

Keywords:

1. Facial Hair
2. Ottoman Medicine
3. Fashion
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Modern Man in the Making: Facial Hair, Fashion and Medico-Social Construction of Masculinity in the Late Ottoman Society (1900-1920)Cem DOĞAN¹*Abstract*

This work is based upon a basic consumption which offers that beard and mustachio mostly determine the type of masculinity itself in Ottoman society. As it is well known, different kinds of beard and moustachio are men's daily tool in essence. However, if one looks at the other side of the coin, he could easily see that facial hair is actually not only a part of external appearance of men, but it symbolizes the ideological frame referring to the selfhood of masculinity itself. Therefore, I intend to show how the beard and mustachio worked in terms of constructing the masculine identity in the late Ottoman fashion and medico-social discourses. I shall claim that the Ottoman men did not consider a beardless or non-moustached male as a real one and thought of himself that he had an effeminate (*tüyşüz/parlak*) personal nature or he was completely a homosexual boy (*oğlan*). Thus, facial hair had become a particular identifiable indicator among Ottoman men and sexual preference of being the variations of maleness regarding with [or without] facial hair. As a result of being bearded or moustached, an Ottoman male could construct his masculine identity and distinguish himself from the "others".

INTRODUCTION

There is a common idiom in Turkish language, saying: "Sakalım yok ki sözüm dinlensin". It means that a young man who does not have a beard complaints that his words are less important than the other men who "have a beard" in the eyes of people around him. This saying shows that the way of being a wise man in the course of daily life is passing through being bearded or moustached. Indeed, it is plausible that amongst some

cultures the more hirsute the man, the more masculine he was perceived to be (Dowd, 2010, p. 38). To be or not to be a man with beard is up to himself actually, but in the end, it is related to the religious, political, social and sexual standings as well. Therefore, a great deal of beard and moustachios had been witnessed in the history of man. Facial hair carried a great weight for the man himself throughout history and it had been a clear sign of

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belonging in the religious communities (or anathema). Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Rastafarians and some sects of Christianity have criterions upon beard, the length of it and what it means when a man shaves it (Peterkin, 2014, p. 102). Creating a religious identity, facial hair indicates that what religion a man is attached, who is his god and his prophet. Let us take Jews for example. They shave their heads and facial hair according to the certain verdicts of the Old Testament. So, they are easily separated from the other religious men. Or when the attention is turned to Muslim beards or moustaches, we could see that Muslim men mostly were in the tendency of shaving and growing their beards as the prophet Mohammed did once.

However, beyond religious, political, social and cultural symbolisms and belongings facial hair is a trademark of a heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality of men. This means that as beard and moustachio separate a man from a woman, it also does the same operations amongst the men themselves. This is why the facial hair is not only a distinctive feature between opposite-sexes, but also a simple token for the same-sex relations, too. From this

point, in this paper, I will attempt to analyze how the Ottomans reacted against the beard and moustachio and what's more how they laid a bridge between masculine identities and facial hair.

1. *Beardless Desires: Cupbearers (Sâkis), Dancing Boys (Kocheks) and Homosexuality in the Ottoman Male Culture*

Facial hair, as a means of important symbol of manhood, has existed throughout the history in almost all cultures as in Ottomans. Set aside the Islamic tradition of beard and moustachio, Ottoman male culture put a great importance on facial hair when it comes to defining the masculine identities. As circumcision, beard, moustachio and shaving them *comme il faut* was a very touchy issue among the Ottoman men. For, they were the first steps on the way of manhood. Thus, Ottoman cities had a great deal of barbershops both indoor and outdoor. We do not exactly know that if they were celebrating the first shave of a young boy as in the ceremonies of circumcision. But it is entirely obvious that the Ottoman male culture had seen facial hair as the second symbol of manhood if the circumcision was the first to be a complete man.

