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SHINY THINGS AND SOVEREIGN LEGALITIES: EXPROPRIATION OF DYNASTIC PROPERTY IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND EARLY TURKISH REPUBLIC

Abstract

This article probes the legal expropriation of dynastic property in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic. Focused on the period from Abdülhamid II's deposal in 1909 to the decade immediately following the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, it takes parliamentary debates as entry points for exploring how this legislative process redefined the sovereign's relationship with property. Although this process was initially limited only to Yıldız Palace, the debates that surrounded it heuristically helped to shape a new understanding of public ownership of property that was put to use in other contexts in the years to come, most notably during and after World War I and the Armenian genocide, before establishing itself as the foundation of a new ownership regime with the republican appropriation and reuse of property two decades later.

Keywords: dynastic property; expropriation; Ottoman Empire; public ownership; Republic of Turkey

In December 1909, a recently manumitted concubine named Layık Seza petitioned the office of the Grand Vizier to claim a piano she had left behind at Yıldız Palace, from which she had been expelled following Abdülhamid II's deposal earlier that year.¹ Like many others before her, Layık Seza was brought to the imperial palace as a young girl. There she built her world around things she earned for "good deeds" she had done for the benefit of the Ottoman state. On the one hand, she understood that nothing she had was hers to own. The property of the enslaved members of the Ottoman court was ordinarily confiscated, not only upon their death but also in the event of a sultan's deposal.² On the other hand, she knew that she could claim the piano only as her personal property. "For they gave back our personal items," she explained with studied naivety in her petition, "but they [must] have forgotten to return my mahogany colored piano."³ She intuitively grasped that, as the Ottoman Empire moved from one mode of rule to another, from absolute to constitutional monarchy, different meanings that the piano previously held in relation to sovereign power collapsed into one: it became the personal and private

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property of—and, had to be claimed as such by—a person who herself until recently had been the property of the Ottoman state.

Layık Seza's personal campaign to recover her piano exemplified many features of the rupture in and subsequent ambiguity of ownership of dynastic property caused by the 1908 Constitutional Revolution in the Ottoman Empire. The revolution brought new limitations and significance to the physical and public presence of the Ottoman state embodied in the buildings and "things" that had hitherto been the symbols of imperial dominion and prerogative.⁴ To be sure, both the material presence of the Ottoman state and the complicated ownership systems of the sovereign's property had already been in flux in the previous centuries.⁵ Concomitant with the global preoccupation with the setting of "universal standards for the holding of property" on the one hand and the parallel development of the liberal project of *res publica* on the other, the relationship of the modernizing Ottoman state to the public domain and its material aspects continued to transform significantly throughout the 19th century.⁶

This transformation was further intensified, with a touch of ambivalence, during the reign of Abdülhamid II, whose welfare policies helped to expand the public domain through new public works and institutions. On the flipside, Abdülhamid II extensively exploited this expanding domain through a set of invented traditions that aimed to restore the sacredness of the sultan's person,⁷ effecting a ceremonial and material presence of the state reminiscent of earlier times.⁸ It was in this context that the "sanctum" of his rule, Yıldız Palace, assumed particular significance.⁹ It was also in this context that, in the aftermath of the sultan's deposition in 1909, Yıldız Palace was singled out as a "monument of despotism" by the constitutional regime. Accordingly, the latter's subsequent desire to legitimately expropriate Yıldız Palace precipitated the first efforts to determine the jurisdictional limits of public ownership of property and to come to terms with the question of what it meant for "the people" to own "things."¹⁰

Focusing mainly on the period from Abdülhamid II's deposition in 1909 to the decade that immediately followed the abolition of Caliphate in 1924, this article probes the legal expropriation of dynastic property by the late Ottoman and early Turkish republican states at a time when their milieu of jurisdiction shifted significantly. It takes lengthily—and often utterly confused—parliamentary debates as entry points for exploring the nature of this expropriation process that aimed to redefine sovereignty and the sovereign's relationship with property, as well as to discursively create "political legitimacy and popular consent."¹¹ To be sure, this was a gradual process that was initially limited only to Yıldız Palace. Nonetheless, as this article aims to show, the debates that surrounded it heuristically helped to shape a new understanding of public ownership of property that was put to use in other contexts in the years to come, most notably during and after World War I and the Armenian genocide, before establishing itself as the foundation of a new regime of ownership with the republican appropriation and reuse of property two decades later.

Historians of the late Ottoman Empire have extensively analyzed state (trans)formation in this period. Yet, as Nadir Özbek has aptly observed, they have often treated the Ottoman and Turkish republican states as "supreme and ever-present political actor[s]" that rarely doubted their jurisdictional limits.¹² Recently, a highly innovative scholarship on the Greek and Bulgarian expulsions, the Armenian genocide, and concomitant property confiscations and expropriations in the postgenocide Ottoman Empire has effectively

demonstrated that it was this intensive confiscation and destruction process that helped the Ottoman and early republican governments to consolidate their power, not only economically but also ideologically.¹³ It was also through this process that the legal and extralegal foundations of this new understanding of public ownership, and its intrinsic ties to national wealth and economy, were established. However, this new scholarship, too, inevitably treats the Ottoman and republican states as “concrete political bod[ies] and unified public actor[s]” that deployed their sovereign will to constitute exceptions and cause the destruction of those they set aside as the “accursed people.”¹⁴

Although the expropriation of dynastic and non-Muslim property paralleled each other and were intimately linked, the two processes also display useful differences.¹⁵ There was ample ambiguity inherent in drafting and implementing laws on abandoned Greek and Armenian property,¹⁶ but the overt hesitation and confusion in regards to the dynastic property, which loomed large in all parliamentary sessions, surpassed that which was witnessed in the Greek and Armenian cases. This stemmed firstly from distinct problems that were directly linked to the nature of dynastic property, which had to do with the classic, convoluted relationship of the person of the sovereign to the legal realm, particularly in regards to property ownership. Islamic jurisprudence and accompanying administrative regulations had traditionally distinguished between the private treasury of the sovereign (*bayt māl al-khāṣṣa*) and the fiscus or public treasury (*bayt māl al-muslimīn*), but the line between the two was by no means clear cut.¹⁷ For the constitutional government, the legal categorization of Abdülhamid II’s property after his deposal proved challenging, to say the least. Moreover, it was anything but a simple task to determine the limits of the person of the deposed sovereign, and sever him from the remainder of the Ottoman dynasty.

Secondly, both the constitutional and the republican governments used the imperial buildings and the “shiny things” they contained as beacons of the imagined majesty of the Ottoman Empire, which uncomfortably sat side by side with what came to be increasingly perceived as its undesirable history—first, against the Hamidian period and second, against the Ottoman past as a whole. This article traces the ways in which the constitutional and republican governments tried to tackle or circumvent these problems. Its overarching goal is to understand how the discordances, misconceptions, and ambiguities inherent in the process shaped the meanings of and the relationship between the state, the public domain, and property ownership in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic.

