Interpreting Monuments: Charitable Buildings, Monuments, and the Construction of Collective Memory in the Ottoman Empire

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Memory – Collective Memory

There are three stages in a complete process of remembering: (1) encoding, (2) storage and, (3) retrieval. Encoding is the recording of the information into the memory, storage is the warehousing of the information, and retrieval is simply the recovering of the information from the memory – the remembering itself.2

There are two distinct types of memory, short-term and long-term. The topic of this paper involves the second type of memory, memory in which information can be “stored” and “retrieved” a long time after its encoding. Encoding may be either intentional or incidental. Intentional encoding is the conscious effort by a person to store information to facilitate memorization: for instance by repetition.3 Incidental encoding, on the other hand, is adventitious, involving no conscious or discretionary effort: it implies the encoding of information while the person is simply going through the routines of his/her daily life. Incidental

1 This article is a longer version of the paper presented at the annual meeting of MESA in Orlando, 2000. I am grateful to Professor Edhem Eldem for his comments on some parts of this paper.
encoding does not necessarily involve verbal input: it may just as well occur via symbols, jests, monuments and so forth. This paper shall deal with such incidental encoding.

Several internal and external factors play roles in encoding. To begin with, both the frequency of exposure, and the nature of the information facilitate encoding. For instance it is easier to recall information expressed in an audial and/or a visual manner. And if the information is embodied in an object, storage and retrieval are facilitated if the object is visually striking or magnificent, or if it has some utilitarian value.

The impress of information in long-term memory is also facilitated by association. For instance, if a symbol or shape is associated with information already stored and thus assigned a meaning, the probability of retaining the symbol or shape in long-term memory increases. Objects or events to which a high moral or spiritual value has been attached, and those associated with experiences accompanied by strong emotions, are almost invariably stored directly in long term memory.

A subset of long-term memory important to the topic of this paper is episodic memory; that is, memory of events from one’s personal past. Episodic information while being encoded and stored in the long-term memory, is affected and transformed by such internal factors as one’s beliefs, biases, prejudices, and expectations. Thus, an event is neither encoded nor stored as it “really” is, nor will be recalled as such. In other words, a person remembers and understands an event as one wants to, interpreting the event with the help, and in the context, of units of information already stored, filling in the gaps in one’s own way through one’s unique personal associations. Thus while encoding and storing an event, one re-constructs it, and sometimes even completely constructs it, to a greater or lesser degree distorting the information about the event.

Another important concept to the subject of this study is collective memory developed by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). Episodic memory and collective memory are closely related. According to Halbwachs, one’s memory is constructed from one’s social relations and it is not possible for a person to have a memory which has come into being outside of, and unrelated to, the social context of one’s life. Halbwachs claimed that even the most personal of

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4 This distinction was made by Endel Tulving, see *Elements of Episodic Memory* (Oxford, 1983).
individual memories is but a part of the society's collective memory created or shaped by social relations and by the interpretations and verbalizations of experiences one has had in a particular social setting.5 Unlike individual memory, collective memory is not "introverted" or "passive", but possesses dynamic images and themes. Its expressions are in tales, legends and myths as well as in rumors and gossip. They are transmitted rather easily because they tend to be readily associated with elements, symbols and concepts that have already been stored; therefore they have a cumulative character (Jung). Thus members of the same society make similar recalls in a collective manner and respond to events in a similar fashion.

**Political Use of Collective Memory**

Information encoded into, and stored by memory may be manipulated and distorted in various ways that result in exaggeration or understatement. For example, the political authority may try to distort the "real" state of affairs through ceremonies in the effort to paint a picture that will impress and appeal to the people. Thus, "phenomena-as-they-are" may get distorted twice: first, while being presented or represented, and then while the inputs are being encoded and stored by the targeted minds. If the holders of political power are good in making effective propaganda, both distortions yield results that serve their purposes.

The political authority6 wants to shape the collective memory of the society in a fashion favorable to its own interests. This can be accomplished by the emanation of subtle information inputs or by systematic repetition. In general, information stored in the memory is past-oriented; but it can be rendered current by associations with current inputs. The political authority wants to impose its own selective memory on the populus, encouraging the people to remember those

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6 In this paper I use the term "political authority" to mean a traditional monarchy based on the idea of divine right, with particular reference to the Ottoman State. Religious factors and traditions obviously played an important role in bestowing legitimacy to the rule of the Ottoman Sultans.
events which it wants remembered, and to forget those events it would rather have forgotten. To do this, the political authority might resurrect faded memories, or even concoct new memories and create myths.

