15, 1896), in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 51–52.



Arméniens ayant pris part à l'attaque de la Banque ottomane de Constantinople.
L'après une photographie faite par M. J. Fabre à leur arrivée à Marseille.

Figure 2. “Arméniens ayant pris part à l’attaque de la Banque ottomane de Constantinople. L’après une photographie faite par M. J. Fabre à leur arrivée à Marseille.” *L’Illustration* 2801 (October 31, 1896).

change the ambassadors’ attitudes. Given that French and British diplomatic correspondences make no mention of receiving the photographs from the Sublime Porte, it appears that the Ottoman government ended up not sending them.

Mavroyeni Bey’s mission in Marseille did not work out as well. All his requests to obtain photographs of the Armenian revolutionaries detained in Marseille were frustrated by French authorities on the pretext that the survivors’ identities should remain confidential. When the French journal *L’Illustration* disclosed a photograph (produced by M. J. Fabre, assumably a small studio photographer in Marseille) on October 31, 1896, of the surviving members who arrived in Marseille (Figure 2), Mavroyeni Bey must have been bewildered. He claimed that if he had not been able to reach them, no one in Marseille would have been

either, and he concluded that the journal had fabricated the photograph only to “arouse the interest and curiosity of its readers while having this embarrassing event known.”⁵⁰ In the telegraph he sent the following day, Mavroyeni Bey elaborated on this by offering the following reasons: 1) it was physically impossible to approach the Armenians detained in Saint-Pierre Prison as the French *Ministère de l’Intérieur* did not authorize anyone to; 2) the number of Armenians featured in the photograph was greater than that of the real deportees (*kaçaklar*); and 3) people who had seen the deported Armenians with their own eyes, including the warder of the cell, did not recognize any of the people in the photograph.⁵¹

This episode illustrates the anxiety within the Hamidian cadre regarding allowing room for interpretations of the event unfavorable to the Ottoman Empire. Although the photograph was seemingly neutral, the fact that the press had the photograph while the Ottomans did not was enough to terrify Mavroyeni Bey. The powerful truth claims inherent in photography could have made this photograph a catalyst for a public response against the Ottoman Empire if the photograph had been accompanied by political messages. By challenging the truthfulness of the photograph, Mavroyeni Bey surely hoped to deny any possible informative value of the photograph regarding the event and minimize its possible impact.

Months passed with little progress in procuring photographs, partly due to Mavroyeni Bey’s dismissal from the post.⁵² Nevertheless, endeavors to obtain the photographs of the

⁵⁰ From Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, document No: 424, November 3, 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 118–119.

⁵¹ From Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, document No: 425, November 4, 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 119–120.

⁵² From an article, “Hors Paris,” mentioning Mavroyeni Bey’s dismissal in *L’événement* dated January 27, 1897, it can be assumed that he was dismissed around that time. The author writes sarcastically that “His Majesty Ab-ul-Hamid [sic] is having fun. ... when he is not beheading Armenians, he spends his time every eight days firing

surviving perpetrators continued. In February 1897, Edhem Bey at the Ottoman embassy in Marseille reported that his predecessor, Mavroyeni Bey, had wanted to have a few people assigned to help with the Armenian issue. Echoing Mavroyeni Bey's words, Edhem Bey listed five people who would help him and suggested that Tevfik Paşa confer on them *mecidiye* medals. Interestingly, Fabre, the photographer of Armenian deportees in *L'Illustration*, was included on Edhem Bey's list. Edhem Bey stated that Fabre "reached out to me today with offers" and had promised to provide photographs of the perpetrators of the Ottoman Bank takeover who were taking refuge in Geneva at the time.⁵³ It took nearly two months for Edhem Bey to receive a response. Tevfik Paşa informed him that he had asked the grand vizier to notify him upon making a decision about the medal. He also ordered Edhem Bey to provide him with information about the perpetrators and their photographs in the meantime.⁵⁴ Tevfik Paşa's slow response in early 1897 may indicate that the government's

his viziers and his ambassadors. It was quite recently the turn of Mavroyeni Bey, consul in Marseille and friend of France. This sultan is becoming very insulting!" (Translation mine.)

Although the reason for his removal is not explained in official documents, it is highly likely to have been triggered by Abdülhamid's withdrawal of favor from the Mavroyeni family. The Mavroyeni family was one of the few Phanariot (Ottoman Greek political elites and their Greek associates) families that retained its standing in Ottoman political and economic circles after the Kingdom of Greece broke away from the Ottoman Empire in 1821. The family's standing was seriously shaken in late 1896 when Mavroyeni Bey's father, Spiridon Mavroyeni Paşa, who was a personal physician-in-chief of the sultan (*sertabib-i hazret-i şehriyari*) and figure with a strong influence in the palace, became estranged from the sultan. This led the palace to recall Dimitri Mavroyeni's brother Alexander Mavroyeni from Washington D. C., where he had served as the Ottoman consul general for almost ten years. Sinan Kunalp, "Ottoman Diplomatic and Consular Personnel in the United States of America, 1867–1917," in Bilge Nur Criss, Selçuk Esenbel, and Tony Greenwood (eds.), *American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Cultures, 1830–1989* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 102; Feza Günergün, "Spiridon Mavroyeni Pacha (1817–1902) et sa Contribution à la Diffusion des Sciences Médicales dans l'Empire Ottoman." *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* 6.1 (2004), 37-62; Taceddin Kayaoğlu, *Osmanlı Hâriciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler (1852–1925)* (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 83; Konstantina Andrianopoulou, "Alexander Mavroyeni Bey: From the 19th Century Reform Era to the Young Turk Revolution through the Life and Ideology of a Neo-Phanariot Ottoman Bureaucrat." Unpublished MA Thesis (Boğaziçi University, 2004), 36–50.

⁵³ From Edhem Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, document No. 930, February 8, 1897, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 120–121.

⁵⁴ From Tevfik Paşa to Edhem Bey, BOA.HR.SYS., 2802-4, 2749/25, document No. 23117/67, March 25, 1897,

need and enthusiasm for acquiring images of the perpetrators had waned. In the fall of 1896, when the political crisis triggered by the Armenian massacres was still haunting the Sublime Porte, Tevfik Paşa exchanged memoranda about Dashnak deportees with Mavroyeni Bey on a daily basis. However, in early 1897, damage control would have been a less urgent issue. Tevfik Paşa still demanded photographs of surviving revolutionaries, perhaps for security concerns, but it is unlikely that he was still looking for material for political damage control.

IV. Photographing the Wounded: Ottoman Victims under Armenian Attacks

Although Mavroyeni Bey failed to procure photographs of surviving revolutionaries, the Hamidian government had another source of photographs that were more easily available and manipulable—injured people in hospitals. When the Hamidian government was criticized for its passivity by Western ambassadors, the Sublime Porte tried to present hundreds of patients in hospitals to highlight the violence of Armenian revolutionaries. In a note sent to foreign embassies on September 9, the Sublime Porte claimed:

It is insisted that the bloody events which took place in the city on the day and night of Wednesday, 26th ultimo [August], were due to the criminal attempts of Armenian revolutionaries who not only attacked all the passers-by regardless of race and of religion but also killed and wounded innocent Muslim women at the railways along the Ottoman Bank and purposefully threw bombs at young Muslim schoolchildren in the vicinities of Sulumanastır ... With regards to the number of Muslims, both

in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 121–123.

military and civilian, who have been seriously injured by the Armenian revolutionaries, their numbers are considerable, and, as the civil and military hospitals where they are being cared are free to access, it is possible to verify *de visu* their numbers and the severity of their wounds.⁵⁵

The note blames Armenian revolutionaries for all “the bloody events” of late August and stresses that they killed and injured many innocent Muslims. As is seen in the note, the Sublime Porte confidently suggested that the hospitals, open to all, where Muslim citizens and officers were being cared for, were evidence of Armenian violence and that people could see for themselves the grave damage on the Muslim side. Shortly after the issuance of this note, the sultan himself sent “an urgent message inviting the six representatives to visit the military and municipal hospitals to see for themselves the number of Turkish soldiers and civilians who had been wounded during the disturbances.”⁵⁶

However, events did not turn out the way Abdülhamid might have expected. After visiting five hospitals, Tomlinson, a surgeon from the British embassy, concluded that among 169 patients, more than a hundred were Armenian. According to the British ambassador Philip Currie, Tomlinson reported that while Muslim patients were suffering mostly from “bomb wounds in the lower extremities,” Armenians had “gun-shot, sword, bayonet, and club wounds.”⁵⁷ Tomlinson even claimed that the hospital authorities “made attempts to pass off wounded Christians as Mussulmans,” and 109 among 112 Turkish patients in the “Istanbul Prison”—assumably he was referring to the Central Prison Hospital—were in fact

⁵⁵ “Note adressée le 9 septembre 1896,” in *Affaires Arméniennes*, 289.

⁵⁶ “Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury,” Correspondence No. 46 (September 16, 1896), in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Christians.⁵⁸ Expectations that simply showing patients would suffice to convey a political message in favor of the Hamidian regime had proven naïve.

A certain Mazhar Bey soon embarked on an official mission to reinvestigate the situation in five Ottoman hospitals. Considering that the representatives' visit to the hospital was unsuccessful in winning them over, the distrust they showed would have prompted the Ottomans to take extra measures to make these patients into solid evidence of Muslim damages, conforming to the official narrative. Mazhar Bey's investigation soon developed into a photographic project for political propaganda, as will be seen in this chapter.