THE PROBLEM OF DYNASTIC PROPERTY IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

Often portrayed in the late Ottoman historiography as a watershed moment, the 1908 Constitutional Revolution was, in effect, no more than a “triumphant” reinstatement of an earlier, disrupted constitutional regime.¹⁸ Although carried out largely by military personnel, at the beginning the revolution did not necessarily have a military character. Nor did it bring an end to Abdülhamid II’s reign, even though the revolutionaries often defined their politics explicitly in opposition to his heavy-handed rule. What constituted more of a rupture than the 1908 revolution was the counter-revolution that broke out in mid-April of the following year. Ambiguously viewed by historians at once as Abdülhamid’s attempt to regain power, the Liberal opposition’s provocation, and the Committee of Union and Progress’s (CUP) plot to take hold of the central organs of

power militarily,¹⁹ the government's violent reaction to the counter-revolution achieved what the revolution did not or could not. During the nine days that it lasted, the "revolutionary fervor," which was absent in the first phase of the revolution, helped the CUP government do away with governmental "impotence" for which it had heretofore been criticized.²⁰ As a result, the suppression of the counter-revolution by the government-organized Action Army not only effectively brought an end to absolutist rule in the Ottoman Empire but also conspicuously militarized the political sphere.²¹

This "fervent" revolutionary moment also marked the beginning of the dissolution of the imperial palace, at this point primarily Yıldız Palace, as a political institution.²² Accordingly, the first parliamentary debates over the ownership of dynastic property and its public and private character took place immediately after the disturbances were brought to an end. In the ensuing months, the parliamentarians debated legitimate ways of handling Yıldız Palace and the things that it contained, with the aim of sketching a legal framework for the expropriation process and determining the liabilities of the institutions, including the legislature itself, that would carry it out.

The first official proposal on the issue was opened to deliberation shortly after parliament reconvened on 1 May 1909. This proposal suggested that a parliamentary commission be convened to accompany the inspectors employed by the Istanbul Municipality (*Şehremaneti*), the institution authorized to carry out the inspection and assessment of the Yıldız Palace buildings and its contents.²³ Although a general procedural ambiguity predominated in subsequent parliamentary sessions, several deputies objected to the Istanbul Municipality's involvement in the matter, partly because the legitimacy and necessity of the institution had begun to be contested.²⁴ The Sinop deputy Hasan Fehmi Efendi maintained that overseeing this process was the responsibility of the central government, particularly the Ministry of Finance, and should not be left to the municipality at all.²⁵ Siroz (Sérres in today's Greece) deputy Hirsto Dalçef Efendi also objected to the Istanbul Municipality's primary involvement in the process, contending that the wealth housed in and extracted from Yıldız Palace did not belong to the imperial capital alone, but to the entire "nation."²⁶ Other deputies were concerned more specifically about the legal dimensions of the process. For Antalya deputy Ebüzziya Tevfik Bey, who was known to be less than an ardent supporter of the constitutional order, Ottoman law stipulated that all this wealth must be transferred to the new sultan, and no government institution had the right to inspect or confiscate it.²⁷ For Nafi Pasha, a deputy from Aleppo, the treasures of Yıldız should be considered *beytü'l mal*, the inspection of which was primarily a matter of shari'a law, to be supervised by the office of the *şeyhülislām* (shaykh al-Islam, chief religious official in the Ottoman Empire who oversaw the Islamic legal order).²⁸ On the following day this claim was taken up by another Aleppan, Ali Cenani, who understood Abdülhamid II's wealth and property to have been "extorted" from the people during the "era of despotism," and eligible to be taken back by "the people" precisely because it was *beytü'l mal*.²⁹

In the following months, deputies continued to debate and negotiate their understanding of what public property meant and how they, as the presumed representatives of the people, were to handle it. All in all, neither the legislature nor the executive branch of the government had a clear idea of the legal procedure for how Yıldız Palace and the property found in it would be handled, and often more than one legal and administrative body was deemed entitled to supervise this process. In the meantime, however, the commander of

both the Third Army Corps and the Action Army, Mahmud Şevket Pasha, sent telegrams to parliament to report that all cash and a portion of the valuable items found at Yıldız Palace had already been seized and removed by the army and secured at army headquarters.³⁰ In these telegrams, Mahmud Şevket Pasha stated, with utmost authority, that parliament should not intervene in this process on the basis that *divan-ı harbi örfî* (court martial during the declared state of emergency) regarded it as a necessary measure, though he deemed appropriate parliament's decision to send "two or three individuals" as observers.³¹ In other words, while the government was grappling with the jurisdictional limits and definitions of deposal and dissolution, revolutionary fervor was placing its mark on the process, making it essentially militaristic in nature.

The more critical questions came when the actual sorting and assessment process began. What exactly was subject to the proposed inspection and confiscation? Did they apply only to cash and valuable items, such as jewelry, or did they also include the title deeds, equity shares, and bonds that the deposed sultan kept in the banks? Was it only sultan Abdülhamid II's personal wealth and, if so, where did his "person" really end? As recurrently voiced in subsequent debates, no justification was necessary for the proposed confiscation of Abdülhamid II's personal property because all of it was considered to have been acquired through illegitimate means.³² The fate of the property belonging to his extended family, on the other hand, which technically included his brother, the reigning sultan Mehmed V Reşad, was more difficult to determine. Despite recent constitutional amendments that had imposed limitations upon the sultan's executive and legislative powers,³³ Mehmed V Reşad was still the legitimate ruler of the empire and owner of the dynastic property. Thus, careful definition of Abdülhamid II's personal wealth and its excision from the remainder of the dynastic property was a difficult but necessary task.

The initial measures in this context were no more than a set of spontaneous decisions to confiscate all movable and real property that belonged to Abdülhamid II and his immediate family. Accordingly, in a proposal opened to deliberation during the 4 May 1909 parliamentary session the Commission on Budgetary Balance (Muvazene Encümeni) suggested that all wealth owned by Abdülhamid II and his family, including cash, stocks, and bonds held in foreign institutions, be seized.³⁴ Fearing that his family members would transfer money and valuable items (which were already referred to as "the people's property" [*milletin malı*]) outside the country, the commission also deemed it necessary to obtain restrictive orders for their bank accounts and impose strict control over their movement.³⁵ This fear proved to be well-founded when two weeks later şehzade Burhaneddin Efendi, one of Abdülhamid II's sons, was captured trying to flee Istanbul with 20,000 lira worth of cash and checks on him.³⁶ The government consequently decided that Abdülhamid II's personal property alone was to be seized. Accordingly, an official note from the office of the Grand Vizier established that everything he purchased, appropriated, and extorted both before and after he was enthroned in 1876 was to be considered his personal property and therefore subject to confiscation.³⁷ In other words, the constitutional government determined not only where the person of the deposed sovereign ended but also how far back in time his "Body politic" extended.³⁸ However, it still needed to locate this wealth in place, which posed another challenge in an already exceedingly globalized financial world.