The objective of the political authority in thus manipulating collective memory is simply its own survival and continuity: it attempts to confirm its legitimacy in the minds of its subjects by creating awe and respect in them. Those who resist being affected by the efforts of the political authority to manipulate the formation of a collective memory have always been a minority—in the past and at present too—and I will not be referring to them in this paper.

Buildings, Collective Memory and Legitimacy

The political authorities in the pre-modern world, in communicating with their subjects, used such visual elements as ceremonies, monumental buildings and symbols rather than written forms. The architec-tone code that can be associated with information previously stored in the memory have the potency to activate various emotions; and the political authority had a monopoly on symbols that express political power, and therefore could use these symbols without any competition.

As in all cultures, Ottoman society had a system of positive and negative political values. The conception of the “Ideal Sultan” articulated in Islamic and Ottoman political theory texts, or mirror for princes, was reflected in the views of the common man. Generosity and charity figured high on the list of characteristics of the ideal Sultan. The


8 Term by Donald Preziosi, Architecture, Language, and Meaning (The Hague et.al., 1979): 4; see also his The Semiotics of the Built Environment (Bloomington, 1979). See also Stephen Humphreys, “The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay,” Studia Islamica 35 (1972): 69-119, where he talks about “architectural meaning”. I am grateful to Professor Carl Petry who drew my attention to the learned article of Stephen Humphreys. Unfortunately I read Humphreys’ essay after I had written this article. He had already articulated many ideas I try to express here.
charitable buildings the Sultan erected were partly aimed at fulfilling the image of an ideal Sultan that was in the collective memory of the people and thereby legitimize his rule in their minds. The Ottoman rulers certainly were not alone among monarchs in attempting to legitimize their rule by public works, but because of the high value placed upon charity and almsgiving in Islamic societies, expenditures on charitable structures had a very high priority with the Ottoman Sultans.

Though many of the buildings the Sultans built were charitable structures per se, others were simply monumental constructions which had commemorative significance and a retrieval function. Therefore I shall consider these two types of buildings separately. There are, of course, monumental buildings which carry the characteristics of both categories, such as imperial mosques.

(1) Charitable Buildings: Because these served a practical purpose, their functional meaning (Zweckbedeutung) was foremost, and such structures, many of which are in Istanbul, were constructed or repaired on orders of the Ottoman Sultans specifically for their public utility.

(2) Monuments: These were built strictly to express a symbolic meaning (Sinnbedeutung). Their value was therefore iconographic, not utilitarian. They simply served to make people remember some accomplishment or charitable service rendered by the political authority. Such constructions may be considered as precursors of monuments in the contemporary sense.

A public building may have a sacred or profane nature – or rather, the people (the receivers) may assign it a sacred or a profane character on the basis of associations previously encoded and stored in their

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9 Cf. Guglielmo Ferrero, Macht (Bern, 1944): 208 [Pouvoir, 1942].
10 I am making this categorization on the basis of the inspiration I had derived from a sentence by Jan Assmann in his Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen (München, 1999 [1992]): 21. I thank Professor Assmann for his suggestion in translating the two terms Zweckbedeutung and Sinnbedeutung.
memories. In some cases a functional building may acquire a sacred character because of local or environmental conditions. A fountain in an arid place like Cairo may more easily acquire a sacred character than a similar fountain built in a Balkan town.

*Charitable Buildings*

Among these, I include public fountains (*çeşme, sebîl*), mosques (*câmi, mescid*), dervish lodges (*tekke*), schools, and bridges. Many such buildings were constructed in Istanbul by the Sultans or by members of their families. Some bureaucrats and wealthy individuals not members of the Ottoman lineage also erected charitable buildings in Istanbul. But those built by the Sultan usually distinguished themselves by their sumptuousness and magnificence. Furthermore, charitable buildings financed by the Sultan and his court were more numerous than those financed by his prosperous subjects and this undoubtedly helped encode the intended message—the grandour of the sultanate—in the collective memory of the people. Among the advices in a sixteenth century mirror for princes treatise was the statement that a minister or a higher bureaucrat should not be allowed to build more than one mosque.13 Although in actual practice this was not the case, it shows that the palace circle was very aware of the propaganda significance of these buildings. For that reason, the imperial monogram (*tugra*) of the Sultan was imprinted on the façade of such structures starting in the mid 18th century. Moreover, beginning in 1831, the construction or the repairing of charitable buildings ordered by the Sultan were routinely published in the official newspaper (*Taqvim-i veqâyı*).14 All this certainly served the Sultans’ aim of creating a conducive collective memory, as did the simple fact that these charitable buildings were of practical use for people: the practical utility of an object or building is positively correlated with encoding and memory formation.

