

*On the Sultan's Service: Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's Memoir of the Ottoman Palace, 1909–1912.* Douglas S. Brookes. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9780253045515

Douglas S. Brookes' excellent translation of Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's memoirs offer a glimpse into palace life during the Second Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1918). The work is divided into sixteen thematic chapters. The details for each are taken from Uşaklıgil's extensive memoirs; this work is an abridged volume. Brookes' translation is supplemented with a glossary of personal names and Turkish terms. It also features maps of Istanbul and the Dolmabahçe and Yıldız Palaces from the period in question. Pictures from the Ottoman journals, *Şehbal* (1909-1914) and *Resimli Kitab* (1908-1914) throughout the work offer a window into the internal life and personality of the Ottoman court.

Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil was an accomplished modernist author. He published six novels and numerous short stories when he entered Palace service. He is often regarded as the first true author of modern Turkish literature. He was chosen by the Committee of Union and Progress, often known as the Young Turks, to serve in the palace and ostensibly be the new party's liaison to the royal family.

Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's verbose writing style is expertly translated by Brookes into a readable account. This translation draws from the three-volume memoir *Saray ve Ötesi* (*The Palace and Afterwards*) published in Istanbul in the early 1940s. This work reveals the inner workings of the palace and Uşaklıgil's perspective of palace life in the court of Mehmed V (1908-1918), the penultimate sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Because these memoirs were originally published in Turkish for a general audience, they focus on the personal rather than the political. These can be interesting, such as his reminiscence that throughout his time Dolmabahçe Palace did not have electric lights in part because Mehmed V disliked them. However, many of

the reminiscences of Halid Ziya are the banal details of court life in the early twentieth century; who is eating with whom and when are painstakingly described.

Nonetheless, there are interesting moments that poke through. Halid Ziya's relationship with the palace staff and the sultan show his personal growth. The memoir also provides personal details regarding the temperament of Ottoman officials, ministers, and the royal family. It even delves into depth about eunuchs and palace staff, providing information rarely found in other accounts. Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil is enthusiastic in describing the new sultan frequently contrasting the bad, old monarchy of Abdülhamid II (1877-1909) with the new, constitutional monarchy of Mehmed V.

This translation offers erudite perceptions of the important moments in the Second Constitutional period of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1918). It provides detailed accounts of Uşaklıgil's experience of meeting Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria (1908-1918) and the Inspection Tour to Macedonia and Kosovo in 1911. He also recounts Mehmed V's reaction to the outbreak of the Tripolitania War 1911-1912. Brookes' work offers scholars and students a very readable account of palace life during the reign of Mehmed V, first-hand observations of many interesting historical events, and fascinating insights concerning life in general from one of the greatest Turkish novelists.

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