1. Mazhar Bey's Investigation Report and Photographs of the Wounded

On September 21, the Ministry of Justice (*Adliye Nezâreti*) appointed Mazhar Bey as a public prosecutor in Istanbul and ordered him to thoroughly investigate the victims of the terrorist attack. Upon receiving the order, Mazhar Bey immediately visited five hospitals—Gümüşsuyu Hospital (*Gümüşsuyu Hastahânesi*), the Hospital for Desperate Muslims (*Gurebâ-ı Müslimin Hastahânesi*), Sixth Department Hospital (*Daire-i Sadise Hastahânesi*), Central Prison Hospital (*Hapishane-i Umumi Hastahânesi*), and Rum⁵⁹ Hospital (*Rum İspitalyası*)—and interviewed the patients in person, collecting every detail available.⁶⁰ The interviewed patients explained what they were doing before being hurt, who injured them, and with which kind of weapon. Mazhar Bey took down the words of every interviewee in the first person and occasionally added brief comments, such as “his wounds are almost

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Orthodox Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁰ BOA.Y.PRK.AZN. 16–40/4 (September 21, 1896) in Ferhat Kütükülü, *Bölücü Terör ve İhtilal Örgütlerine Bağlı Ermenilerin İstanbul Ayaklanmaları: Arşiv Belgeleri, 1895 – 1896* (Kuşak Ofset Matbaası, 2009), 245.

healed” or “he spoke with difficulty, suffering from the pain from his wounds.”⁶¹ At the end of every hospital report, Mazhar Bey left page-long accounts expressing his thoughts on the event. He condemned the Armenian perpetrators as the “people’s enemies,” whose cruelty was “worse than wild animals” and “confirmed by the tears foreign visitors shed before the mournful scene of the hospital.”⁶² Receiving Mazhar Bey’s reports, Abdürrahim Nureddin Paşa, the Minister of Justice, added that a new order should be given because further investigation was needed of the injured soldiers in the Hospitals of National Defense and of Marine (*Savunma Bakanlığı ve Bahriye Hastahâneleri*).⁶³

The intention of Abdürrahim Paşa and Mazhar Bey was evidently not to create an objective balance sheet of Armenian and other Ottoman deaths and injuries. Confining the scope of his investigation to the non-Armenians injured by Dashnak revolutionaries, Mazhar Bey tried to depict Armenians as little as possible as victims of violence. In his report, Armenian names do not appear in the interview records or patient lists. It is unlikely that no Armenian civilians were injured during the bank situation because Samatya, mostly inhabited by Armenian laborers, was a major site of Dashnaks’ indiscriminate bomb attacks.⁶⁴ Furthermore, although Abdürrahim Paşa stressed the need to visit many hospitals, he did not

⁶¹ BOA.Y.PRK.AZN. 16–39 (September 18, 1896), 3, in Kütükülü, 228–232.

⁶² BOA.Y.PRK.AZN. 16–39 (September 18, 1896), 5; 16–40/1 (September 19, 1896), 6, all in Kütükülü, 232; 237–238. He does not mention here exactly who these “foreign visitors” were; if he was referring to Tomlinson and other representatives of foreign embassies that sultan invited to the hospitals, the statement that “foreign visitors” deplored the bodily damages of Muslim citizens and soldiers should not be taken at face value. They may have lamented the general situation, but as mentioned in Tomlinson’s report, the visitors concluded that Armenian patients outnumbered Muslim patients and that their wounds were more severe.

⁶³ BOA.Y.PRK.AZN. 16–40/4 (September 21, 1896) in Kütükülü, 245.

⁶⁴ This is not to say that Armenian victims were completely disregarded by Ottoman statesmen. Ottoman documents tend to underestimate the number of Armenian deaths, but the number was still too great to be ignored. One way to address the issue was to blame Armenian deaths on Armenian revolutionaries. For example, the Minister of Police, Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, wrote in his memoir that it was “an undeniable fact” that most of the Armenian lives were taken by bombs and gunshots of Dashnaks. Of course, the veracity of such accounts is highly doubtful, and the accounts are seldom supported by concrete evidence. Eldem (1999), 238.

mention a single place in which injured Armenian revolutionaries were hospitalized, including the Russian Hospital (*Rusya Hastahânesi*) in Şişli.⁶⁵ To Ottoman ruling elites, wounded Armenians would have been, at best, a secondary concern or, at worst, an extremely dangerous element that could significantly damage the official framing of the events.

Although Mazhar Bey did not mention photographs at all in the report, his investigation report apparently served as base material for producing the captions of the 60-photograph set of wounded people mentioned in the introduction to this study. Many people featured in these photographs also appear in Mazhar Bey's report, and the captions deviate only slightly from the interview records given in the report. For example, Mazhar Bey wrote about a boy named Abdullah living in Hacıhüsrev. Abdullah suffered a severe chest injury from "a bomb thrown from an Armenian house," but all the shrapnel pieces were removed thanks to surgery conducted at Rum Hospital.⁶⁶ This boy also appears in the photograph, whose caption reiterates the description of the incident in the report (Figure 3).

There is little documentary evidence indicating exactly by whom, where, or when these photographs were taken, given captions, and mounted on cardboard. Nevertheless, photographs themselves provide some clues that may facilitate our understanding of the process of their production. First, they were likely taken by Ottoman military photographers as no signature is written on them. Unlike commercial and court photographers, who almost always wrote their names on photographs or their backings, Ottoman military photographers refrained from leaving signatures.⁶⁷ Also, these photographs were produced *before* Mazhar

⁶⁵ Five to six wounded Armenian revolutionaries were taken from the Ottoman Bank to the Russian Hospital. BOA.Y.PRK.ZB. 18–10 (September 29, 1896) in Kütükülü, 149; Eldem (1999), 236–237.

⁶⁶ BOA.Y.PRK.AZN. 16–40/3 (September 21, 1896), in Kütükülü, 243.

⁶⁷ Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople: Pioneers, Studios and Artists from 19th-Century Istanbul*



Figure 3. “Abdullah bin Rüstem, twelve-year-old student at Kocamustafapaşa Middle School (*Kocamustafapaşa Rüşdiyyesi*). While passing Samatya on his way to school, a piece of bomb shrapnel entered under his right breast and pierced into the liver; his rib bone was cut by a surgical operation (*ameliyyât-ı cerrâhiye*), and the piece of the bomb was removed, which is shown in the picture.” İÜMK 779/71-012.

Bey’s investigation. In the photograph of Abdullah above, we can see the shrapnel pieces still present in Abdullah’s body, while the caption explains that they were surgically removed.

Another photograph indicates that there was also a time lag between Mazhar Bey’s investigation and the photographs’ compilation. Captions in the photograph of Ibrahim Efendi Haleb, a police officer (Figure 4), explain that he died 37 days after the incident (that is, October 2, 1896), so this photograph set must have been produced at the beginning of October at the earliest. Therefore, the photographs were mounted on cabinet card backings and given captions *weeks after* Mazhar Bey’s investigation. The timeline of this photographic project can be summarized as in Table 1.

(Aygaz, 2006), 335-342.

Estimated Date	Event
August 26, 1896	Dashnaksutyun launched an attack on the Ottoman Bank and other parts of the city; a citywide Armenian massacre ensued for a couple of days.
Late August to early September, 1896	Patients in hospitals were photographed.
Mid-September, 1896	Surgeon Tomlinson visited five hospitals in Istanbul.
19 to 21 September, 1896	Mazhar Bey conducted a survey in five hospitals in Istanbul.
Early October, at the earliest, 1896	The photographs were mounted on cardboard, given captions, and compiled.

Table 1. Timeline of the process of producing the photograph set.

The long gap of two months between the photo shoot and their compilation implies that at the time the photographs of the wounded were taken, there was not yet a clear, predetermined plan for their propagation. These photographs were evidently produced as political propaganda from the outset, but they were only for potential use at the time of the photo shoot. However, in late fall, with the extreme deterioration of public opinion in Europe and the United States,⁶⁸ Yıldız Palace must have felt the dire need to take action to defend itself

⁶⁸ In Britain, Gladstone’s Liverpool speech condemning the Ottomans in late September became a “political time-bomb.” Roy Douglas, “Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894–7.” *The Historical Journal* 19.1 (1976), 130–133; Likewise, the book *Armenien und Europa: Eine Anklageschrift* by pro-Armenian activist Johannes Lepsius became a hit in Germany, severely tarnishing the image of the Ottoman Empire. One contemporary witness recalled that “in autumn 1896 one could see the yellow Lepsius book with its flaming red title on display in all German bookstores.” Stefan Ihrig, “Germany and the 1890s Armenian Massacres: Questions of Morality in Foreign Policy.” *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines* 11 (2018), 75–92; Further fueling public Turcophobia was the news that the Ottoman Special Tribunal had sentenced a Muslim to fifteen years of imprisonment for killing Armenians, while “a long list of Armenians” were condemned to death. “Way that Turk Has. How Justice is Administered by the ‘Unspeakable’,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (October 1, 1896), 5; “Mussulmans Convicted, Sentenced to Imprisonment, while Armenians are Condemned to Death,” *The Washington Post* (October 1, 1896).

and embark on a project to transform these photographic “reserve ammunitions” into propaganda materials.

2. Official Conceptualization of the Event Visualized

As demonstrated earlier, these photographs were intended to be used as propaganda materials. The French captions given to each photograph along with Ottoman Turkish ones clearly show that they were produced not only for internal use but also for Western observers.⁶⁹ Moreover, the photographs reflect the way in which the Hamidian regime attempted to frame the mass violence that unraveled after the occupation of the Ottoman Bank. The Hamidian government attempted to avoid accusations of instigating the Armenian massacre by skirting around the massacre while highlighting the revolutionaries’ assault. This photography set contains only the images of people who survived the Armenian revolutionaries’ attack, just as Mazhar Bey’s survey only targeted non-Armenian Ottoman soldiers, police officers, and civilians in the five hospitals. In contrast, Armenian patients who had survived the citywide massacre and who far outnumbered the injured soldiers and Muslim civilians due to the terrorist attack⁷⁰ are absent not only from this photography set but

⁶⁹ Although the two captions convey almost identical content, they appear to have been written by different person and with different sources. In general, the Ottoman Turkish ones give slightly more detailed explanations about the situation in which the patients were attacked, and the French ones reiterate the former but tend to lack a few minor details. This may mean that the writer of the French captions translated the Ottoman captions into French. However, the French captions tend to describe the sitters’ condition more specifically by using more technical and anatomical jargons, compared to the Ottoman ones. For example, the French caption given to the photograph of a soldier named Ömer bin Bekir (İÜMK 779/71-038) writes that he broke his left femur near “*l’articulation coxo-femoral*,” while the Ottoman caption simply refers to the “left leg’s hip (*sol bacağı kalçası*).” The writer of the former may have been a bureaucrat with supplementary medical records written in French or possibly a medical staff member familiar to the technical jargon and involved in the patients’ treatment.