I include fountains in the category of charitable buildings, because so long as a fountain remains in use, it continues to possess functional meaning. However, a fountain may also have a symbolic meaning.

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14 For some examples of the buildings that were built or repaired by imperial order, see the official newspaper of the Ottoman State *Taqvim-i veqâyı* (Istanbul), 90 (October 1, 1834).
because if, in the social memory, an object (e.g. a fountain) associates an abstract concept (e.g. religious) with a characteristic (e.g. charity) then the former may get encoded in the memory together with the latter two. In the case of fountains, the charity implicit in supplying running water to the people had acquired a semi-sacred meaning in the Ottoman culture because of the extraordinary significance and symbolic meaning attached to this activity by Islam.

But a fountain has actual commemorative significance above and beyond any symbolic meaning if and only if it goes beyond its use-value of supplying water. If a passing person says “God bless So-and-so Efendi who had this fountain built”, that person is assigning commemorative significance to the fountain. An object attains symbolic meaning when and if it is assigned a value above and beyond the least-common-denominator it shares in different cultures in terms of its functional value. Therefore it is not a quality that the fountain per se possesses; it can only be added to the significance of the fountain by an external factor.

Functionality and utility is the predominant value in charitable buildings. If this basic purpose is no longer fulfilled, their value is largely lost. In contemporary Istanbul most Ottoman fountains do not run anymore. However, at the time they were constructed (and from the standpoint of the Sultans who had them built) these fountains did have a function other than their practical use-value. For instance, if there is a commemorative inscription on a fountain identifying the benefactor, or even, if such a building is named after somebody (e.g. Fountain of Sultan Ahmed); it can not be said to have had only use value as a fountain per se: It has also acquired another meaning and an image-building function on behalf of the benefactor. Is there really any difference then, between this latter function and that which we shall elaborate in the section on monuments? If a charitable building carries the name of the benefactor who had it built, and/or if its façade boasts the Sultan’s monogram (the tugra) or an inscription otherwise identifying the benefactor, then it has a significance other than that of its practical or charitable function; and this other significance has a function that may be useful in enhancing one’s political purposes.

*Monuments and Buildings with Monumental Characteristics*

Monuments are erected not to fulfil a practical function but to make the people remember an event or an achievement. A monument would
fail of its purpose if it were perceived as a mere object. Thus, it should have elements which would create auspicious associations in people's minds: reliefs, symbols, inscriptions as well as its shape, and general appearance can form such associations. Unlike charitable buildings, a monument or a monumental construction usually has a name, and sometimes even rituals will originate around it.

One important difference between the Ottoman Sultans and non-Muslim monarchs was that, because of the Islamic injunction against representations of the human figure, they had to refrain from engraving their portraits on the façades of public buildings, monuments and coins and from erecting sculptures in public places. This contrasted with the political symbolism available to other political authorities with similar monarchical tradition in history. For example, the Roman Emperors had their sculptures erected and busts placed on pedestals in public places, and minted coins bearing a relief of their likenesses, which bust-reliefs would be surrounded by numerous symbols. Marble reliefs depicting the current Caesar were often accompanied by the bust reliefs of previous emperors as an expression of the continuity of the lineage,\(^{15}\) and a claim by the presently ruling caesar to the long chain of achievements by his predecessors. This meant that a Roman emperor who had just ascended the throne and was yet untested, did not have to start from scratch in his claim to legitimacy.

The Ottoman Sultans also used allusions to the achievements of their predecessors to enhance their claim for legitimacy. But they had to refrain from using busts, sculptures, and reliefs in public places. The personal inclinations of some of the Sultans certainly might have tempted them to flaunt this Islamic injunction, especially in the 19th century; but disobeying it would have been violation of the most important characteristic of the image of “the Ideal Sultan”, piety. And this would have been a grave political mistake.