As Ahmed Bey, the acting president of the Commission on Budgetary Balance, maintained, were this solely a domestic issue, it would be an easy matter. But the dethroned sultan spread his wealth virtually all over the globe.³⁹ Reclaiming the “things” held in those accounts in the name of the people (*millet*) was not a simple task, if it was even possible at all. As the deputies collectively noted, foreign banks would be very unlikely to return the money, bonds, and stocks they held on a simple request. The matter had to be reviewed in reference to the law (*kanun dairesinde*) and an official consultation needed to be communicated to the executive branch. But what exactly did the law prescribe? In dispirited fashion the Istanbul deputy Hallacyan Efendi raised the question, to which the Üsküp (Skopje, in today’s Macedonia) deputy bluntly responded: “Nothing.”⁴⁰ Hallacyan Efendi persisted: international law, which had the upper hand in matters related to “haute finance,” must have surely dealt with similar cases before that they could also refer to. In the year that followed, the despairing and occasionally dumbfounded government embarked upon a program of collecting Abdülhamid II’s money, bonds, and stocks.⁴¹ Some of the collection processes were rather straightforward and were brought to a conclusion within a few months,⁴² while others, such as those with Crédit Lyonnais and Reichsbank, were remarkably complicated and took much longer to resolve.⁴³ All in all, regardless of their straightforwardness or complexity, these cases helped the constitutional government come to terms with the broader, international limits of its (re)envisioned sovereignty.

Together with the valuables found at Yıldız Palace, all wealth confiscated through domestic channels was transferred to the Ministry of Finance, though with another round of confused debates among the parliamentarians, which brings us back to the initial question posed above, with which this article concerns itself. What were the limits of the Ottoman state’s ownership of these newly acquired funds? Or, to repeat the question in more familiar terms, what did it mean for “the people” to own “things”?

What the government could and could not do with the confiscated money was first discussed during a formal inquiry by the Commission for the Hejaz Railway (Hicaz Demiryolu Encümeni) shortly after the deposal of Abdülhamid II. According to a note sent by the commission’s president Abdülkadir Hâşimî to parliament, the deposed sultan had previously conceded 50,000 liras for the construction and maintenance of the railway, although the commission never received the money.⁴⁴ Abdülkadir Hâşimî contended that continuing with the railway construction without any disruption was of utmost public importance but also reliant on the availability of funds. The commission queried whether this amount could be set aside from the cash and valuables found at Yıldız Palace and immediately deposited for the use of the railway administration.⁴⁵ This inquiry sparked a debate among the parliamentarians, some of whom were not even sure whether the amount in question was to be considered a gift or a debt. In either case, the main point of disagreement had to do with the nature and the definition of people’s property (*milletin mali*). As the Sinop deputy Hasan Fehmi Efendi confirmed, the political, economic, and religious importance and urgency of the Hejaz Railway could not be disputed, but the money found at Yıldız Palace belonged to the people (*millet*), who now seized and claimed it and could use it only in ways it pleased (*keyfema yeşar*).⁴⁶

In addition to such large-scale projects, there were appeals for smaller and less valuable—though no less important or urgent—resources, particularly the reusable items found at Yıldız Palace’s residential quarters. One such request was for the transfer

of Yıldız Palace's bedframes and copperware to the soon-to-be-opened hospital in Cerrahpaşa.⁴⁷ Informed about these items, stacked up and idly waiting at the palace, the Directorate General for Health and Public Assistance (Müessesât-ı Hayriye-i Sıhhiye Riyaseti) requested them from the municipal government for the hospital's use. The municipal government then asked the Ministry of Interior for their transfer. Similar to the large public projects, these requests inspired debates over the problem of "the people's" ownership of "things" and called for a legal definition and procedure of expropriation, as well as a justification for these things' appropriation for public use. The items included in the Directorate General's list comprised of no more than a few iron bedframes, copper pots and pans, and straw mattresses, which held close to no value. Moreover, as the deputy mayor Tevfik Bey stated in support, they were left there unused, "to rust and decay whereas they could be of utmost use, serving the sick people of the city instead."⁴⁸ The deputy mayor further explained that the municipal government was short of funds yet there was urgency around opening the hospital. Thus despite having no value, these items would ease the financial burden of the municipality.⁴⁹ Even with such reasoning, however, the Ministry of Interior found this request unacceptable, until the grand vizier Hakkı Pasha got involved and propelled the new sultan to approve their transfer.⁵⁰

The valuable items found at Yıldız Palace, particularly jewelry, were consequently priced in accordance with expert assessments and reluctantly auctioned, bringing the state treasury a decent sum.⁵¹ Less valuable items, which had potential public use, continued to slowly and cautiously flow towards public institutions, both old and new. For example, in the case of various tools and instruments in Yıldız Palace's observatory, the deputies debated the matter within the larger context of budgetary planning and consequently voted in favor of their transfer to a newly established meteorological station.⁵² Many other items were given away to a range of state institutions, most notably the Ministry of Education, to be utilized in various government offices and schools.⁵³ The palace automobiles were requested by the Ministry of War.⁵⁴

Once Abdülhamid's things were duly transposed, the focus of parliamentary debates shifted towards the built environment of Yıldız Palace. The confiscation of the palace complex was more conspicuous than auctioning jewelry or disposing cash and had to be conceived publicly, with due precision and utmost legitimacy. From early on after Abdülhamid's deposal, there were suggestions to turn Yıldız Palace into a museum that would represent the struggle of "the people" against its "infamous resident." There were also other suggestions based on the immediate needs of "the people," and by extension, the public good. Sinop deputy Hasan Fehmi Efendi, for one, suggested that the palace be given to the least funded of all Ottoman institutions, namely, the state almshouse (Darülaceze).⁵⁵

In effect, the discourse on the needs of "the people" defined how Yıldız Palace would be put to use in the subsequent months. The palace gardens and parts of the buildings were opened to the public shortly after Abdülhamid II's deposal, and guided or unguided tours were made available to Ottoman and foreign visitors.⁵⁶ Although the newspapers boasted a commercial return of one hundred liras daily, the Yıldız Commission's efforts focused on the palace's public uses, determining along the way what public use or benefit came to mean in general.⁵⁷ For example, the Yıldız Commission used the palace grounds to organize social gatherings involving members of the Ottoman dynasty, with the

purpose of raising money for the victims of anti-Armenian pogroms that had taken place in Adana several weeks earlier.⁵⁸

There were other instances, however, in which the use of the palace buildings was more ideologically charged. For example, when the Committee of Union and Progress decided to hold a banquet at Yıldız Palace for the occasion of the first anniversary of the revolution, the handling of the palace grounds was not wholly untouched by the ideological effects of the regime change.⁵⁹ Yet, even then it was presented more as an act of retribution that aimed at “doing justice” on behalf of the people. Full ideologization of the expropriation process would take years of legislative work that regulated total mobilization, genocide, confiscation, destruction, and appropriation, at the end of which the Turkish Republic emerged as the lawful owner of all dynastic things.