⁷⁰ Eldem (2015), 142–144.



Figure 4. “İbrahim Efendi Haleb, police officer. Shrapnel of a bomb that Armenians threw in front of Taksim Square hit the upper region of his right kneecap, shattering the femur into pieces; regrettably (*müteessiren*), he passed away 37 days after the incident.” The board on the wall reads: “Burns (*cürha-yi nârîyye*) from bomb shrapnel to the upper part of left calf and a complex fracture (*kesr-i muhtelit*) to the right femur.” İÜMK 779/71-060.

also from the Yıldız archive, which includes only mugshots of arrested Armenians.

Furthermore, the carefully added captions reduced the event to an attack by Armenian perpetrators on innocent Ottomans. Underlying the ostensibly dry and neutral descriptions was the implicit logic of innocent victims who were caught up in indiscriminate, Armenian-perpetrated violence. Many of the patients, according to the captions, happened to be at the location of the incident coincidentally. It was explained that these innocent civilians and bank staff were only doing their jobs when they were, unfortunately, caught up in the unexpected hostility of the Armenian revolutionaries. At the same time, elements that could have implied violence *against* Armenian militants were carefully omitted from the captions. The majority of the patients captured in the photographs were Ottoman soldiers and gendarmes, who were highly likely to have been at the location due to the ongoing hostility.



Figure 5: (Left) “Mehmed Ağa from Erzincan, firefighter in the Tophane Firefighting Force (*Tophane Ocak Sandığı*), injured in the head with a knife in the back street of [in front of, according to French caption] the Ottoman Imperial Bank.” (Middle) “Hüseyin Mehmed, soldier in Firefighting Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 1st Division, 15th *Sihhiye* [a medical platoon?], injured in the left kneecap by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray.” (Right) “Hacı Mehmed İbrahim from Ankara, soldier in Firefighting Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 4th Division, 4th *Sihhiye*, while patrolling in front of Galatasaray, he was injured in the left calf by a thrown bomb.” İÜMK 779/71-016.

However, the captions stubbornly stuck to such expressions as “*se promenant*” or “*faisant son devoir de garde*” in French and “*kol/devriye gezmekte iken* (while patrolling)” or “*geçerken* (while passing by)” in Ottoman Turkish to explain why these people were at the scene (see Figure 5). Arguably, the captions were written with extreme caution to avoid implying that the Ottoman officers were on the offensive. The writer of the captions suggests that these soldiers and gendarmes were merely patrolling the area or carrying out other duties, making them victims, too, and distancing them as far as possible from the potential accusation of “Turkish atrocities.” The photographs of ordinary citizens, such as a café server, a pastry maker, and a grocery store apprentice, had relatively shorter captions than those of the soldiers and gendarmes, probably because their innocence seemed self-explanatory.

In contrast to the elaborate descriptions of the injured Ottomans, the perpetrators were consistently referred to using a simple, generic ethnic term: “*Arménien (Ermeni)*.” The difference between the Dashnaktsyun revolutionaries and Armenian citizens, most of whom were itinerant laborers, was therefore effectively blurred. However, grouping Armenians into a single category was a rarity in Ottoman official statements that explained the mass violence against the Armenians. The Hamidian regime typically sought to make clear that the Armenians who had instigated the social disorder by no means represented the general sentiment of loyal Armenian subjects.⁷¹ The official Ottoman position after the Ottoman Bank takeover was no exception. On August 28, when the massacre slowly started to taper off, the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a telegraph to foreign embassies claiming that “the majority of [Ottoman] Armenians are loyal to the government and deeply saddened by the malice of their compatriots.”⁷²

While it is unclear why the writer of the captions attempted to attribute the mass violence to Armenians as a whole, its implication is evident. The captions’ generic reference to *Arméniens* reflects the Hamidian regime’s deep mistrust of the Armenian population in general,⁷³ which bureaucrats desperately tried to mask in other official statements. Despite the official sugarcoating, migrant Armenian laborers were considered potentially dangerous and a possible threat to the Empire’s integrity as they were highly politicized as holding a grievance against the Hamidian regime and being actively involved in antigovernment

⁷¹ Gölbaşı, 33–62; especially 42–50.

⁷² BOA.Y.PRK.HR. 22–22, August 28, 1896, in Kütükülü, 143.

⁷³ It was in the Hamidian era that Armenian millet, which had been called the “millet-i sadıka” (loyal millet), came to be called “millet-i asiya” (insurgent millet), an appellation usually reserved for rebellious Christians in the Balkans. Gabaret K. Moumdjian, “From Millet-i Sadıka to Millet-i Asiya: Abdülhamid II and Armenians, 1878–1909,” in *War and Diplomacy*, 304, 337.

demonstrations.⁷⁴ When settling the Ottoman Bank situation, the Ottoman government pinned responsibility for the massacre on Armenian laborers; as a result, many lower-class Armenians were arrested, expelled from Istanbul, and sent to their “native lands.”⁷⁵ The Hamidian government even prohibited the return of Armenians who had left the Empire in search of safety.⁷⁶

3. Medicalizing the Photographs

The most noticeable feature of the photographs is that they were *staged* as wards, with a bed in the center and wounded people wearing the same patient gowns and hemispherical caps. The setting is often accompanied by a chalkboard explaining the patient’s medical conditions, which was widely used in Ottoman hospitals in the period. Why did the photographer opt to stage the photographs instead of taking them in the actual wards in which the patients were hospitalized? Supposedly, the photographer intended to render the wounded people more legible components of a discourse on the incident by providing a formal unity; the fixed settings of the photographs and their compilation into a series reduced them to interchangeable symbols of the revolutionaries’ violence and offered a sense of formal coherence among them, suitable for official storytelling. Of course, it is also possible that the photographer was simply avoiding the inconvenient process of visiting each ward to take a photograph and instead chose to summon the patients to the staged sets. Nevertheless, the

⁷⁴ Dinçer, 21–23.

⁷⁵ Dinçer, 39; “Anthopoulos Pasha to the Marquess of Salisbury,” Correspondence No. 39 (September 1896), in *Turkey No. 1 (1897)*, 39.

⁷⁶ İlkay Yılmaz, “Governing the Armenian Question through Passports in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908),” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32.4 (2019), 393–395.

scenes were not left blank but were arranged as wards, meaning it was deemed necessary to present the wounded people as being *in a hospital*.

The context of a medical institution must have been crucial, therefore, to constructing the desired narrative. The visual strategy of “medicalizing” the photography reflects the anxiety of Hamidian ruling elites in the earliest phase of the events. In late August 1896, which roughly coincides with the time of the photo shoot, Ottoman statesmen were anxiously collecting data on the death and injury figures of Armenians and Muslims. As the extensive violence of the Muslim mob against Armenians was already apparent, they sought any sources that could “verify” the mutual violence between Muslims and Armenians, hoping to downplay the possibility of one-sided massacres. Hospitals were where “victims” were receiving care and protection, so they likely seemed the logical place to search for evidence.⁷⁷ The photographer might have chosen to use *ersatz* wards as backdrops for photographs and filled them with non-Armenians to visually suggest the fictional injury toll, presenting a situation that better conformed to the way they wanted the situation to be interpreted.

Furthermore, to present the photographic scenes as wards was, I suggest, a means of visually expressing the message that the Ottoman Empire was successfully addressing the human damage and reestablishing public order. As discussed above, in conveying the incident as essentially a terrorist attack by Armenians on innocent citizens, the Ottoman state’s responsibility was reduced to quelling the chaotic situation and maintaining public order.

⁷⁷ Ottoman administrative elites’ anxiety in the early phase of the massacre that Muslim death figures might not be particularly high is well reflected in the remarks of the head (*Mutasarrıfı*) of Beyoğlu district in Istanbul. He claimed that “Muslims are the nation (*milliyet*) who heal their wounds in their home” instead of going to hospitals, suggesting that figures of Muslim deaths and injuries might be underestimated. “Beyoğlu Mutasarrıflığı’nın cevap tezkiresi,” (August 17, 1312 [August 29, 1896]), Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi*, cilt II, 345, cited in Eldem (2007), 140.

Demonstrating the medical care provided to the injured civilians may have seemed an effective way to show that the Hamidian government was devoted to fulfilling this responsibility. Presented as hospitalized patients, the wounded people in the photographs symbolized a damaged society returning to normalcy thanks to Ottoman medical care. Such an intention was well reflected in an official telegram that the Sublime Porte sent to European embassies. The telegram repeatedly stressed that “the wounded ... are being cared for in the different hospitals of the city” and their “lamentable condition ... has been borne witness to by several members of the European Embassies.”⁷⁸ Underlying such an account was the message that the Ottoman state was striving to mitigate human damage and retain society’s medical wellness. Accentuating that the hospitalized patients were “borne witness to” by foreign ambassadors, the Porte must have intended to suggest that the Ottoman Empire’s medical capability and sincerity had been well acknowledged.

The intention behind the “medicalization” of the photographs becomes clearer when we compare these photographs of patients produced in 1896 with other photographs of the wounded taken against the backdrop of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Shortly after the end of the Russo-Turkish war, Western dignitaries publicly condemned the Ottoman state for conniving massacres against innocent Bulgarian Christians. To counter such allegations, the newly ascended sultan Abdülhamid II promptly ordered Pascal Sébah to take photographs of the wounded and mutilated Muslim inhabitants of the district of Eski Zağra (Stara Zagora) in Bulgaria. Thirty-one photographs taken by Sébah were all accompanied by the inhabitant’s name, age, place of residence, and quality of injury, written on the back of the cardboard

⁷⁸ This telegram was cited in “Latest Intelligence: The Porte and the Armenians,” *The Times* (September 17, 1896).