Though it does not seem to have been very effective in terms of creating a conducive collective memory, as late as the 17th century when Ottoman military power was still near its height Ottoman Sultans built mansions and named them after the cities they had captured. Two examples are the Revan Mansion (named for the capture of Erivan) and

the Baghdad Mansion. However, both were constructed within the walls of the Topkapı Palace and it is not certain that people were even aware of their existence. And if the subjects of the Sultan did not have any chance of seeing these buildings one can not say that they could have served the function of making people remember the glory of those campaigns. Nevertheless, they did serve this function for the members of the Ottoman Court itself.

Erecting monuments with a predominantly symbolic meaning and commemorative significance was an idea imported from Europe considered for the first time in the plans of a monument intended to commemorate the proclamation of the Tanzimat (1839). I said “considered” because the Tanzimat monument was never actually erected, although its planning extended to the drawing-up of blueprints. The Tanzimat edict, which sought a reformation mainly of the justice system, was a 19th century version of the 'adâlet-nâme genre, and was considered evidence of the changing mentality of the Ottoman Court – a manifesto of the efforts of the Ottoman state to modernize. To memorialize the Tanzimat edict detailed plans were made for erecting not only one but two monuments and this was the first time ever that the Ottoman court planned to erect a monument to commemorate the proclamation of a royal edict.

Though neither of these monuments was actually erected, this statement in the Ceride-i havâdis, a semi-official daily, shows that the political authority was well aware of their symbolic value and potential function:

Since time immemorial, it has been a tradition for monarchs to erect stones commemorating the charitable works they had done. Our master and Padishah, the holder of great power, Sultan 'Abdülmecid Han has ordered the erection of such a commemorative stone at the Gülhane

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Square on the occasion of the proclamation of the *Tanzimât-ı hayriyye* which is going to benefit peoples of all territories under Ottoman protection and in particular bring justice and compassion to the impoverished. Since the Gülhane Square is located in a park not daily frequented by masses of people and since the Bâyezid Square is a venue that is the cross-roads of many avenues, the Sultan has ordered the erection of a similar stone at this latter site so that (throng of) people passing by the monument day and night may see it and rejoice and say a prayer blessing our state and the precious life of our Padishah.\(^1\)

Later, during the reign of 'Abdülmecid II (1876-1909), various commemorative monuments were erected in Istanbul as well as in some other parts of the empire. A monument was raised in Haifa to commemorate the extension of the railway; and another in Damascus on the occasion of the start of telegraph service (pic. 1).\(^2\) Meanwhile, clock towers, which were popular among the people and which can be said to carry the characteristics of both charitable and monumental buildings, were erected in many cities throughout the empire.\(^3\)

**The Imperial Monogram (tuğra)**

In this part of the paper I would like to elaborate on the *tuğra* as an example to the use of symbolism for political purposes. The *tuğra* is the imperial signature of the Ottoman Sultans. In the earlier periods, it was inscribed on imperial orders and edicts to prove to the interlocutor that the document was authentic. Similar imperial signatures had been used earlier by Persian and Mameluke monarchs. The *tuğra* also appeared on Ottoman coins, and it became a tradition for the new Sultan to mint new coins exhibiting his imperial signature. The outlines and the shape of the *tuğra* remained largely unaltered from ruler to ruler, but in time their stylized calligraphy became more complex and aesthetic. There were only a few officials at the court who were given the authority to

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19 *CeriJe-i havâdis* (İstanbul), 9 (December 15, 1840).
inscribe the tuğra on documents; and unauthorized use of the tuğra was a capital crime.22

In the context of this paper, an interesting development in the history of the tuğra occurred after the first quarter of the 18th century, when the Ottoman Sultans first had their tuğras engraved on buildings. Monarchs in Europe and some Popes had already been etching their insignia imperialia on buildings they constructed;23 but, so far as I know, the first monarchs in the Islamic world who followed their example were the Ottoman Sultans of the 18th century. Indeed, I have not met any tuğras engraved on stone before the first quarter of the 18th century. The ones on the buildings and gates in the Topkapı Palace do not date to pre-18th century either. On-site research I have carried out indicates that the earliest tuğra which was engraved on a stone outside of the Topkapı Palace complex is with an inscription on the dedication plate of the “Great Aqueduct” (Büyük bend) in Büyükdere district of Istanbul by Sultan Ahmed III (reign. 1703-30) (pic. 2). But because this inscription was located outside the town at an unpopulated site, it did not have much commemorative impact. There are very few tuğras of Ahmed III and his successor Mahmūd I (reign. 1730-54) engraved on stone with the intention to be placed on a public building. One of Mahmūd’s is preserved in Penzing district of the city of Vienna (Hadersdorfer Türkensteine), brought there from the city gates of Belgrade (pic. 3a-b). This tuğra had been placed on the city gate after the recapture of Belgrade in 1739 by the Ottomans,24 and this is one of the first publicly displayed tuğras that really expressed the symbolism of power and domination. It is also the biggest one I have ever seen (108 x 167 cm.). It is not surprising that the Austrian Fieldmarshal Laudon

