

My second criticism is about the limits of the scope of analysis on Ottoman legal culture. Rubin describes legalism and the notion of the rule of law as defining features of this culture. Yet he underestimates the significance of the abuse of this principle on a regular basis. Abdülhamid II had suspended the *Kanun-ı Esasi* four years before the Yıldız trial began. As Noémi Lévy demonstrates, in doing so the sultan did not even refer to Article 113 of the *Kanun-ı Esasi*, which allowed him to declare *idare-i örfiyye* (state of siege), and hence “suspend the legal order in the name of the rule of law.” Still, the Hamidian regime continued to refer to this article whenever it needed to declare the state of siege.<sup>3</sup> Besides, the prologue and the conclusion of the book recall the legal practices from contemporary Turkey, which is quite fertile ground for finding similar examples. In some ways Rubin is perfectly right: the notion of the rule of law was a defining feature of the legal culture in the late Ottoman Empire (as it is today in contemporary Turkey). But what if its abuse was also “normalized” or turned into an expected practice? Does this abuse only matter for political theory? Did not it have any significance for Ottoman legal culture? Considering his sociolegal approach, I would have expected Rubin to evaluate Ottoman legal culture together with its paradoxes and tensions in a more nuanced way. To conclude, despite these limitations, this well-constructed book with its microhistorical analysis and multilayered interests is certainly a valuable contribution to the legal and political history of the late Ottoman Empire.

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doi:[10.1017/npt.2021.20](https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2021.20)

**Darin N. Stephanov. *Ruler Visibility and Popular Belonging in the Ottoman Empire, 1808–1908*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. vii + 240 pp.**

The intersection of political, intellectual, and cultural history embodies critical material to understand the great transformations of the nineteenth century. The symbolic background of nation-state formation in Europe is a fundamental component in this research area. Most of the analyses in this field focus on the end of the century, and thus they often miss the continuity

3 Noémi Lévy, “An Ottoman Variation on the State of Siege: The Invention of the *Idare-i Örfiyye* During the First Constitutional Period”, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 54 (2016): 1–24.

between the imperial images and the national discourse. In contrast to these limitations, Darin N. Stephanov's *Rural Visibility and Popular Belonging in the Ottoman Empire, 1808–1908*, is a novel contribution by covering the entire century while highlighting the points that the imperial image and discourse influenced the self-consciousness of the public.

The book focuses on the sultanic image and explores how it was perceived and responded to by the public. Its conceptual framework rests on the discussions of ideology, discourse, nationalism, and modernity to raise questions about visibility and belonging. While it “prioritises breadth over depth” (p. 3), its methodological approach integrates micro- and macro-historical elements. Its main argument is that the signifiers of imperial celebrations significantly impacted post-imperial states’ popular mindset. It challenges the idea that the ethnoreligious confession was the primary determinant of “popular belonging.” Instead, it claims that popular belonging was shaped by imperial ceremonies and the place of birth and work.

The book rests on extensive research of Ottoman imperial archives to identify the sultanic celebrations. While documents at *Hatt-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Edicts) and the *İrade-Dahiliye* (Interior Affairs) collections reveal the official point of view of the center, the lengthy textual analysis of the documents at *İrade-Hariciye* (Foreign Affairs) focuses on the official perspective of the provincial elite. Furthermore, various materials such as newspaper articles, memoirs, poems, slogans, school performances, and correspondence in Turkish, Bulgarian, Hebrew, Russian, English, French, and German reveal the details of imperial ceremonies and their public reflections. The book also presents illustrations regarding the physical realm of ruler visibility.

The book has four main chapters in addition to an introduction, a conclusion, and an epilogue. The first chapter introduces the concept of “ruler visibility,” which is the physical and symbolic appearance of the ruler to the public (p. 7). After reviewing the literature on ruler visibility before the nineteenth century, the author focuses on the reign of Mahmud II. Facing a series of political crises, the sultan acquired a more direct and higher public visibility. He displayed different images to his Muslim and non-Muslim subjects; “strictly Muslim” at home, “secular” abroad. As the latter group had rising importance for him, the common emphasis on “faith” molded the content of “Ottomanism” (p. 17). The symbolic realms of military campaigns, Friday prayers, royal portraits, press, imperial edicts, and sultanic celebrations represent several examples of this divided yet uniform sultanic image.

The following two chapters discuss how the two successor rulers, Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz, expanded their father Mahmud II’s policy of increased visibility. As a common theme, they focus on the imperial ceremonies and explain how they fragmented the imperial image and the popular

belonging. In Chapter 2, a textual analysis of newspaper articles, provincial reports, and letters on the occasion of royal celebrations presents the “trope of love” for the sultan (p. 49). It demonstrates how the provincial elite translated the ordinary people’s imagery of the sultan to the sultan. Then, the chapter illustrates the sultan’s image-making process through his tour Rumelia in 1846 and follows the tour through songs and newspaper articles. This chapter conceptualizes the artistic productions of Bulgarian literary men during and after the tour as the genesis of Bulgarian communal belonging.

Chapter 3 begins with a report from Sivas depicting how popular celebrations for Abdülaziz’s accession to the throne were organized with discipline and order. Imperial discourse diffused into the local communities as these ceremonies were officially standardized. Gradually, official celebrations created new means of self-identification for Bulgar groups. For instance, local newspapers frequently referred to the Bulgarian national identity and national pride while reporting the ceremonies (p. 101). Their rising national consciousness overlapped with the weakening of their loyalty to the Ottoman authorities. Especially toward the end of Abdülaziz’s reign, mismanagement escalated a critical transformation from Ottomanism to Bulgarian nationalism.