Figures 6–8: All by Pascal Sébah, photograph no. 6, 12, and 28 (from left to right) from the photo series “Russian atrocities,” İÜMK 779/35-044, 042, 065 (from left to right).

backing, with the phrase “*Les victimes des atrocités commises par les Russes.*” This carefully produced photograph series showing the “Russian atrocities” was distributed to influential individuals through diplomatic channels to counter the accusations of “Turkish atrocities.”⁷⁹ The documentative format of the captions is almost identical to that of the 60 photographs taken in 1896; however, the ambiance of each set of photographs is radically different from that of the others. Sébah’s photographs were apparently intended to depict pitiful scenes. The background is well restrained, with a shallow focus, and the subjects in the frame are captured close enough for observers to immediately notice the despair in their faces. A woman exposing wounds on her skin or a truncated limb (Figure 7) and frowning young children in the arms of an old man with a Fez or a scarfed woman (Figures 6 and 8) are the two most frequently recurrent themes in the “Russian atrocities” series.⁸⁰ Observers are

⁷⁹ These photographs made it to *Le Monde Illustré* as base materials for a composite engraving. Although the correspondent insists in the article that he drew the croquis at a hospital in Adrianople (Edirne), to which attacked Muslim and Jewish civilians were sent, the picture was evidently a reproduction of the mentioned photographs. Martina Baleva, “İmparatorluğun Misillemesi: 1877–1878 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı’nda Resim Savaşları ve Resim Cepheleri,” trans. Emine Danacı, *Toplumsal Tarih* 228 (2012), 36–38; *Le Monde Illustré* 21, 1075 (November 17, 1877), 301–302.

⁸⁰ It is no coincidence that the latter photographs are reminiscent of the *Pietà*, as Sébah and other prominent studio photographers of the Ottoman Empire were well informed of Western artistic clichés and conventions and

invited to sympathize with these innocent women and children and bemoan the Russian violence inflicted on them.

However, a depiction of the people as miserable, hopeless victims is elusive in the photographs of “Armenian atrocities” in 1896. With postures and gazes that are rather apathetic and blasé, most of the photographed patients instead seem quite indifferent to their own injuries, as if there is nothing particularly wrong with them. Again, the reason for this difference lies in the Ottoman administrative officials’ intention: to superimpose on the photograph an image of the modern state apparatus effectively rectifying public order. The photographs implied that the Armenian threat to Ottoman society had been successfully neutralized thanks to the improved medical care that the state was providing to wounded citizens. In the patient photographs, we see “the modern obsession with physical pain as a visible marker of social disease.”⁸¹ The social disease—namely, Armenian violence—and the resultant social unrest had to be presented as dangerous but manageable, and the Ottoman Empire had to be presented as a sufficiently modern state to fully control the situation. In accordance with this logic, the patients were photographically “anesthetized” and appear no longer haunted by the Armenian violence.⁸² Likewise, the scene had to be arranged as a ward, the space in which the government medically controls the bodies (and even bodily pains) of citizens.

skillfully applied them to their photographs. Martina Baleva, “İmparatorluğun Misillemesi,” 38; Bahattin Öztuncay (2015), 67–101.

⁸¹ Tanya Sheehan, *Doctored: The Medicine of Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 73–76.

⁸² *Ibid.*

V. Bombs over Bodies

Although the photographs of the wounded were clearly intended as propaganda material, these photographs are absent or, at least, have not yet been found in any other sources, such as the Western and Ottoman contemporary illustrated press. The only source mentioning the uses of such photographs that I came across was Fikretin Yavuz's book *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Terörü*.⁸³ Indirectly citing a document from the Urgent Correspondence Bureau of the Grand Vizierate (*Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemi Evrakı*), he writes, "it was communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that photographs of explosives and those of murdered soldiers and policemen had arrived at [Ottoman] embassies in Europe and America."⁸⁴ The mentioned photographs do not seem to align with those of the wounded people analyzed above, who were injured, hospitalized, and cared for—not murdered. Furthermore, other documents from Ottoman embassies in Europe cited by Yavuz mention only the photographs of explosives,⁸⁵ which will be discussed later in the thesis. These photographs of "murdered soldiers and policemen" also did not appear in the contemporary illustrated press, as if they had not been delivered at all. Was it a miscommunication? Did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Yıldız Palace change its mind and decide not to use the photographs of "murdered soldiers and policemen"? Did the Ottoman ambassadors screen out these disturbing photographs at their discretion? Or did such photographs exist at all? Due to the lack of other supporting documents, it is difficult to

⁸³ Fikretin Yavuz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Terörü: 1896 Osmanlı Bankası Baskını* (Atatürk Kültür, Dil, ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 2015).

⁸⁴ BOA. A.MKT.MHM 748-23, lef.1–10, cited in Yavuz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Terörü*, 205.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

identify the circumstances.

If such photographs did not make it to the general public, this would be, I assume, because the photographs were too dangerous, bearing the potential to disturb the official narrative. As Sliwinski rightly points out, photography “demands narrative but also resists that demand.”⁸⁶ When mobilized to construct a narrative, photographs easily become “punctuated accounts, often moving too quickly, jumping from impression to impression, all disrupted by profound silences where a surcharge of meaning remains imprisoned, unsayable.”⁸⁷ The difficulty in refining the meanings that photographs bear must have been particularly difficult due to the tension between multiple considerations that were not easily reconcilable—to present Ottoman society as a victim, to suggest that the revolutionaries’ violence was dangerous but manageable, and to show state medicine operating on the bodies of the Ottoman populace and society. “Pensive” photographs that “speak too much,” in Roland Barthes’s words, are subversive and dangerous in that they inevitably “reflect ... a different meaning” for observers.⁸⁸

Wounded bodies captured in the frame could easily amplify such tension, making the meaning of the photographs unstable. As photographs of a wounded body are “produced as ... a symbolic icon that stands in for itself as the referent object of political violence,” the “visual symbolics of pain” are always subject to fierce contestations among the conflicting narratives “that come to be associated with the imagery.”⁸⁹ Above all, a body in pain can be

⁸⁶ Sharon Sliwinski, “A Painful Labour: Responsibility and Photography,” *Visual Studies* 19.2 (2004), 151.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Roland Barthes, trans. R. Howard, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Jonathan Cape, 1981), 37–38.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Dauphinée, “The Politics of the Body in Pain: Reading the Ethics of Imagery,” *Security Dialogue* 38.2 (2007), 139–143.

interpreted in either direction—between healthiness and morbidity, recovery and exacerbation. The moment its image is fixed at one point in time through photography is the moment in which it is permanently frozen into an irresolvable state. This extreme polarity inherent in images of corporeal damage makes the meaning of photographs precarious.

Considering that the photographs in the set were initially produced without a concrete utilization plan, it is plausible that the palace did not agree with the photographer's way of presenting the scene. It is highly likely that Ottoman officials were aware of the inner incongruity in these photographs and worried that the open-ended images would backfire. The circulation of such slippery images prone to "misinterpretation" was the situation that Ottoman ruling elites wanted most to avoid. An anecdote of Ahmet İhsan, the chief editor of the illustrated journal *Servet-i Fünün* (Wealth of Science), reflects this anxiety shared by Hamidian authorities. In 1906, Doctor Besim Ömer Paşa wrote an article about the installation of a water fountain (*çeşme*) for *Servet-i Fünün*, and a colored picture of an old man praying in front of a water fountain was added to the article in the journal draft. However, the Directorate of Domestic Press highlighted the image as problematic, drawing a question mark (*sual*) on it. When İhsan asked for an explanation, the chief censor Ebulmükbil Kemal Bey replied:

The image of a fountain is indeed beautiful, and prayer is undoubtedly sacred in the eyes of every believer, for it is our religious duty (*farz*). However, people with bad intentions have increased so much these days that I am bewildered about what to keep and what to remove from newspapers. I tell you, those people with bad intentions will say, upon seeing this beautiful picture in *Servet-i Fünün*, "hah, putting the picture in this place in this way must be to implicitly suggest that the only thing

for us is to pray.” I put a question mark on the picture to inform you of this as I knew too well that they would drivel about you (*yolunda saçmalayacaklarını yakından bildiğimden*).⁹⁰

To Ottoman censors, even a seemingly harmless image of an old man praying was potentially dangerous enough to provoke attacks from rapidly increasing “people with bad intention.” The Hamidian regime’s obsession with controlling the meanings of images evidently bordered on paranoia but was not completely groundless. Indeed, it would have been extremely difficult to achieve a photographic truth claim in the face of the Western public, which was already deeply distrustful of the Ottoman government. In other words, these photographs would have had little effect at best or boomeranged back on the regime at worst. Knowing this, the Yıldız Palace was likely reluctant to use the photographs.

Instead of using the photographs of wounded patients, the Hamidian government opted for photographs of bombs seized from Armenian revolutionaries. In the Yıldız photography archive, there are more than a hundred almost-identical copies of photographs of discovered bombs (İÜMK 779/35-167 to -247; İÜMK 779/82-001 to -094), implying that these photographs were prepared for distribution. Like the photographs of the patients, French captions were added to the images, suggesting that they were intended for Western observers. The bombs that the Armenian activists had prepared, which could have caused a more disastrous consequence had they been used, were self-explanatory symbols of Armenian terrorism. Ironically, photographs of these dangerous weapons must have been a much safer option for Ottoman officials than photographs of wounded Ottoman citizens. The latter

⁹⁰ Ahmet İhsan Tökgöz, *Matbuat Hatıralarım* (İletişim Yayınevi, 1993), 118, quoted in Demirel, 51–52. See also Ebru Boyar, “The Press and the Palace: The Two-way Relationship between Abdülhamid II and the Press, 1876–1908.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69.3 (2006), 419.