23 E.g., Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere, † 1484) as well as his cousin, an important pope of the Renaissance period, Pope Julius II (Guilliano della Rovere, † 1513) used to have the 4-branched oak tree, their family coat-of-arms, engraved on the buildings they have had built. (Rovere, means oak). Examples can be seen in Musei Vaticani, Magazzino.
brought this distinctive stone to Vienna when he re-conquered Belgrade in 1789.\textsuperscript{25}

In brief, the engraving of the \textit{tuğra} on public buildings was a practice initiated during the first quarter of the 18th century and became common by the end of the century\textsuperscript{26}. Thus during the 1800s, the \textit{tuğra} appeared on all types of public buildings funded by the Ottoman Sultan. When the Ottoman State began celebrating the accession day of the Sultan towards the end of the reign of Mahmûd II. (1838), the \textit{tuğra} was again used in public displays. During these festivities, higher state officials were accorded the privilege of placing \textit{tuğras} on top of large wreaths illuminated by oil lamps.\textsuperscript{27} This development was surely a manifestation of the palace's intention to use \textit{tuğra} as a symbol of power and let it gain public importance in this period.

So why, then, did the Ottoman Sultans display the \textit{tuğras} on public buildings? The esthetically pleasing and sophisticated calligraphy of a \textit{tuğra} was so complex and stylized that not even a literate person could easily decipher the words on it. However even illiterate people could recognize that it \textit{is} the imperial signature. In that way, for a society

\textsuperscript{25} On the \textit{Hadersdorfer Türkenstein\textae} which consist of the \textit{tuğra} of Mahmûd I, an inscription from the city walls of Belgrade and the gravestone of Elçi el-


\textsuperscript{26} Hâfiz Hüseyin Ayvansarâyî (d. 1787) mentions in his \textit{Mecmu\textá-i tevârih}, a compilation of inscriptions in Istanbul, that the striking of \textit{tuğras} on cannons was introduced only in 1773. This can be regarded as another indication of the widening area of usage of the imperial monogram. Cf. Hâfiz Hüseyin Ayvansarâyî, \textit{Mecmu\textá-i tevârih}, ed. Fahri Derin, Vâhid Çabuk (İstanbul, 1985): 264-265.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Taqvîm-i veqâyi} (İstanbul), 170 (September 3, 1838).
where the literacy rate was not very high, the *tuğra* was more useful than a dedication plate. Dedication plates and inscriptions mean nothing to a person who is illiterate: if one wants to deliver information to such a person, one must use signs and symbols, not words. Therefore the *tuğra* could be a potent propaganda device where the illiteracy rate was high.\(^{28}\) It symbolized the continuity of the Ottoman lineage and it made the illiterate passerby realize that the Sultan had ordered and funded the construction of the building he saw, because no person other than the Sultan could use such a sign.\(^{29}\) Where the imperial *tuğra* appeared, there the Sultan was, *in effigie*, declaring that he, the Sultan, was the constructor and the protector of that building and that site. Thus today, we know at the first sight that a building bearing the *tuğra* must have been built or repaired by a Sultan.