Chapter 4 examines the long reign of Abdülhamid II in chronological order. The early period’s religious and military motifs in the sultan’s public appearance conveyed an integration with other empires and shaped his future image. Nevertheless, from the start, he built an image targeting different groups within and outside of the empire. In his mid-reign, the use of physical and abstract dynastic signifiers such as medals, coats of arms, triumphal arches, and Western-style military uniforms became prevalent. The late-Hamidian era was marked by the “personality cult,” which created a realm of oppositions and challenges (p. 176). Since the sultan was a “Muslim leader” for the Muslims and a “Western leader” elsewhere, his visibility required a continuous fine-tuning of his public display.

The concluding chapter underlines the continuities with the Ottoman imperial regime and the post-imperial Bulgaria, namely establishing the term “fatherland” referring to Bulgaria in the 1850s and a collective imaginary setting in the 1860s. Challenging the nationalist historiographies, it argues that the sultanic ceremonies played a role in shaping the successor states’ national consciousness. Finally, in the epilogue, the author compares the Ottoman and the Russian Empires concerning the formation of post-imperial popular belongings by focusing on the Bulgarian and Finnish cases, respectively. Education was the main driving force in both communities for establishing a royal attachment which later became a means of creating national belonging.

The book effectively fulfills its promise to explain the sultanic ceremonies’ long-lasting effects on the communal belonging and representation forms.

It also provides convincing examples of the historical evolution of communal identification. Taking up the question of communal self-consciousness, the author compares the references to the terms “*millet*” and “*vatan*” in different periods and argues that rather than the Tanzimat, the mid-nineteenth century was a turning point. Until then, *millet* was an “Ottoman diplomatic concession” (p. 202) rather than a reference for communal belonging. Similarly, following the universalist paradigm shift, *vatan* reached an abstract and macro level in the second half of the nineteenth century. More importantly, the analysis of the historical evolution of Bulgarian communal belonging demonstrates that the popular attachment was not merely a symbolic concept. Quite the contrary, it was a repertoire of everyday practices and collective memory.

Defining ruler visibility, popular belonging, and how they evolved through time is a central aim of the book. The book presents a detailed analysis of ruler visibility, discusses its historical evolution, and examines its effects on making certain forms of communal belonging. Nevertheless, it could have problematized the definition of “popular” and raised further questions on its formation. What is defined as the “public” in the book is instead the local elite composed of literary men, artists, men of the clergy, or political representatives. The textual and artistic examples of the popular responses during and after the sultanic ceremonies are, in fact, the local elite’s products. The book successfully shows that the literary elite translated the sultanic imagery to the public. It also formulated a response on behalf of the public, which eventually influenced the popular attachment forms. The popular dissemination and adaptation of the local discourse would have been a stimulating topic for the book. In this way, the author could have discussed the local elite’s role in shaping popular belonging.

Another central promise of the book is to analyze the symbolic interaction between the ruler and the ruled. The emphasis on the term “interaction” implies a reciprocal action between the ruler and the public. While the book thoroughly explains the effects of the ruler ceremonies on society, the effects of popular belonging on ruler visibility remain little explored. A more balanced account would have strengthened the argumentative backbone of the research. It would also attribute more significance to the public as a political agent capable of transforming itself and the ruler.

These two critiques mentioned could be responded to through the book’s methodological preference, which “touches by necessity rather lightly on a high number of highly voluminous bodies of scholarship” (p. 3). Nevertheless, refraining from this deepness inevitably makes dominant actors more visible in the historical narrative. In this case, without differentiating the ordinary people and the local elite, and without a profound discussion of the possible influences of the communal self-consciousness on the sultanic image, the

narrative locates the ruler and his signifiers as the key historical determinants of post-imperial national awareness.

That said, these limitations hardly undermine the work's overall significance. *Rural Visibility and Popular Belonging in the Ottoman Empire* is a noteworthy example of integrating nineteenth-century imperial and post-imperial studies. The book's chronological structure presents the historical evolution of the key concepts and arguments coherently. While presenting rich historical evidence at local and imperial levels, it offers a creative dialogue of different archives. In covering a long period with several actors, events, and discussions, it incorporates micro and macro perspectives throughout the study by focusing on the Bulgar communal belonging during and after the Ottoman period.

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doi:[10.1017/npt.2021.23](https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2021.23)

### Elif M. Babül, *Bureaucratic Intimacies: Translating Human Rights in Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017, xiv + 230 pages

This highly insightful, readable, and award-winning volume deals with the puzzle of coexistence of EU-funded human rights training for Turkish bureaucrats (and ensuing indicators of progress) and ongoing state violence. How is it possible that after so many years of training for the sake of harmonizing Turkish official practices with the EU, violations still go on? Skeptical of seeing human rights training as mere “lip service,” Babül convincingly argues that the way the programs are designed “unexpectedly and perhaps unintentionally” helps reproduce already existing aversion in Turkish bureaucracy toward human rights as a Western construct and elicit nationalist and conservative responses in addition to paving the way to impunity. Simultaneously, she provides a Bourdieusian analysis of reproduction of the state on the basis of distinctions and hierarchies while also paying attention to the agency of various figures, such as government workers, translators, human rights advocates, and experts.

The book is composed of two main parts. The first part, divided into two chapters, provides background on the formation of the state and government workers and their transformation since the Early Republican era. Here Babül argues that longstanding structures of the pedagogical state shape attitudes of government workers who take part in human rights training. Accustomed to