Figure 9: Photograph of the bombs discovered after the occupation of the Ottoman Bank: (Left) “The bombs found in the closet of Agavni, the instructor of the Armenian school of young girls, which is located in the Church of Sulumanastir, in Samatya” and (Right) “The bomb[s] found from Agole, who was arrested in Dolapdere”; İÜMK 779/35-224. Some of the photographs identical to this photograph in the Yıldız Archive of the İÜMK have a different, simpler caption: “The bombs found in the Ottoman Imperial Bank,” which makes it difficult to ascertain the actual place from which the Ottoman soldiers retrieved the bombs.

required collective presentation to construct a narrative; individually presenting, for instance, an Ottoman soldier with a gunshot wound or a schoolboy who had bomb shrapnel extracted from his breast could not properly convey the intended messages. However, photographs of bombs needed little context as they were, by themselves, symbols of violence. Bombs were already an appalling emblem of terrorism in the public imagination of *fin-de-siècle* Europe and widely used in radical terrorist attacks. A wave of sensational articles soon transformed them into a symbol of dreadful anarchist resistance against imperial and capitalist hegemony.⁹¹ Therefore, using images of bombs must have been a relatively risk-free move for the Yıldız Palace, appealing to widespread fear of radical violence.

⁹¹ Ann Larabee, “Terrorism and Technology” in Randall D. Law (ed.), *The Routledge History of Terrorism* (Routledge, 2015), 457; James Crossland, “Radical Warfare’s First “Superweapon”: The Fears, Perceptions and Realities of the Orsini Bomb, 1858–1896.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2021), 1–15.

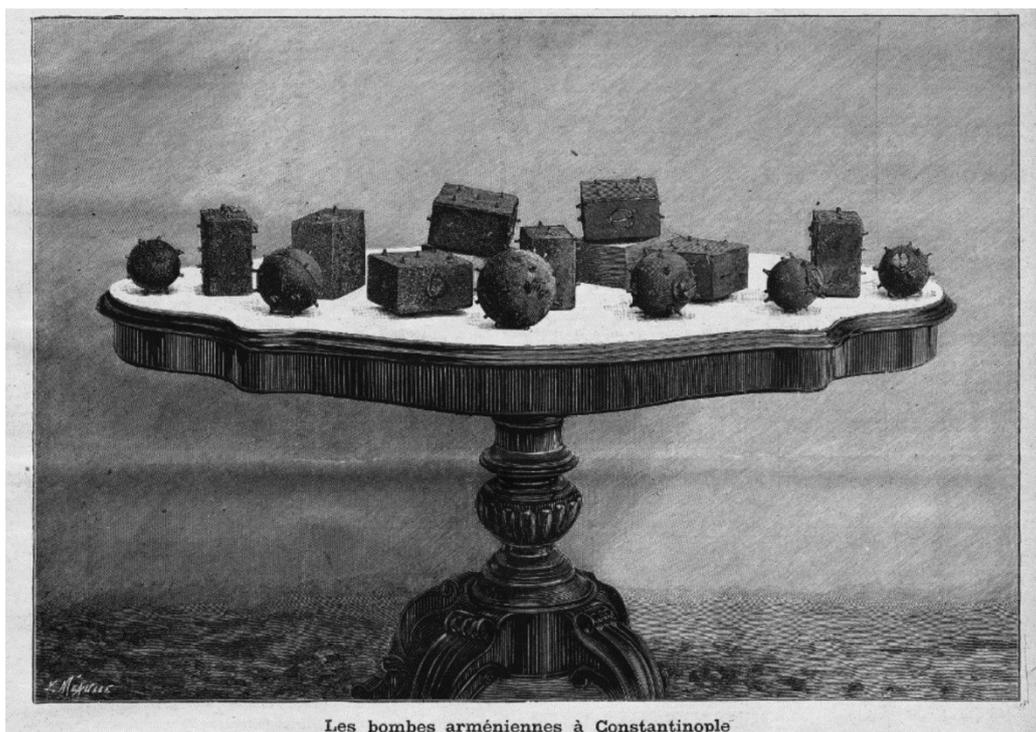


Figure 10. “Les bombes arméniennes à Constantinople,” *Le Petit Journal, Supplément Illustré* (November 15, 1896).

Thus, after Ottoman officials discovered unused bombs and firearms in a number of areas in Istanbul, they readily used photographs of them to defend the Ottoman state from Western accusations. On October 6, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered every photograph of bombs (*humbara*) and explosives to be copied and sent, with the neutralized bombs themselves (!), to the embassies abroad.⁹² Ottoman embassies in London, Paris, Rome, Brussels, and Washington soon reported back that they had received the copies and requested major illustrated press outlets to publish articles in favor of the Empire.⁹³ A number of newspapers accepted the request. For example, *Le Petit Journal* published a photograph-based illustration of bombs on November 15, 1896 on its Sunday supplement (Figure 10), explaining that these “*machines infernales*” had injured many victims. It also emphasized that

⁹² Yavuz (2015), 205.

⁹³ Yavuz (2015), 206.



Figure 11. “The Situation in Constantinople: The Armenian Bombs Discovered by the Police. In a shed in the Artillery Department at Topaneh is now being exhibited a number of bombs and arms discovered by the police in the houses of Armenians in different parts of Constantinople. Among the exhibits are the arms and explosives abandoned in the Imperial Ottoman Bank—namely, a large quantity of dynamite, forty-eight bombs, twenty-five dynamite cartridges, five packages of bomb caps, a hundred cartridges for revolvers, a box of caps, four metres of fuse for dynamite, ten boxes of revolver cartridges, and a long match-box. From a Photograph by Baker and Edwards, Constantinople.” *The Graphic* (October 3, 1896).

the number of seized revolvers and daggers, a picture of which was not given, was

“*véritablement extraordinaire.*”⁹⁴

At the same time, the Ottomans sought another channel to spread photographs of weapons. In early October 1896, the Ottoman War Office held an exhibition of discovered weaponry, displaying “a large quantity of dynamites, forty-eight bombs, twenty-five dynamite cartridges, five packages of bomb caps, a hundred cartridges for revolvers, a box of caps, four meters of fuse for dynamite, ten boxes of revolver cartridges, and a long match-box” in Tophane (Figure 11)⁹⁵. This exhibition was open only to foreign state representatives

⁹⁴ “Les bombes arméniennes à Constantinople,” *Le Petit Journal, Supplément Illustré* (November 15, 1896).

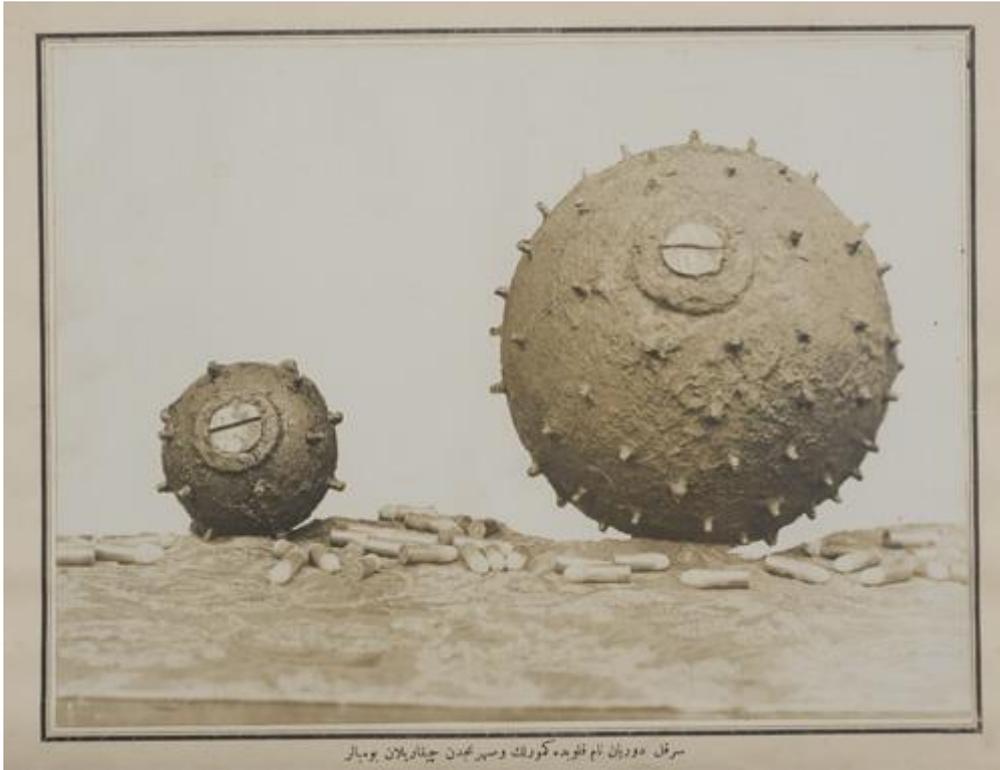
⁹⁵ “The Situation in Constantinople: The Armenian Bombs Discovered by the Police,” *The Graphic* (October 3, 1896).

and journalists who were granted the sultan's permission.⁹⁶ Arguably, Abdülhamid may have wanted to show the weapons to influential figures, hoping they would photograph the exhibit and propagate the photographs to the Western public. The sultan tried to keep the situation under control by limiting the exhibit's observers to people who could be trusted by the regime. This swift movement, together with the dissemination of the photographs, shows the Ottoman state's urgent need in the late fall of 1896 to mitigate great public hostility in Europe. The presentation of the discovered weaponry was expected to play an important role in reinforcing the official narrative of Armenian violence by accentuating the violence perpetrated by the Armenian activists.

The images of weapons had survived as an important political subgenre of photographic documentation of violence against the Ottoman state. The relatively safe, easy-to-use photographs of bombs were mobilized again in 1905 after the Dashnaksutyun's failed attempt to assassinate Abdülhamid II. After three months of investigation into the assassination attempt, the Ottoman government published a report on it in great detail. The report was published in Ottoman Turkish and French; the latter, which targeted foreign dignitaries and journalists, adhered to the "language, rhetoric, and jargon of Western police practice at the time," probably to facilitate the report's propagation in Europe.⁹⁷ The report contained a wide variety of photographs, including bombs, bullets, and dynamite cartridges discovered in wells and buildings in Pera, a carriage used to hide bombs, and mugshots of the 12 people involved in the plot. The bombs and other weapons were neatly arranged with

⁹⁶ Yavuz (2015), 204–205.