The political and ideological value that has always been afforded to monarchial inscriptions bearing imperial signs, titles, and names is perhaps best demonstrated by the haste with which a new dynasty or party effaces the inscriptions of a deposed dynasty or party. Many examples to this has been observed ever since the times of the ancient Egyptians. A striking example to this is damnatio memoriae: the removal from inscriptions of the names of Roman emperors who had been tried by the senate and found guilty of violating the ideals of Caesarship (*perduellio*) or of acts of treason against the state or the *Princeps*. Damnatio memoriae, literally the damnation of one's legacy and memory, showed the importance the Romans attached to political

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\(^{29}\) There are only a few exceptions to this: Stylized calligraphy of Koranic verses and *hadrîl* cast in the shape of a *tuğra* could be seen on the gravestones of some members of the Ottoman court and rarely on fountains, starting in the 18th century. Although I have not (yet) encountered any in Istanbul, there are still some inscriptions bearing the name of a *şeyh* (master of an Islamic order) on some dervish lodges in the provinces. For two examples in Edirne see: F.Th. Dijkema, *The Ottoman historical monumental inscriptions in Edirne* (Leiden: 1977): 114 (no. 82, dated 1165/1752) and 211 (no. 176, dated 1153/1740-1), both being from the hand of the same calligrapher devoted to the same *şeyh*. 
symbolism etched on stones and marble.\textsuperscript{30} And “\textit{damnatio memoriae}” was not alien to the Islamic world, as two examples will demonstrate:

The first is an example familiar to art historians: The Dome of the Rock built on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem is an important building representing Omayyad imperial power. The band of inscription engraved on the inside of this monumental mosque originally mentioned Omayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwän (691), who constructed the Dome. Shortly after the Caliphate was seized by the Abbasids in 750, virulent and widespread enmity against the Omayyads appeared throughout the empire. The graves of the Omayyad Sultans and notables were desecrated and their bones scattered around. This enmity was also expressed in the denial of Omayyad symbolism: the Abbasid dynasty would not use colors characteristic of the Omayyad period. Al-Ma’mūn, who ascended the throne in 813, had the name of the ‘Abd al-Malik removed from the Dome of the Rock and replaced it with his own.\textsuperscript{31}

The second example I shall give is from Cairo: After forcing an-Nāṣir Muḥammed to abdicate his throne in 1309, Rukn ad-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshankīr failed to find any support either with the ulema, or with the people. A year later, at a time when it became obvious to him that he would soon have to surrender the throne back to an-Nāṣir, Baybars had his titles and name engraved on a complex of buildings consisting of a \textit{hanqāh} (dervish convent), a small mosque, and a mausoleum the construction of which has not yet been completed. He hoped that the \textit{hanqāh} would be carrying his name, because such inscriptions on buildings had the status of legal documents. Soon afterwards an-Nāṣir Muḥammed indeed regained his throne and Baybars, who had fled, was caught, brought back to Cairo, and imprisoned. An-Nāṣir Muḥammed seized the endowments of the \textit{hanqāh}, abolished it and had the titles of Baybars erased from the band of inscriptions on the building (pic. 4).\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} Henry C. Kay “Arabic Inscriptions in Egypt,” \textit{The Journal of the Royal
Where there is a struggle for power, a struggle over symbols often occurs: The victorious will remove material symbols with the aim of obliterating the memory and effacing the sympathy of the people for the rival. Not only symbols and inscriptions or a particular monument or building, but even whole squares, avenues, or an architectural style might, because of their recall and retrieval power in the collective memory, become targets for negation and deletion by the new rulers who feel that the memory of those they have deposed and replaced is a threat to their political existence. However, though there had been numerous violent depositions of Sultans in Ottoman history, there never was a case—as far as I know—in which the new Sultan resorted to the removal of the tuğra and the destruction of inscriptions belonging to the deposed Sultan—not until the 20th Century. Perhaps this was because those who ascended the throne felt that there was more to be gained by association with the charitable works of the members of the lineage who had preceded them, even including the Sultan who had just been deposed and executed. This fact also confirms that the Ottoman lineage and the Sultanate itself were concepts which commanded more respect and acceptance than the individual Sultans themselves. But, as we shall now see, the removal of the symbols of a deposed Sultan did occur at least on two occasions during the final decade of the Empire, when revolutions were carried out that involved changes of regime.

The Young Turks, who carried out the revolution of 1909 that introduced parliamentary monarchy, qualified the administration of the deposed Sultan (‘Abdülhamid II) as tyrannical and blamed him and the ancien régime for all the problems that had arisen and all the ills that had been suffered during the previous decades. The Young Turks proceeded to replace some of the tuğras of ‘Abdüllhämîd II with that of the new Sultan, Mehmed Reşad V (1909-1918), whom they had hand-picked for the throne and who functioned as their puppet. For example, they replaced the tuğra of the deposed Sultan on the main gates of the new Post building and the Port Authority (pic. 5a-b).  