WARTIME APPROPRIATION AND REPUBLICAN REUSE

As the dissolution of Yıldız Palace was still underway in early 1910, a low-ranking gendarmerie officer who had been on duty in a makeshift station there reportedly removed furniture from the palace to furnish a nearby gendarme station.⁶⁰ Related correspondence between the Ministry of the Interior, the office of the Grand Vizier, and the municipal government stated the unlawfulness of the items’ transfer, which the officer carried out despite being repeatedly advised against it.⁶¹ Although the War Ministry’s response is missing from the archival file, the continued correspondence indicates that the furniture was never returned to the palace premises. Unlike the Directorate General’s request for the Cerrahpaşa Hospital, the gendarmerie division did not have to make a case for itself; nor do it seem to have obtained the sultan’s permission for the items’ transfer. As indicated by Mahmud Şevket Pasha’s commanding voice when he gave the ultimatum to parliament a year earlier or the ease with which the War Ministry claimed and obtained the palace automobiles a few months earlier, the army had the upper hand in the expropriation process.⁶² Although the Ottoman parliament often appeared to be in full support of it, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the 1909 counter-revolution, the actions of the military personnel did not always go unnoticed or uncontested. On the contrary, deputies openly voiced their criticism of the anomalous position held by the military in general and by Mahmud Şevket Pasha in particular.⁶³

This situation changed drastically with the onset of the Balkan Wars in 1912–13, which marked the beginning of what would be the final decade of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout this period of consecutive wars, total mobilization, and harsh suppression of all political opposition, the Ottoman state claimed its citizens’ lives and property in their entirety, leaving only few facets of Ottoman society untouched.⁶⁴ To be sure, the Ottoman state had claimed the lives and property of its subjects and citizens before the Balkan Wars as well. In fact, throughout its existence it had customarily used confiscation of land and moveable property as a governmental practice (*müsadere*). Yet, at least in theory, this practice targeted state officials and/or local power holders⁶⁵ and rarely, if at all, translated into a wholesale dispossession.⁶⁶ For instance, in the case of the abolition of the Janissary corps and the associated Bektashi Sufi order, extensive confiscations were still limited to regimental property or that of the individuals prosecuted during or following the abolition.⁶⁷

What is more important and relevant, perhaps, is that a number of legal “inventions,” such as those related to the newly emerging welfare policies in the 19th century, gave unprecedented license to the Ottoman state to intervene directly in matters of personal and family property and to act in the interests of the Ottoman poor and needy.⁶⁸ In 1873, for instance, the Ottoman state reportedly expropriated numerous houses and plots that belonged to a private waqf in Edirne, in support of a newly built state orphanage in the city.⁶⁹ A good portion of these policies and concomitant legal changes were also effected by large-scale population displacements that began in the mid-19th century,⁷⁰ when categories such as abandoned property began to assume new meanings, ones that were often different from classical provisions on the subject.⁷¹ In this context the standards for the holding of property, as well as the very definition of sovereignty and its relationship to both “the people” and “things,” transformed in the late 19th and early 20th century.

This transformation intensified in the final decade of the empire and, beginning with the implementation of the war taxes (*tekalif-i harbiye*) during the Balkan Wars, culminated in a series of laws that ordered the systematic confiscation of property for military purposes.⁷² More decisive than the military requisitioning in this context, however, was the coinciding process of large-scale dispossession of Bulgarians, Greeks, and Armenians during and after World War I and the reformulated notion of abandoned property (*emval-i metruke*) that emerged as its immediate outcome. As mentioned previously, the legal category of abandoned property, which historically had been one of the subsidiary income sources that constituted *beytü'l mal*,⁷³ was not a new invention. Already in flux earlier in the 19th century, however, it assumed a whole new significance with the onset of the Bulgarian and Greek expulsion in 1913 and particularly throughout the Armenian genocide, and became the central concern of the subsequent governments, both economically and ideologically, in their efforts to redefine who the sovereign was and how it related to the holding of property.⁷⁴

As with the constitutional government's takeover of the dynastic property a few years earlier, the central question in relation to the appropriation of “abandoned” non-Muslim property was that of legitimacy.⁷⁵ Although this process began during the Balkan Wars, the first law regulating the confiscation of abandoned property, albeit temporary in nature, did not come until September 1915.⁷⁶ Generically entitled “The Law about the Abandoned Properties, Debts and Credits of the Population Who Were Transferred to other Locales,” the decree stipulated that all real property be registered by the treasury of the Ministry of Finance, whereas all moveable property had to be gathered and assessed by a commission to be duly auctioned and sold.⁷⁷ The corresponding money would then be given to the local subdivisions of the treasury, to be eventually returned to the actual owner of the items, a stipulation that was fully overridden by laws enacted at different times, that gradually transferred all of the property to the state budget of the Turkish Republic following the War of Independence.⁷⁸ Still, however, this process was neither self-evident nor straightforward. For one, it took years of lengthy, and once again utterly confused, parliamentary debates to resolve the categorical messiness inherent in the new definitions of abandoned property, which treated all absentee property owners—whether fugitive, disappeared, or even killed—as one and the same.⁷⁹ Legal heirs or proxies who fell into such categories also took lengthy efforts to resolve⁸⁰

because the subsequent governments strove to attain legitimate means for “the people’s” ownership of “things.”

The novelty of the War of Independence was that it fomented, among other things, a radical redefinition of property ownership strictly along national lines. By the end of the war, the question of property, particularly of public property, was no longer solely about the legitimate ownership of “things” by a body referred to indistinctly as “the people,” as was the case during the appropriation of Yıldız Palace and even during the early phases of the Armenian genocide.⁸¹ Instead, it became a question of, as Ellinor Morack has eloquently shown, “who the nation was, whether or not it could be represented, and if yes, by whom.”⁸² This question went on to inform the legislative processes in the aftermath of the war, not only on the continued appropriation of abandoned property but also on the impending abolition of the caliphate and the expropriation of dynastic property with which it was intimately linked. The earlier discussions of the appropriation of Yıldız Palace depicted Abdülhamid II primarily as an unjust ruler who amassed his property through illegitimate means. The new debates on the abolition of the caliphate and the implied expropriation of dynastic property, by contrast, were concerned with the question of who the nation was, and sought, in an unprecedented way, to define Abdülmecid II and other members of the dynastic family principally as undeserving citizens.⁸³

After lengthy deliberations over the years, and not without ample reservation,⁸⁴ the Law on the Abolition of Caliphate and Exile of the Members of the Ottoman Dynasty passed on 3 March 1924 and went into effect three days later.⁸⁵ As the title indicates, it not only abrogated the office of the caliph but also ordered all members of the dynasty to leave the country at once. The rationale, with which the bill of law was introduced, was rather straightforward: the existence of the office and the imminent threat it posed undermined the efforts of the republican state to establish itself as sovereign, and potentially had destructive effects on the future of the new political order.⁸⁶ Signed and presented by the president of the Commission on Standing Orders (Nizamname-i Dahilî Encümeni) as well as fifty-three deputies, the thirteen-item bill touched upon all presumed complications resulting from the abolition and expulsion. Six of these items were about the regulation and management of dynastic property alone.⁸⁷

Shortly before the law was brought to parliament, the issue of dynasty was raised as a problem during the budgetary discussions in a slightly different, yet more poignant way. When it was disclosed that the first republican governmental budget contained a hefty sum set aside for the dynastic family’s use, Istanbul deputy Yusuf Akçura led parliamentarians in leveling a critique.⁸⁸ Akçura noted that in no republican order did there exist a noble class that constituted a dynasty. The bylaws of the ruling Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası) also made this principle clear in its second clause: its members, who largely comprised the republican government, were obliged to do away with the privileges granted to “any family, class, congregation or individual.”⁸⁹ For Akçura and many others who concurred with him, the budget set aside for or allowances paid to the caliph or other members of the Ottoman dynasty were essentially incompatible with the very definition of the republic itself. Denizli deputy Mazhar Müfit Bey took the discussion even further in the following session. The dynasty had no share in the national budget because only those who had justified citizenship rights could have a share in it. The dynastic family, with all the “shine” Mazhar Müfit Bey specified, had none. Nor did the dynastic family fulfill any sort of duty for the benefit of “the people.”⁹⁰