⁹⁷ Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, and Henk de Smaele, "Introduction," in Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, and Henk de Smaele (eds.), *To Kill a Sultan: A Transnational History of the Attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 27–28.



Figures 12 and 13. Bombs seized by the Ottoman police in Pera district, Ömer M. Koç Collection. Retrieved from “İmparatorluğu Kadetmek: Bomba Hadisesi Fezlekesi,” *Camera Ottomana*, <https://cameraottomana.ku.edu.tr/gallery/detail/id/19>. Accessed April 4, 2022.

careful symmetry on a nicely embroidered cloth, composing a photographic spectacle (Figures 12 and 13).⁹⁸ Giving subtle aesthetics to these photographs, the Ottoman police may have hoped to improve their public appeal.

VI. Concluding Remarks

This thesis has attempted to shed light on the complex process of Hamidian image politics by navigating how photographic propaganda was constructed to win the heart of the European public. Hamidian diplomats and statesmen endeavored to procure photographs of Armenian perpetrators, wounded people, and seized bombs, hoping to use them to reverse negative Western opinion. The process involved many actors, including photographers, diplomats, bureaucrats, and the palace. The photographs of the patients were particularly telling with regard to the actors involved. They were photographed in the earliest stage of the massacre but transformed into propaganda material almost two months later, when the European opprobrium was irrecoverably deteriorating. This means that in late fall, Ottoman functionaries used existing photographs rather than taking new ones. The Yıldız Palace might have disagreed with the photographer's strategy, deeming it dangerous and unpredictable, and have abandoned the idea to use the photographs, opting for the safer images of seized bombs. In short, the propaganda photographs were not manifestations of a clear, monolithic Hamidian ideology but the result of continued adjustment and negotiation of meanings and possible strategies.

While I have tried to address the stories of many actors around the photographic

⁹⁸ Zeynep Çelik, "Formal Order," in *Camera Ottomana*, 218–219; Öztuncay, 98–99.

production of this photograph set, the presented actors are by no means to be considered comprehensive. As Nancy Micklewright points out, photographs in the Hamidian archives “reveal the involvement of photographic subjects at the direction of the photographer, and express little desire on the part of the subjects to be photographed”; indeed, the subjects “would have had little choice about their presence in the photographs taken at the behest of the sultan.”⁹⁹ We could easily imagine that civilians must have felt grave fear in front of the lens and Ottoman military photographer. Further research is required regarding the subject’s agency in the photographic practices of the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire could rarely force a certain image on the Western public. The case of the bomb photographs was a rare case in which the palace actually succeeded in distributing the desired images. Nevertheless, whether the images succeeded in attenuating Western antagonism against the Ottoman Empire is an entirely different matter. Might the image of bombs carefully arranged on a pedestal have been too bland to capture readers’ attention? Or were even such sanitized images enough before the heydays of photojournalism? Can Susan Sontag’s warning that the contemporary flood of sensational photographs has desensitized audiences to photographs suggesting violence be applied to the *fin-de-siècle* readership of illustrated journals?¹⁰⁰ Instead of hasty retroactive speculations, such as assuming that the photographs must have failed because the sultan continued to be hated or that the Ottoman image would have been worse had it not been for such efforts, I prefer to wait for a follow-up study.

⁹⁹ Micklewright, 281.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

Appendix A. List of the photographs of the wounded (İÜMK 779/71-001 to -060)

Index No.	Sitter information	Caption description (Causes of wounds, their attributes, and medical treatment undergone, etc.)
779/71-001	Yusuf Mehmed, [from] Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, Second Battalion (<i>Alay-ı İtfai İkinci Taburu</i>), 4 th Company, 3 rd <i>Sıhhiye</i> (ward? medical platoon?).	Hit by bomb shrapnel while walking with his battalion in front of Galatasaray Lycée. First and second toes of his left foot were completely disfigured; he was injured in his right elbow.
779/71-002	(Left) Hasan Muhsin Niğde: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 2 nd Company, 14 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Right) Ahmed Osman [from] Ankara: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 16 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the big toe of his right foot. Injured on the upper side of his left leg. Both hit by bomb shrapnel while patrolling with their battalion in front of Galatasaray.
779/71-003	Hacı Osman Faik Efendi from Erzurum: Police officer.	Hit by bomb shrapnel thrown by Armenians entering the Ottoman Bank. Injured in his right forearm and both legs. * French caption does not mention Armenians
779/71-004	Mustafa Mehmed from Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 16 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Hit by bomb shrapnel while walking with his battalion. Forehead was broken, and the shrapnel piece was removed afterward.
779/71-005	Derviş Ağa from Konya: First lieutenant (<i>mülazım-ı evvel</i>) and standard-bearer (<i>sancakdar</i>) of 8 th Regiment, 1 st Battalion.	On the 4 th day of the incident (<i>vak'a</i>), at the <i>Voyvoda</i> police station, hit by bullets and bombs shot and thrown from the window of Vitalis Han. Injured in 14 parts in total. He recovered due to surgical treatment with the aid of His Excellency.
779/71-006	Hüseyin Ali from Yozgat: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 1 st <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Hit by bomb shrapnel thrown from a police station while patrolling with the battalion in front of Galatasaray. It hit his right calf; as it completely shattered the bone into pieces, his upper leg was amputated. Also severely injured in the left leg, under and over the knee, and the left wrist. * The sitter's leg in the scene is not amputated; his leg was supposedly amputated after being photographed but before the point when the caption was attached.

779/71-007	<p>Ömer Efendi bin Ali from Koçhisar: Student (<i>talebe</i>).</p> <p>Mehmed bin Süleyman from Kemah: Porter (<i>hamal</i>).</p>	<p>Stabbed in the head with a knife around Salmatomruk.</p> <p>While he was passing through the Bağçekapısı with a load on his back, a bullet fired by someone in the store pierced his right eye and exited under the chin.</p>
779/71-008	Hakki bin Osman from Asitane: Ice cream vendor.	Terribly (<i>dehşetli surette</i>) injured in the groin by a bullet in Eyüb Nişancası.
779/71-009	<p>Ömer Efendi bin Ali from Koçhisar: Student.</p> <p>Mehmed bin Süleyman from Kemah: Porter.</p> <p>(Same sitters and almost identical captions to 779/71-007)</p>	<p>Stabbed in the head with a knife around Salmatomruk.</p> <p>While he was passing through the Bağçekapısı with a load on his back, a bullet fired by someone in the store pierced his right eye and exited under the chin.</p>
779/71-010	Ali Mehmed from Sinop: Soldier of Transport Battalion (<i>Nakliye Taburu</i>), 4 th Company, 1 st <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	While he was transporting supplies to Aziziye Police Station, horses were startled by the sound of gunshots near Tophane, and the carriage was overturned; he felled out, and his bone protruded from under the right kneecap.
779/71-011	Hüseyin bin Tahsin Efendi: Chief plain-clothed officer (<i>sertaharri memuru</i>) of the Galatasaray Police Station.	Injured in the leg by a bomb in front of Galatasaray.
779/71-012	Abdullah bin Rüstem: Twelve-year-old student at Kocamustafapaşa Middle School (<i>Kocamustafapaşa Rüşdiyesi</i>)	While he was passing Samatya on his way to school, a piece of bomb shrapnel entered under his right breast and pierced into the liver; his rib bone was cut by a surgical operation (<i>ameliyyât-ı cerrâhiye</i>), and the piece of bomb was removed, which is shown in the picture.
779/71-013	İsmail bin Hüseyin: Server in a coffeehouse.	Shot in the toe at the Yeni Mahalle in Halıcıoğlu.

779/71 -014	Durmuş bin Ahmed from Trabzon: Soldier of the Imperial Navy Corps (<i>Asakir-i Bahriye-i Şahane</i>).	On the first day of the incident, he went under the wheels of a car that Armenians were driving while returning from duty.
779/71 -015	(Left) İsrail bin Youda: Janitor of the Ottoman Bank. (Right) Şerif Salih from Karahisar: Dock porter (<i>İskele hamalı</i>)	Shot in the face while exiting the Ottoman Bank. Shot by Armenians in Bademlik.
779/71 -016	(Left) Mehmed Ağa from Erzincan: Firefighter of Tophane Firefighting Force (<i>Tophane Ocak Sandığı</i>). (Middle) Hüseyin Mehmed from Ankara: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Division, 15 th <i>Sihhiye</i> . (Right) Hacı Mehmed İbrahim from Ankara: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Division, 4 th <i>Sihhiye</i> .	Stabbed with a knife in the face in the back street behind the Ottoman Bank. Injured in the left kneecap by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray. Injured in the left calf by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray.
779/71 -017	Mustafa Ali from Karahisar: Gendarme Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Division, 5 th <i>Sihhiye</i> .	As his left kneecap [femur] was shattered to pieces by a bomb thrown from the Ottoman Bank, his leg was amputated from the waist.
779/71 -018	Soldier of 3 rd Infantry (<i>Hassa</i>) Regiment, 4 th Battalion, 2 nd Division. * Name not given in the caption	Injured by a bullet shot from a house in Sulumanastır.
779/71 -019	(Left) Mari veled-i Panayod, resident in Uzunçarşıbaşı. (Middle) Anastas veled-i Yorgi. (Right) Nikoli veled-i Yuvakim: Grocer at the Galata Thursday Market (<i>Galata Perşembe Pazarı</i>).	Injured in the hand amid the commotion. Injured in the leg by bomb shrapnel in Samatya. Injured in the arm in the mentioned place [the Galata Thursday Market].
779/71 -020	Tanaş veled-i Balba, resident in Langa.	Injured in the head in the mentioned place [Langa].