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33 Here is how a daily reports this: “The tuğra of ‘Abdüllhämîd which had been
this was a first in Ottoman history, the Young Turks broke with the Ottoman tradition in this respect. Unfortunately this new tuğra of Meḥmed Reşād was once again removed from the gates of the Main Post building in the Republican era. Meanwhile the new regime erected its own monuments symbolizing the new political values and initiated a tradition of annual celebrations around them. Of these, the most important was the monument erected on the Freedom Hill, the Ābide-i hürriyyet (Liberty Monument). However, the Young Turks did not have all the tuğras of the deposed Sultan removed. Neither do we encounter that kind of procedure in the other examples of the same phenomenon. The common occurrence is only the removal of the symbols, names that had been engraved on key buildings, which are considered to be of significance.

The next revolution in Turkish history, a decade following the transition to parliamentary monarchy, was incomparably more radical, more comprehensive and more sweeping: it abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate, thus marking the end of the Ottoman Empire and the theocratic state, and replaced it with a secular republic. The Kemalist reforms which came in the wake of the proclamation of the republic in 1923 represented a total break with the Ottoman past. There was a strong association of the Arabic alphabet and Islam in Turkey like anywhere else in the world. Following the approval by the Grand National Assembly of a law replacing the Arabic letters with the Latin alphabet (November 1, 1928), the Arabic script started being regarded as a symbol of the ancien régime. Before that, a law (no. 1057) about the removal of all the tuğras from the façades of official buildings was passed in the spring of 1927 (pic. 6). Meanwhile the stalwarts of the

engraved on the main gate of the new Postal and Telegraph Building is being removed; it will be replaced by the tuğra of the new Sultan. [...] The tuğra appearing in the center of the insignia that had been engraved on the gate of the Port Authority building has [also] been replaced by the tuğra of the new Sultan.” Tanin (Istanbul) 299 (July 2, 1909). I became aware of this source from a note in: Tarih ve Toplum, 120 (Dec. 1993): 2. The Young Turks also stopped the circulation of brand new printed banknotes bearing ‘Abdüllāhīm II’s monogram after his deposition and issued new ones with the new Sultan’s monogram. See Edhem Eldem, A History of the Ottoman Bank (Istanbul, 1999): 257-258.

revolution removed from some important buildings *tuğras* that have become symbols of the Sultanate; they even attempted to chisel-out some inscriptions written in Arabic letters (read Ottoman Turkish) (pic. 7). This was yet another example of the phenomenon to which I have given some examples in the preceding paragraphs.

Appendix:

After I had written this article and the proof-reading was done and the article was about to be published, I came across an inscription bearing the *tuğra* of Murād II. (reign. 1421-44 and 1446-51) on the south gate of the Seven Towers (…), dated 1430, in Thessaloniki (pic. 8). This was very surprising to me and, I must confess, I really do not have any explanation for the solitary appearance of the *tuğra* here. Can the inscription be a later (maybe 18th century) fabrication? Or did the sultans actually use the *tuğra* as early as the 15th century on inscriptions, only to stop using it until it became popular again in the second half of the 18th century? I believe we need further documentation to find the correct answer.

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pic. 1. The inscription on the monument built on the occasion of the start of telegraph service in Damascus.
pic. 2. The inscription of Büyük bend in Büyükdere from 1135/1723-4 bearing the tuğra of Ahmed III
pic. 3a-b. *Hadersdorfer Türkensteine* located in the outskirts of Vienna. This *tugra* was brought here from the city walls of Belgrade after the capture of the city by the Austrian Fieldmarshall Laudon in 1789.
pic. 4. The titles of Rukn ad-Dīn Baybars al-Jashankīr were erased from the inscription of his ḥanqāh in Cairo in 1310.
pic. 5a-b. The tugra of deposed ‘Abdülhamid II was replaced by that of Mehmed Reşad in 1909. In the Republican era the tugra as well as the coat of arms were once more broken down. This coat of arms on the Main Post building in Sirkeci, Istanbul must have looked like the one on pic. 5c.
pic. 5c.
pic. 6. The law 1057 from May 27, 1927 ordered the removal of all the *tuğras* from the façades of “official buildings”. An erased *tuğra* from a fountain preserved in the Topkapı Palace gardens.
pic. 8. The inscription bearing the *tuğra* of Murād II. (reign. 1421-44 and 1446-51) on the south gate of the Seven Towers, dated 1430, in Thessaloniki.