This intrinsic contradiction of dynastic presence in the republican order was dealt with, in no less a contradictory manner, in the first clause of the Law on the Abolition of Caliphate, enacted a week later. The law unambiguously stipulated that each and every member of the Ottoman dynasty was now stripped indefinitely of their—largely non-existent—citizenship and residency rights within the borders of the Turkish Republic, which they had to leave within ten days; no member of the dynasty could own real property in the country and whatever property they owned had to be liquidated within a year and following a particular legal procedure; all land titles that belonged to the dynasty, as well as all moveable property in the palaces and other imperial buildings, such as furniture, jewelry, paintings, and other types of art works, were now transferred to “the people,” understood as the nation (*millet* *intikal etmiştir*).⁹¹

The lengthy discussion that followed the introduction of the bill in parliament, which described dynasty and dynastic presence as excessive pomp, drew clear connections between the excessive splendor that still existed in the palaces and the excessive poverty and “backwardness” of “the people.”⁹² Highly supportive of the republican government’s recent resolution, and mirroring for the most part the parliamentary debates, the newspapers and journals went as far as calling the Ottoman dynasty a parasitic class (*tufeyli sınıf*) to highlight its incompatibility with the republican order.⁹³ Six items of the proposed law, which were directly related to the issue of dynastic property, were accepted without any debate or discussion, let alone contestation.⁹⁴

Despite its unambiguous wording and that it was accepted almost unanimously, the law introduced a new set of complications, which were reminiscent of the difficulties that the preceding governments had grappled with over the previous decade and a half. Stuck with many things, particularly buildings, in its possession, the republican government needed to find ways to put these items into reuse in safe and meaningful ways for public good or benefit. Not unlike Yıldız Palace, which was condemned as the “monument of despotism” during the constitutional era, each of these newly confiscated palaces and imperial buildings was now denounced as the root cause of “today’s distresses and disasters.”⁹⁵ Yet, the dynastic buildings and things were deemed to embody not only the “burdensome past” of the Ottoman Empire but also its imagined grandeur. For example, an official proposal from May 1924 to remove all Ottoman coats of arms, imperial seals, and symbols from government offices, schools, and hospitals, many of which were presumably put in place during the reign of Abdulhamid II, was met with nearly as much objection as support in parliament.⁹⁶ Thus, the republican government had to tread the line between these realms of desired and undesired, that is “selective,” pasts with utmost care.⁹⁷

Aided by a form of rhetoric exemplified in a *Resimli Ay* (Illustrated Monthly) article shortly after the abolition of the caliphate, the new government defined all dynastic buildings (and objects they contained) as “treasure troves of unequalled value,” yet “made of the blood of the nation/people.”⁹⁸ In the months that followed, the press continued to exploit this theme at great length, frequently inviting readers “to take their minds off of the poverty and misery that surround[ed] them” by taking virtual tours of Topkapı Palace, “where [the miseries of] the people had rarely ever reached before.”⁹⁹ Even the guidebook, written for the actual visitors of Topkapı Palace, which opened its doors to the public in October 1924, played on a similar juxtaposition.¹⁰⁰ The booklet presented the palace to its prospective visitors as a treasure trove which served only a small group of

privileged Ottoman and foreign visitors and had been out of Turks[ish citizens'] reach for most of its existence, particularly during the Hamidian era.¹⁰¹

Outside of this specific rhetorical function, dynastic property was put to numerous uses by the republican government, all tainted in varying degrees by a similar sort of ambivalence. One apparent use for this property had to do with the museum content and value of palace buildings and things. Not unlike postrevolutionary France, Ottoman palace buildings and things in the early republican era carried the potential of becoming "a sign of popular sovereignty and triumph" over a "treacherous and parasitic" order, inciting a "communal enjoyment of nationalized property . . . contribut[ing] to . . . the 'republican mold.'"¹⁰² As Wendy Shaw argued for the Ottoman case, museums, including newly converted palaces, became expressions of a "national idea" and eventually assumed a new level of significance during and after the national struggle.¹⁰³

What is perhaps less obvious and more easily taken for granted than this transformation's ideological aspect is its material dimension. For, as the Kırşehir deputy Yahya Galib asserted, "nationalizing" dynastic palaces and buildings was not enough to make them "national" (*milli*). Only when they were put into reuse in a meaningful institutional capacity, for the benefit of the public, would they become so.¹⁰⁴ By this Yahya Galib meant not solely that the palaces and other dynastic buildings would be converted into national museums but also that they had to be transformed into schools, hospitals, and other public buildings and "things" of the new republic.¹⁰⁵ When Yahya Galib stressed this point in parliament, various commissions for inventorying and registering dynastic property were already at work towards that end.¹⁰⁶ In July 1924, a commission was formed to classify things found in "Dolmabahçe, Yıldız, Beylerbeyi and the like," for the specific purpose of furnishing the new building of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara.¹⁰⁷ In an official note, the Ministry of Finance asked the Office of the Prime Minister to oversee the administrative and legal procedures for the transaction of sixty items chosen for this purpose, a list that comprised not only valuable art pieces such as several Aivazovsky paintings, but also small, trivial items such as an enameled cigarette box and a gilt tobacco stand, a lacquered coat hanger, and vases and curtains.¹⁰⁸

In the following year, another 335 items were reportedly sent to Ankara to furnish the Assembly Building, in addition to many other items that were distributed to various ministry buildings as well as embassies and consulates abroad.¹⁰⁹ In the meantime, the government established the Directorate of National Palaces (*Milli Saraylar Müdüriyeti*) as a subdivision of the Ministry of Finance, in order to facilitate the organization of these transfers and overall to institutionalize the expropriation process.¹¹⁰ More things were dispensed with in the subsequent years, to furnish schools, orphanages, government institutions, and the newly established "Diplomats' Club" which was intended to host and entertain the foreign representatives resident in Ankara.¹¹¹ Various presidential mansions, particularly the primary residence of Mustafa Kemal in Ankara, Çankaya Köşkü, itself confiscated from the wealthy Armenian Kasabian family during the Armenian genocide a decade earlier, were also furnished, for the most part, with things taken from the imperial palaces.¹¹²

As dynastic things continued to flow towards Ankara, a specter of the Ottoman dynasty began to haunt the republican administration. A governmental decree from 1925 ordered all Ottoman coats of arms, imperial seals, and symbols to be removed from government offices, schools, and hospitals, ostensibly because they were incompatible with the

“notion of the republic” (*cumhuriyet mefhumu*).¹¹³ That the Law on the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu), which came into effect the same year to suppress all popular and political opposition, was extended to dynastic symbols and images in circulation via print media, indicates that there was more to the removal of these symbols than a simple conceptual incompatibility.¹¹⁴ The republican government was aware that the acts of destroying, erasing, or tucking away the dynastic signs, symbols, and images were laden with new ambiguities and dangers. As one governmental decree made clear, an all-encompassing erasure process would perpetuate a public debate, which carried an apparent risk of highlighting and bolstering the dynastic claims on buildings and things in question.¹¹⁵

Perhaps it was to counter this imminent claim that, in the ensuing years, the republican government linked its own power and might to the buildings and things they had taken over, especially if they were sufficiently “shiny.” For example, every year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs borrowed, by direct orders of Mustafa Kemal, a set of gilt tableware to be used in banquets held for foreign representatives on special occasions, most notably Republic Day commemorating the proclamation of the republic.¹¹⁶ The palace buildings themselves were also put to use for important diplomatic conferences, and official visits from foreign royalty were given a royal treatment with the use of the same dynastic things, both in Istanbul and Ankara.¹¹⁷ What is perplexing is that this took place on the personal level as well. Upon becoming the chair of Grand National Assembly, Kazım Paşa brought with him to Ankara the things provided for his use at Dolmabahçe Palace, where he spent the previous summer, a list of fifty-seven items including, among other things, a confectionary plate, a whisk broom, and a soap dish.¹¹⁸ Unsurprisingly in this context, on his first return to Istanbul in 1927, after an absence of eight years, Mustafa Kemal ceremoniously entered the Dolmabahçe Palace,¹¹⁹ held a banquet in its Grand Ceremonial Hall just as the Ottoman sultans did until a few years earlier, and continued to live there intermittently until his death a decade later.