779/71 -021	(Left) Enver bin İsmail from Eyüp: Chest maker (<i>kutucu</i>). (Right) İsmail bin Hüseyin, resident in Unkapanı: Vault-keeper (<i>sandıkçı</i>) of the Régie. ¹⁰¹	Injured in the right upper arm [the Ottoman caption mistakenly describes it as his <i>left</i> upper arm (<i>sol bazusu</i>)] by a knife in Eyüp Nişanca. Injured in the head and in the right thigh by a knife while passing Unkapanı.
779/71 -022	Nazmi bin Ali, resident in Unkapanı: Domestic servant.	Injured by a sharp instrument (<i>alet-i katta</i>) in the left side of his chest at the height of his arm while passing the [Galata] quay.
779/71 -023	(Left) Kenan Efendi bin Nazmi, [from] Asitane (Istanbul): Student in Torpedo Senior Class? (<i>Torpedo Gedikli Sınıf talebesi</i>). (Right) Rıza Mehmed [from] Bursa: Soldier of 1 st Infantry Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 1 st Company.	Injured in the right hand by two Armenians, near Çarşıkapı. Injured in the left thigh, hit by a bomb thrown from a school (<i>mektep</i>) in the Sulumanastır Church.
779/71 -024	Mehmed Abdullah from Arapkir: Police officer of Beyoğlu.	Hit in the left hand by a bullet while passing the Galata quay.
779/71 -025	(Left) Mehmed bin Ahmed from Niğde: Soldier of 1 st Infantry Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 2 nd Company. (Right) Mehmed bin Mehmed Şiro: Guard (<i>bekçi</i>) of the Hacıkadın district (<i>mahalle</i>), Sulumanastır.	Injured in the head near the Karagümrük Church. Injured in the left kneecap by a bomb thrown from a house in Sulumanastır.
779/71 -026	(Left) Ahmed Osman [from] Ankara: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 1 st <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Middle) Salih Battal [from] Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 5 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Right) Nuri Musa [from] Yozgat: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Company, 8 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the big toe of his right foot [the Ottoman caption mistakenly describes it as his <i>left</i> foot (<i>sol bazusu</i>)] by a bomb in front of Galatasaray. Injured in the back of his left hand by a bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray. Injured in the dorsum of his left foot by a bomb in front of Galatasaray.

¹⁰¹ *La Société de la Régie Co-intéressée des Tabacs de l'Empire Ottoman*, or the Régie de Tabac, was a company established by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration; the Régie had a monopoly over tobacco and production. It shared the same building as the Ottoman Bank.

779/71 -027	(Left) Ahmed Bilal from Kastamonu: Corporal (<i>onbaşı</i>) of the Model Regiment (<i>Alay-ı Numûne</i>), 2 nd Artillery Battalion, 4 th Company. (Right) Süleyman Efendi from Kemah: Sergeant (<i>çavuş</i>) of the Sixth Department (<i>Daire-i Sadise</i>).	The animal (a horse) that he was riding was startled by bombs thrown in front of Galatasaray. [As a result,] he was injured in the left leg. Injured in the left flank (<i>sol böğrü</i>) and in the left buttocks by a bomb thrown by two Armenians who got off a kart (<i>araba</i>) in front of Taksim Fountain.
779/71 -028	Halil bin İbrahim from Erzincan: Boatman (<i>kayıkçı</i>) in Defterdar.	Injured in the iliac region near the anus by a bullet while passing Hasköy.
779/71 -029	Emin bin Sadık from Kastamonu: Soldier of 1 st Infantry Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 1 st Company, 5 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the left leg by a bomb thrown from the school ¹⁰² inside Sulumanastrı Church.
779/71 -030	Vasıf bin Mehmed of Zindanarkası, Kasımpaşa: Gravedigger (<i>mezarıcı esnaf</i>).	Injured in the head, in the leg, and in the foot by an Armenian while passing Hasköy.
779/71 -031	(Left) İhsan Mustafa from Kayseri: Sergeant of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company. (Right) Seyyin Hacı from Kayseri: Sergeant of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Company, 10 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the right leg by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray. Injured in the left shoulder [scapula] and in the left calf by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray.
779/71 -032	(Left) Şakir bin Ali: Worker at a <i>hamam</i> , in Kağıthane. (Right) Mehmed bin Latif: Dough-kneader at a bakery (<i>fırında hamurcu</i>) in Çeşme Square, Galata.	Injured in the left wrist with a poniard (<i>kama</i>) in his right hand in the mentioned neighborhood [Kağıthane]. Injured in the left hand at the Galata Thursday Market. * The given captions do not correspond with the photographed scene. There are three sitters in the scene, all of whom are bandaged only on their legs.

¹⁰² The French caption refers the school as an “Armenian” school (*école arménienne*).

779/71 -033	(Left) Cafer bin İsmail, resident in Davud Paşa: Hay seller (<i>Samancı</i>). (Right) Halil bin İbrahim: Shoemaker (<i>kunduracı</i>) in Unkapanı.	Injured in the right wrist with a knife in the mentioned neighborhood [Davud Paşa]. Injured in the back with a sharp instrument in the mentioned neighborhood [Unkapanı].
779/71 -034	Anastas: Gendarme.	Injured in the right knee and in the groin in Samatya.
779/71 -035	Hasan bin Ahmed from Eskişehir: Soldier of 1 st Infantry Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 1 st Company.	Terribly injured in the left [groin] and in the right leg by a bomb thrown from a school inside the Armenian Church in Sulumanastır.
779/71 -036	Ali bin Mehmed Efendi from Harput: Superintendent of Galatasaray Police.	Injured in the buttocks by a bomb thrown from a flower shop adjacent to Galatasaray while he was doing his duty (<i>vazife esnasında; faisant son devoir</i>).
779/71 -037	Emirze Osman [from] Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company.	Injured in the left thigh by a thrown bomb while patrolling in front of Galatasaray.
779/71 -038	Ömer bin Bekir: Soldier of the Imperial Navy Corps, 15 years old.	His left femur was broken near the coxofemoral articulation because of the fight (<i>lutte</i>) with seven Armenians. * Above is the translation of the French caption. Unlike the French caption, the Ottoman caption opts to describe the incident as a group assault on the individual rather than as a fight between the two. The Ottoman version reads as follows: “His left femur was broken near the hip when he was grappled by seven to eight Armenians in Kasımpaşa and was violently slammed on the ground by them.”
779/71 -039	Mehmed Nazif from Bolu: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 4 th Company, 1 st <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the right kneecap and in the lower part of the left knee by a thrown bomb from near the police station while walking in front of Galatasaray with the battalion.

779/71 -040	Mehmed Musa from Konya: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Company, 12 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured by a bomb shrapnel that hit his left groin when he was patrolling in front of Galatasaray.
779/71 -041	Ali Efendi from Taşköprülü: Officer of Military Police (<i>Nizamiye Kanunları</i>).	Hit in the left thigh by a bullet shot from a house in Sulumanastır.
779/71 -042	(Left) Osman Mustafa from Batum: Soldier of Gendarme Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 4 th Company, 6 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Middle) Mustafa Ali from Kastamonu: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Company, 13 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Right) Mehmed Ağa, living near Tophane: Laborer (<i>amele</i>).	Stabbed in the right jawbone with a knife, while he was passing near the Hüseyin Ağa Mosque (<i>Ağa Cami-i Şerifi</i>) in Galatasaray. When he was patrolling Galatasaray, a bomb took away his big toe and the second toe; also injured in both legs. Injured between his right upper arm and his elbow by a thrown bomb while he was passing near the [Ottoman] Bank.
779/71 -043	İbrahim from Niğde: Soldier of Gendarme Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 4 th Company, 5 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the right kneecap by a bomb thrown from the Ottoman Bank.
779/71 -044	Said bin Selim: Chief of the voluntary firefighters (<i>tulumba reisi</i>) in Zindankapısı, Kasımpaşa.	Injured in the hand with a poniard by an Armenian at the Armenian café (<i>Ermeni kahvesinde</i>) in Fincancılar, Galata.
779/71 -045	(Left) Kadir Elvan from Yozgat: [Soldier of] 6 th Regiment, 3 rd Battalion, 2 nd Company, 14 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Middle) Emir Mustafa from Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 1 st Company, 11 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Right) Halil Mehmed from Ankara Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 15 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the right leg by a bomb thrown from Vitalis Han while he was standing sentry (<i>nöbet beklemekte iken</i>) near the Voyvoda Police Station on the fourth day of the incident, [which was] Saturday. Injured in the fingers of his left hand by a bomb thrown from shops when he was patrolling in front of Galatasaray on the first day of the incident; fingers had to be surgically removed afterward. Injured in the first and second toes of his left foot by a bomb in front of Galatasaray.

779/71 -046	(Left) Mustafa Süleyman from Sivas: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 2 nd Battalion, 1 st Company, 10 th <i>Sıhhiye</i> . (Right) Mehmed İbrahim [from] Kayseri: Soldier of Firefighting Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 4 th Company, 3 rd <i>Sıhhiye</i> .	Injured in the left thigh and in the forehead by a thrown bomb when he was patrolling in front of Galatasaray. Injured under his left armpit—his humerus was destroyed—and the middle part of his left leg by a thrown bomb when he was patrolling in front of Galatasaray.
779/71 -047	(Left) Dimitri Kantopolu, resident in Tatavla ¹⁰³ : Compositor (<i>mürettib</i>) of the gazette <i>L'Orient</i> . (Right) Andon: Attendant (<i>çırak</i>) of the grocery store in Taksim.	Stabbed in the back with a knife at the Thursday Market. Hit by a bullet while standing in front of the store.
779/71 -048	Süleyman Mehmed: Crewman (<i>Gemi tayfası</i>) [of the Navy]	Broke his left leg after a bomb was thrown by two Armenians while he was passing through a back street of the Ottoman Bank.
779/71 -049	Mösyö Jak (Monsieur Jacque): Employee of the Ottoman Bank, son of the Brigadier General (<i>Mirliva Saadetlü</i>) Spraki Paşa, member of the Committee of Common Inspection? (<i>Teftiş-i İnsânî Komisyonu</i>)	Injured at the [Ottoman] Bank in his left temporal area.
779/71 -050	Şaban bin Salih from Tirebolu: Sergeant of the Imperial Navy Corps.	While patrolling around Hasköy, he was shot on the neck by a revolver bullet fired by Armenians; he completely lost eyesight in his left eye.
779/71 -051	Sami bin Hakkı Efendi from Kasımpaşa: Secretary of a Navy brig (<i>Bahriye-i Şahane Brik Kâtipleri</i>).	Injured in the hand in Kasımpaşa by Armenians while he was returning to home after duty.
779/71 -052	(Left) Mehmed bin Hüseyin, resident in Cağaloğlu: Day laborer (<i>rençber</i>). (Right) Hüseyin bin Süleyman: Watermelon seller in Fatih.	Injured in the parietal area (<i>nahiye-i cidâriyesi</i>) while passing Tahtakale. Injured in his head and his back with a sharp instrument in front of Yenicami.