Despite the increased use and circulation of dynastic buildings and things by and for “the people,” the republican administration was still less than clear as to what these items meant in actuality. Accordingly, the question of property as a means of understanding “who the nation was” and who represented it once again took central importance. The lengthy debates of the constitutional era largely gave way to short, sharp interrogations, but a degree of ambiguity still loomed large in the parliamentary sessions over the transfer and ownership of dynastic property. Such was the case with the things given to the Grand National Assembly after the Trabzon deputy Muhtar Bey brought the matter to the parliament as a formal question.¹²⁰ In a concise yet boldly inquisitive manner, Muhtar Bey asked the finance minister Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey to reveal the legal and administrative procedure for the said transfer. Were these items, referred to as valuable national property (*emval-i milliye*) by Muhtar Bey, given to the assembly within the limits of law and in exchange for their monetary value? “This chandelier [above us],” Muhtar Bey asked, “did the Ministry of Finance receive a payment for it or make budgetary arrangements for its compensation?” Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey tried to explain that a procedure for the items’ legal appropriation had begun but had not been brought to a conclusion yet. When pushed for more detailed explanations, he blurted: “I do not see any difference between these items being kept there at the palace or here [in this building] . . . the [actual]

goal is to maintain them; here or there, they are maintained in our name. This building is ours but so is the palace, it too is ours!”¹²¹

Not entirely clear yet perhaps, but in contrast to the constitutional government’s insecure utterances expressing a vague notion of “the people” a decade and a half earlier, the republican government now appeared surer and more unhindered about its jurisdictional limits. More than simply possessing the dynastic buildings and things, it claimed the authority and power to command how they could and should be put to use, and answered, along the way, who the nation was and what it took for it to own “things.”

NOTES

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¹Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives (hereafter, BOA), DH.MUI 40-1/49, 1327.Z.5 (18 December 1909).

²Betül İpşirli Argit, “Manumitted Female Slaves of the Ottoman Imperial Harem (*Sarayîs*) in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul” (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2009), 109. For a vivid depiction of the dethronement and removal process, see Ziya Şakir, *Çırağan Sarayı’nda 28 Yıl: Beşinci Murad* (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2007), 109.

³BOA, DH.MUI 40-1/49.

⁴Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 186–91; Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800* (London: Continuum, 2008), 7; Kaya Şahin, “Staging an Empire: An Ottoman Circumcision Ceremony as Cultural Performance,” *The American Historical Review* 123 (2018): 478–79; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998), 16–43.

⁵Tülal Artan, “Forms and Forums of Expression: Istanbul and beyond, 1600–1800,” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 394–95; Marinos Sariyannis, “Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought,” *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 120–24; Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 7–8.

⁶C. A. Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 112. For the Ottoman case, see Sibel Zandi-Sayek, “Ambiguities of Sovereignty: Property Rights and Spectacles of Statehood in Tanzimat Izmir,” in *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, eds. Sahar Bazzaz, Yota Batsaki, and Dimiter Angelov (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 150; and Huri Islamoglu, “Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858,” in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000). A product of liberal ideas recast in the late 19th century, the “project of *res publica*” had many precedents and parallels across the globe. On the cases of Imperial and Soviet Russia, close parallels to the Ottoman and Turkish republican experience, see Ekaterina Pravilova, *A Public Empire: Property and the Quest for the Common Good in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, N.J.:

Princeton University Press, 2014); and Anne O'Donnell, "A Noah's Ark: Material Life and the Foundations of Soviet Governance, 1916–1922" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014).

⁷Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (1993): 3–29.

⁸Şahin, "Staging an Empire," 464.

⁹Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 26.

¹⁰Throughout this article, I use the term "the people" as the collective body in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic that was in the process of being redefined as the new sovereign. However, as with many other liberal fictions, "the people" is a highly elusive concept and what it signified varied from one context to another, a point that is apparent in parliamentary debates, which I tried to capture and maintain in the article. The other, equally important, point to be made here has to do with "things" that I treat simply and uniformly as such here. This is not to disregard the fact that law treated different types and subtypes of property differently and that each type of "thing" had its own brand of agency. Yet, the parliamentary debates lack that distinction entirely. While this is partially attributable to the general confusion with which the issue was discussed in parliament, it is more indicative of the legislative process' distinctness from the judiciary. As Edward Rubin has noted, in the modern administrative states, which the Ottoman constitutional order was in the process of becoming, legislatures were responsible for allocating resources, creating administrative agencies, and enacting "a wide range of other provisions," which bore only tangential similarities to the traditional concept of law; Edward L. Rubin, "Law and Legislation in the Administrative State," *Columbia Law Review* 89 (1989): 369.

¹¹Ellinor Morack, *The Dowry of the State? The Politics of Abandoned Property and the Population Exchange in Turkey, 1921–1945* (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2017), 4.

¹²Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question' during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54 (2012): 773. For a theoretical treatment of the governmental logic that sets these limits, see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978* (New York: Picador, 2007), 256–57; Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2008), 4.

¹³Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 6–7; Morack, *The Dowry of the State?*, 7; Mehmet Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question in the Ottoman Empire 1870–1914" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2017); Bedross Der Matossian, "The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of 'Armenian Capital' at the End of the Ottoman Empire," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], Complete List, 2011, online since 6 October 2011, accessed 19 December 2017, <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4411>; Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *The Spirit of the Laws. The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Nevzat Onaran, *Osmanlı'da Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1914–1919)* and *Cumhuriyet'te Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1920–1930) Emlâk-i Metrâkenin Tasfiyesi-I&II* (Istanbul: Evrensel, 2013).

¹⁴Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation," 773; Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). One prominent exception to this is Ellinor Morack's *The Dowry of the State*, which provides, throughout the book, thorough analyses of the contradictions and discrepancies between different governmental objectives and practices.

¹⁵Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey's Step-Citizens," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46 (2014): 660.

¹⁶Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 78.

¹⁷For an illustrative anecdote on the degree of blurriness of this line, see Sariyannis, "Ruler and the State," 121–22. Literally meaning "house of wealth," *bayt al-māl* (*beytü'l mal* in Turkish) denotes the royal treasury of the sultans and caliphs in Islamic jurisprudence and was regulated in accordance with Islamic (shari'a) law; Noel J. Coulson et al., "Bayt al-Māl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., accessed 10 August 2018, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0109. For a comprehensive theoretical treatment of the problematic relationship between the person of the sovereign and the legal realm, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz's seminal study *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016). For a cautionary note on complex private relations based on the shari'a property regime and the lack of a "historical dichotomous relation with a notion of the 'public,'" see Brinkley Messick, "Property and the Private in a Sharia System," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70 (2003): 712.

¹⁸Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 148.

¹⁹Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014), 151.

²⁰Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 255.

²¹*Ibid.*, 224.

²²The most comprehensive study on the topic is Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Exile Days of Abdülhamid II in Salonica (1909–1912) and Confiscation of his Wealth" (Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1990), also published as a book entitled *Exile Days of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Salonika (1909–1912)* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2015). The first part of this article builds on Karakışla's excellent study, shifting the focus to the categorical limits of the process.

²³Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi (Parliamentary minutes, hereafter MMZC), 18 Nisan 1325 (1 May 1909), 139–41.

²⁴MMZC, 20 Kanunusani 1325 (2 February 1910), 92–115.

²⁵MMZC, 18 Nisan 1325 (1 May 1909), 140; MMZC, 24 Haziran 1325 (7 July 1909), 215.

²⁶MMZC, 18 Nisan 1325 (1 May 1909), 140.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹MMZC, 19 Nisan 1325 (2 May 1909), 161.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 148–49.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²MMZC, 21 Nisan 1325 (4 May 1909), 208; 2 Temmuz 1325 (15 July 1909), 365–84 and the appendix to the same session, 1–7. This is evident in the institutional correspondence as well. For example, see the note written by the office of the Grand Vizier to the Ministry of Finance, BOA, BEO 3543/265857, 1327.R.21 (12 May 1909). For other examples on endowment deeds or estates of deceased dynasty members, implied to be appropriated by him, see BEO 3582/268577, 1327.C.5 (24 June 1909), BEO 3581/268565, 1327.C.5 (24 June 1909); MMZC, 21 Nisan 1325, 208.

³³Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 267–69.

³⁴MMZC, 21 Nisan 1325 (4 May 1909), 207–8. See also MMZC, 25 Nisan 1325 (8 May 1909), 272 and MMZC, 3 Mayıs 1325 (16 May 1909), 417–18.

³⁵The Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives contains numerous documents on tracing, locating, and appraising Abdülhamid's wealth deposited in domestic and foreign banks. For the first and most comprehensive of these, see BOA, BEO 3542/ 265617, 1327.R.15 (6 May 1909).

³⁶"Şehzade Burhaneddin Efendi," *Tanin*, 4 Mayıs 1325 (17 May 1909), 3.

³⁷BOA, BEO 3542/ 265617, 1327.R.15 (6 May 1909).

³⁸Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 7–8.

³⁹MMZC, 21 Nisan 1325 (4 May 1909), 208.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 209.

⁴¹Files pertaining to the requests and communiqués in that effect are numerous at BOA. For a few of those, see BOA, BEO 3542/ 265617, 1327.R.15 (6 May 1909) and the files connected to it, such as BEO 3582/268634, 1327.C.6 (25 June 1909); BEO 3631/272316, 1327.Ş.23 (9 September 1909); BEO 3690/276716, 1328.M.6 (18 January 1910); BEO 3711/278324, 1328.S.20 (3 March 1910).

⁴²For the Deutsche Bank account, for instance, which resulted in full recovery of Abdülhamid II's deposited money, stocks, and bonds in July 1909, see Karakışla, *Exile Days of Sultan Abdülhamid II*, 138–40.

⁴³For the Reichsbank case, see "Davayı Kazandık," *Tanin*, 25 Teşrin-i Sani (8 December 1910), 4. For the Crédit Lyonnais case, see Karakışla, *Exile Days of Sultan Abdülhamid II*, 146.

⁴⁴MMZC, 4 Mayıs 1325 (17 May 1909), 480.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 480.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 481.

⁴⁷BOA, DH.MUI 65/55, 1328.Ra.5 (17 March 1910).

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 2.

⁵¹Karakışla, *Exile Days of Sultan Abdülhamid II*, 140–44.

⁵²MMZC, 28 Temmuz 1325 (10 August 1909), 307.

⁵³See MMZC, 24 Haziran 1325 (7 July 1909), 213–21, for the commission's initial report. For more specific cases see MMZC, 12 Nisan 1326 (25 April 1910), 370; and "Yıldız Mefruşatı," *Tanin*, 13 Haziran 1325 (26 June 1909), 3.

⁵⁴"Yıldız Otomobilleri," *Tanin*, 10 Haziran 1325 (23 June 1909), 4.

⁵⁵MMZC, 16 Haziran 1325 (29 June 1909), 78.

⁵⁶"Yıldız Komisyon-u Mahsusundan," *Tanin*, 8 Haziran 1325 (21 June 1909), 4.

⁵⁷"Yıldız Hasılatı," *Tanin*, 9 Haziran 1325 (22 June 1909), 3.

⁵⁸"Yıldız Komisyonu," *Tanin*, 20 Haziran 1325 (3 July 1909), 4.

⁵⁹MMZC, 8 Temmuz 1325 (21 July 1909), 473.

⁶⁰BOA, DH.MUI 42/56, 1328.M.19 (31 January 1910).

⁶¹BOA, BEO 3673/275402, 1327.Za.22 (9 December 1909).

⁶²BOA, BEO 3581/268552, 1327.C.4 (23 June 1909).

⁶³For an excellent example of such criticism, see MMZC, 24 Haziran 1325 (7 July 1909), 215–21.

⁶⁴Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2018), 3–4, 22; Nadir Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2007): 795–809.

⁶⁵For late 18th- and early 19th-century applications, see Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016), 107–11. For a more detailed study of the practice of *müsadere*, see Yasin Arslantaş, "Confiscation by the Ruler: A Study of the Ottoman Practice of *Müsadere*, 1700s–1839" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2017).

⁶⁶Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011), 30–31, 46–47. Both Mehmet Mert Sunar and Ellinor Morack note, however, that in the aftermath of the Greek rebellion in 1821, property confiscations were extended to ordinary Greek subjects; Sunar, "Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807–1826" (PhD diss., Binghamton University State University of New York, 2006), 183–84; Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 49–51.

⁶⁷Sunar, "Cauldron of Dissent," 28, 216–27.

⁶⁸Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 148–50. For the differences from earlier practices of charity and poor relief, see Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹Nazan Maksudyay, *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 108.

⁷⁰Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 119; Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, "Circassian Refugees and the Making of Amman, 1878–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 605–23.

⁷¹Samy Ayoub, "The *Mecelle*, Sharia, and the Ottoman State: Fashioning and Refashioning of Islamic Law in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2 (2015): 136.

⁷²Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 113–18. For the definition and scope of war taxes, see *ibid.*, 20–22. In addition to the Law on War Taxes that was reintroduced during World War I, a law on the "Acquisition of Military Transport Vehicles," together with numerous other supplementary ones, remained in effect throughout the war. For an example of a supplementary law, see "Seferberlikte vaz-i yed edilecek emakin ve mebani hakkında kanun," *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 8. Cilt, 1322 (14 October 1916).

⁷³Coulson et al., "Bayt al-Māl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

⁷⁴Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 106.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 143–44.

⁷⁶Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 46. For the content of the law, see *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 7. Cilt (Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Amire, 1336), 737–740 (27 September 1915).