¹⁰³ Modern day district of Kurtuluş, Istanbul.

779/71 -053	(Left) Mustafa bin Mehmed from Erzincan: Gendarme. (Right) Osman bin Ahmed from Cide:	Injured in his nose and his legs by a bomb while he was guarding the gate of the [Ottoman] Bank. Injured in the arm by a bomb thrown by Armenians while he was patrolling Galata.
779/71 -054	Mustafa bin Mehmed from Amasya: Soldier of 1 st Infantry Regiment, 1 st Battalion, 1 st Company.	Injured in the kneecap [and in the retromalleolar region] of his right leg [the French caption mistakenly describes it as the <i>left</i> leg] by a bomb thrown from a school inside Sulumanastır.
779/71 -055	Mehmed bin Sadık: Confectioner (<i>Şekerci</i>) in Tahtakale.	Injured in his head and his feet by a sharp instrument in the mentioned place [Tahtakale].
779/71 -056	(Left) Mehmed Reşad bin Mehmed Haki: Café owner (<i>kahveci</i>) in Silvrikapısı. (Right) Aziz bin Mehmed from Prizlen: Shepherd.	Injured in the left leg by a bomb and shot in the left wrist. Injured in the left arm [the sitter in the scene is wearing a cast with a sling on his <i>right</i> arm] by a sharp instrument in Yenicami.
779/71 -057	(Left) Hakkı bin Mehmed from Kastamonu: Simit vendor. (Right) Halid bin Ömer from Çankırı: Day laborer.	Injured in the right arm by bomb shrapnel while he was passing in front of the Ottoman Bank. Injured in the thigh, left and right, and in the abdomen with a knife by an Armenian docker (<i>çımacı</i>) in Kandilli quay.
779/71 -058	Ahmet bin İsmail from Beykoz: Soldier of the Imperial Navy Corps.	Injured in the neck by a bullet in Hasköy while he was patrolling around on the night of the incident. * The given captions do not correspond with the photographed scene. The sitter is bandaged in his amputated stump where his left leg would have previously been.
779/71 -059	Alexandre: Student in a Greek school (<i>Rum mektebi</i>) and son of Anastas, grocer in Bedreddin, Kasımpaşa.	On the day of the incident, when he entered an Armenian café to save his life (<i>muhafaza-i nefis</i>), he was injured in his abdomen and arm by Armenians [at the café]. * He is bandaged in his thigh instead of his arm.
779/71 -060	İbrahim Efendi Haleb: Police officer.	Shrapnel of a bomb that Armenians threw in front of Taksim Square hit the upper region of his right kneecap, shattering the femur to pieces; regrettably (<i>müteessiren</i>) he passed away 37 days after the incident.

List of Figures

Figure 1. “Mehmed Abdullah from Arapkir.” İÜMK 779/71-024.

Figure 2. “Arméniens ayant pris part à l'attaque de la Banque ottomane de Constantinople. L'après une photographie faite par M. J. Fabre à leur arrivée à Marseille.” *L'Illustration* 2801 (October 31, 1896).

Figure 3. “Abdullah bin Rüstem.” İÜMK 779/71-012.

Figure 4. “İbrahim Efendi Haleb.” İÜMK 779/71-060.

Figure 5. “Mehmed Ağa from Erzincan,” “Hüseyin Mehmed,” and “Hacı Mehmed İbrahim from Ankara.” İÜMK 779/71-016.

Figures 6–8. Three photographs from the “Russian atrocities” series, photographed by Pascal Sébah. İÜMK 779/35-044, 042, 065.

Figure 9. “The bombs found.” İÜMK 779/35-224.

Figure 10. “Les bombes arméniennes à Constantinople,” *Le Petit Journal, Supplément Illustré* (November 15, 1896).

Figure 11. “The Situation in Constantinople: The Armenian Bombs Discovered by the Police.” *The Graphic* (October 3, 1896).

Figures 12–13. Bombs seized by the Ottoman police in Pera district.

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국문 초록

압뮐하미드 2세 정권의 정치적 피해 관리: 오스만 제국은행 점거사건(1896)과 사진 프로파간다

본 논문은 이스탄불에서 벌어진 아르메니아인 학살(1896) 이후 압뮐하미드 2세 정권(1876-1909)이 구축했던 사진 프로파간다에 대해 분석한다. 1896년 8월 26일, 무장한 아르메니아 혁명연맹의 일원들이 오스만 제국은행을 공격, 직원과 손님들을 인질로 삼아 동(東)아나톨리아 지역의 개혁을 요구하였다. 이에 격노한 무슬림 군중들은 이스탄불의 아르메니아인 주민들을 공격하기 시작하였으며, 폭력 사태는 끝내 대규모 학살로 번졌다. 유럽 정부와 언론들은 아르메니아인 학살에 미온적이고 소극적으로 대응했다며 압뮐하미드 정권을 일제히 비판하였고, 심지어 술탄이 비밀리에 학살을 획책하였다는 의혹도 제기되었다. 격렬한 비난에 직면한 오스만 행정가들은 은행 점거에서 아르메니아인 학살로 이어지는 일련의 사건들을 정권에 보다 유리한 방식으로 규정하고자 했다. 즉 학살 자체보다는 그 기폭제가 된 혁명가들의 테러 공격을 중심으로 사건을 제시함으로써 아르메니아인 학살을 합리화하거나 적어도 그 심각성을 축소하려 했던 것이다. 따라서 오스만 관료들은 은행 점거사건에 관한 사진들을 확보하는데 주력하고, 이들을 프로파간다에 활용하려 했다.

본고는 압뮐하미드 정권이 은행 점거사건을 제시하는 세 부류의 사진들(테러 공격에 가담한 아르메니아인들, 테러 공격으로 부상을 입어 병원에 입원한 사람들, 그리고 경찰이 혁명가들로부터 압수한 폭탄들의 사진들)을 어떻게 입수하고 선전에 동원하였는지 추적한다. 아르메니아인 혁명가들의 이미지를 활용하려는 시도들은 성공적이지 못했다. 오스만 정부는 은행을 습격한 뒤 망명한 혁명연맹원들의 사진을 손에 넣는 데 실패하였던 것이다. 뿐만 아니라 경찰이 체포 및 촬영에 성공한 다른 아르메니아인 혁명가들의 사진들이 유럽 대사들의 태도에 큰 영향을 줄 수 없으리라는 것이 드러나면서, 이 사진들을 선전에 동원하려는 계획은 흐지부지되었다. 반면, 테러 공격으로 부상당한 피해자들의 사진은 선전용 매체의 형태로 변모하였다. 사진에 달린 캡션은 사태의 성격을 선량한 오스만 시민들에 대한 아르메니아인의 폭력 행사로 축소하려는 경향을 보이는데, 이는 서구의 비난으로부터 벗어나고자 했던 압뮐하미드 정권의 의도가 반영된 것이다. 일련의 사건들을 본질적으로 오스만 제국에 대한 아르메니아인들의 폭력 행사로 규정한다면, 국가의 역할은 아르메니아인들이 책동한 혼란을 수습하는 것에 국한되기 때문이다. 이는 국가의 의료적 역할에 대한 새로운 이해, 즉 국가가 사회적

병리(즉, 아르메니아인이 가져온 혼란)를 해소하고 국민과 사회의 안녕과 보건을 증진해야 한다는 관념이 반영된 것이기도 하다.

그럼에도 불구하고, 환자들의 사진들은 널리 배포되지 않았다. 오스만 중앙에서는 이 사진들이 위험하고 예측 불가능하다는 점에서 사진 촬영자의 전략에 동의할 수 없었고, 그 때문에 이 사진들의 활용을 포기한 것으로 보인다. 사진의 의미는 통제하기 어렵다는 것을 잘 알고 있었던 오스만 제국의 행정가들은, 이 이미지들이 원치 않는 해석들을 초래할 가능성을 깊이 우려했던 것이다. 대신, 오스만 정부는 아르메니아인의 끔찍한 테러를 암시하는 폭탄 사진들을 배포하였다. 폭탄의 이미지들은 19세기 말 유럽에서 급진주의 테러의 상징으로 널리 받아들여지고 있었기 때문에, 부상을 입은 환자들의 사진들보다 더 안전하고 믿을 수 있는 프로파간다 매체로 간주되었을 것이다. 압뮐하미드 정권은 압수한 무기류를 보여주기 위한 전시회를 열었으며, 폭탄의 사진을 유럽의 삽화 신문들에 실는 데도 성공하였다. 무기의 사진은 안전하고 믿을 만하다는 것이 입증되었고, 오스만 국가체제에 대한 폭력을 기록하는 사진 기록물의 하위 장르로 자리잡게 된다.

본고는 프로파간다 사진이 갖는 특정한 양식적 특징을 압뮐하미드 정권의 “이데올로기”와 대응시키는 단순하고 피상적인 해석을 거부하고, 사진 이미지를 의미론적으로 열려 있는 유동적인 존재로 접근하고자 한다. 이를 위해 본 연구는 압뮐하미드의 이을드즈 사진 아카이브(Yıldız Photography Archive)에 소장된 사진들 중, 종래 연구들이 주목하지 않던 지저분하고 정돈되지 않은 사진들을 분석 대상으로 한다. 결점이 있는 사진들은 국가 사진 프로젝트의 중간 산물 혹은 부산물로서, 사진의 의미와 정권의 의도와 전략들이 지속적으로 교섭, 재조정되는 “과정”을 읽어낼 수 있는 귀중한 자료이기 때문이다.