⁷⁷Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 46; "Ahir mahellere nakledilen eşhasın emval ve diyun ve matlubat-ı metrukesi hakkında kanun-ı muvakkat," *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 7. Cilt, 737–38.

⁷⁸Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 55–57. The temporary law was given a permanent status in November 1915 with procedural information and fourteen additional items, some of which were amended in the following years; *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 7. Cilt, 775–88 (10 November 1915); *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 8. Cilt,

1322 (14 October 1916); *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 9. Cilt, 759–760 (25 October 1917); *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 10. Cilt, 22 (8 December 1917); *Düstur*, Tertib-i Sani, 11. Cilt, 553–560 (8 January 1920).

⁷⁹Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 148.

⁸⁰Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi (Parliamentary Minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, hereafter TBMMZC), 14.03.1337 (1921), 123, quoted in Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 151.

⁸¹Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 177.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 122.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 177. For a parliamentary debate in which the Greek and Armenian citizens were recast as rebels against the legitimate ruler (*hurucu alelimam, khuruj 'ala al-imam*), see TBMMZC, 16.04.1338 (1922), also quoted in Morack, *The Dowry of the State*, 165; and TBMMZC, 27.2.1340 (1924), 429–30.

⁸⁴A highly controversial issue, the abolition of the caliphate had been subject to lengthy deliberations almost from the beginning of the War of Independence. For an example of one such early debate, see Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Gizli Celse Zabıtları (Closed Session Minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, hereafter TBMMGCZ), 25.09.1336 (1920). Handling it rather cautiously and for the most part secretly, the nascent republican government delayed taking any action on the matter until the war and peace negotiations came to a conclusion in late 1923. The general debates on the office of the caliphate and its relationship to national sovereignty as well as the law were multifaceted and produced a vast number of contemporary accounts. For an essay collection on the subject by contemporary thinkers, see *Hilâfet ve Millî Hakimiyet* (Ankara: Matbuat ve İstihbarat Müdüriyeti [Matbuat ve İstihbarat Matbaası], 1339/1923). For the legal and religious contexts, see Adliye Vekili Seyyid Bey, *Hilâfetin Mahiyet-i Şer'iyesi* (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Matbaası, n.d.).

⁸⁵“Hilâfetin ilgasına ve Hanedan-ı Osmaninin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Memaliki Hâricine Çıkarılmasına dair teklif-i Kanuni,” TBMMZC, 3.3.1340 (1924), 27–69. For the bill itself see “Hilâfetin İlgâ ve Hânedân-ı Osmâniyye'nin Türkiye Cumhûriyeti Memâliki Hâricine Çıkarılmasına Dâir Kânun, numerosu: 431,” *Resmî Ceride*, no. 63, 6 Mart 1340 (6 March 1924), 6.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸TBMMZC, 25.2.1340 (1924), 345.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 345–46; *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Nizamnamesi* (Ankara, 1339/1923).

⁹⁰TBMMZC, 27.2.1340 (1924), 429–30.

⁹¹TBMMZC, 3.3.1340 (1924), 28–29.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 29–31; *Resimli Ay Mecmuası*, no. 2, vol. 1, Mart 1340 (March 1924), 23.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁴TBMMZC, 3.3.1340 (1924), 68–69.

⁹⁵*Resimli Ay Mecmuası*, no. 2, vol. 1, Mart 1340 (March 1924), 20.

⁹⁶TBMMZC, 5.1.1340 (1924), 665–66; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 29.

⁹⁷Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 128–62.

⁹⁸*Resimli Ay Mecmuası*, no. 3, vol. 1, Nisan 1340 (April 1924), 20.

⁹⁹*Resimli Ay Mecmuası*, no. 6, vol. 1, Temmuz 1340 (July 1924), 33, 36.

¹⁰⁰*İstanbul Asar-ı Atika Müzeleri, Topkapı Sarayı, Muhtasar Rehber* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1341/1925).

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 5–6. For a comprehensive overview of Topkapı Palace's transformation in the long 19th century, see Nilay Özlü, “From Imperial Palace to Museum: The Topkapı Palace during the Long Nineteenth Century” (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2018).

¹⁰²Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 7. This very point is also stressed by Sinop deputy Rıza Nur, as he proposed the conversion of the palaces to museums shortly after their full confiscation; TBMMZC, 9.3.1340 (1924), 202.

¹⁰³Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003), 188.

¹⁰⁴TBMMZC, 24.3.1340 (1924), 1030.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶See the finance minister Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey's note in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Başbakanlık Republican Archives (hereafter, BCA), 30 18 1 1.10.35.7 / 132–34.

¹⁰⁸For a detailed list of the items see BCA, 30 18 1 1.10.35.7, 132–34 attachment, pages 166–67.

¹⁰⁹TBMMZC, 5.1.1341 (1925), 12; BCA, 30 18 1 1.15.58.19, 132–34 attachment, pages 171–73; BCA, 30 18 1 1.14.39, 132–34 attachment, pages 135–39; BCA, 30 18 1 1.16.77.3, 132–34 attachment, pages 125–34.

¹¹⁰Özlü, “From Imperial Palace to Museum,” 574; T. Cengiz Göncü, “Arşiv Araştırmaları ve Milli Saraylar,” in *150. Yılında Dolmabahçe Sarayı Uluslararası Sempozyumu: 23–26 Kasım 2006, Dolmabahçe Sarayı bildiriler* (İstanbul: TBMM Milli Saraylar, 2007), 128.

¹¹¹Records pertaining to such transfers are numerous at the Başbakanlık Republican Archives. For some illustrative cases, which are also attached to the large file of inventory lists, see BCA, 30 18 1 1.19.35.7, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.22.78.20, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.20.59.12, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.20.45.18, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.22.78.16, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.20.47.18, 132–34; BCA, 30 18 1 1.21.64.10, 132–34.

¹¹²Zeynep Kezer, “Of Forgotten People and Forgotten Places: Nation-Building and the Dismantling of Ankara’s Non-Muslim Landscapes,” in *On Location: Heritage Cities and Sites*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2012), 174. BCA, 30 18 1 2.28.37.16, 3–22. See attachment 3–22, pages 3–4, 7–10, 15–22 for the detailed list, which again contained small, trivial items such as doormats, mosquito nets, and pitchers, in addition to numerous bigger, valuable items, especially paintings.

¹¹³BCA, 30 18 1 1.14.37.17.

¹¹⁴BCA, 30 18 1 1.14.43.7. For a related governmental decree that ordered the removal of all portraits of the Ottoman sultans from palace/museum displays, see BCA, 30 18 1 1.15.53.2.

¹¹⁵BCA, 30 18 1 1.15.59.12.

¹¹⁶BCA, 30 18 1 2.14.68.15, 132–95; BCA, 30 18 1 2.31.66.17, 132–117.

¹¹⁷BCA, 30 18 1 2.23.67.10, 403–4; BCA, 30 18 1 1.28.30.2, 239–39; BCA, 30 18 1 1.28.26.10.

¹¹⁸BCA, 30 18 1 1.26.63.15, 132–34.

¹¹⁹“İstanbuluların Büyük Misafiri,” *Servet-i Fünun*, no. 1612–138, vol. 35, 7 Temmuz (July) 1927.

¹²⁰TBMMZC, 5.1.1341 (1925), 11.

¹²¹TBMMZC, 5.1.1341 (1925), 12.