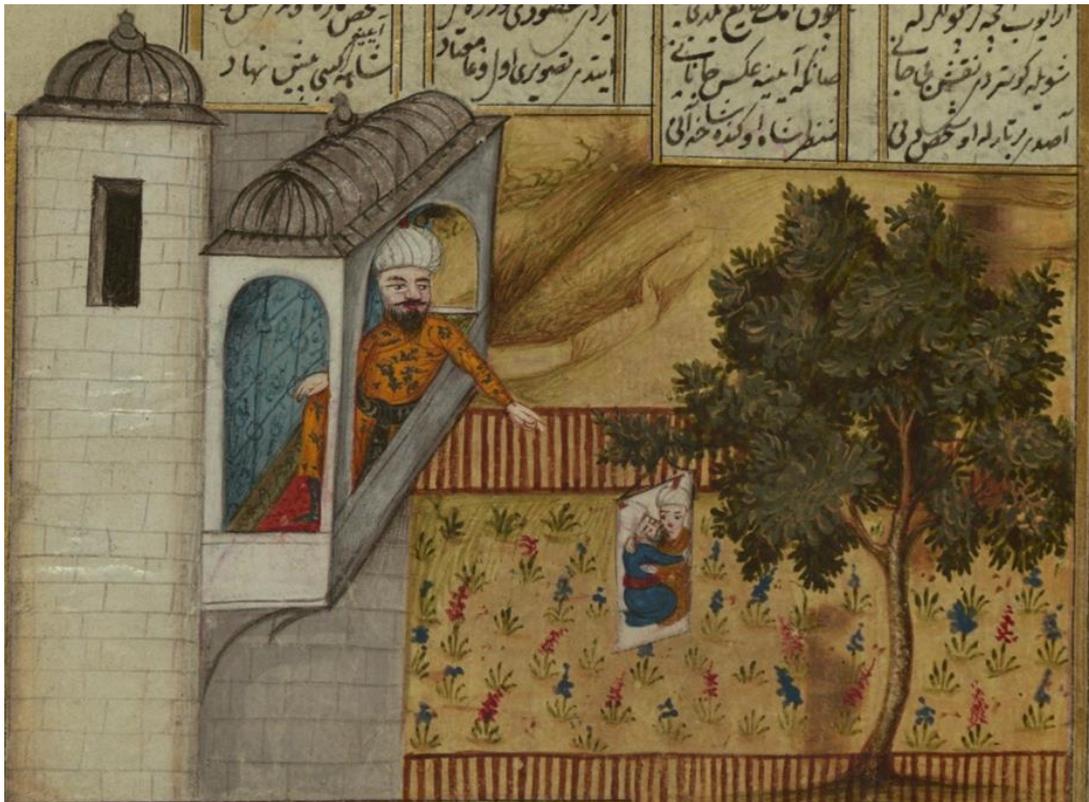


Fig. 1. A king looking at a picture of his son and his tutor, who fell in love with him. (Source: Hamse-i Atâyi. Walters Art Museum, fol: W.666.127a)

One of the foremost manuscript on Ottoman social history which contains a lot about the sexual codes of the seventeenth century is *Hamse-i Atâyi of Nev'izâde*

Atâyi. As it seen in the miniature above from *Hamse-i Atâyi*, when a man made his mind on a homosexual relationship the first thing he had to do was to find a

parlak ođlan (beardless boy) in the Ottoman classical age. In actual fact, *ođlan* (boy) was in use so as to define a homosexual boy by itself, however when you intend to stress that a boy had homosexual tendencies, you most of the time had to state that he was not wearing any beard or moustachio. By this way, facial hair was a critical element in order not to separate woman and man but at the same time man and man. As the miniature shows, beardless and non-moustached boys were accepted as girl because of their outer looks and most probably they were the ones who were penetrated in the homosexual copulations.

As a matter of fact, there is no reason to not to think that the close relation between manhood and facial hair is some sort of legacy that had passed to the Turkish perception of masculinity through the older Indo-Iranian tradition of gender codes. As Najmabadi stressed, in this cultural structures concerning maleness the growth of a full beard marked adult manhood, the adolescent male's transition from an object of desire to a desiring subject. As we have argued just above in the instance of *Hamse-i Atâyî*, in the classical eleventh-century book of advice, *Qabusnamah*, a seventy-year-old ruler fears falling in love with a recently purchased ghulam. He orders his *vazir* (minister/adviser) to free the slave but to keep him indoors until his beard is fully grown (Najmabadi, 2005, p. 15).

Because of the strict Islamic and moral codes, there was an acute public and private sphere distinction in the Ottoman society. Particularly in the classical age, Ottoman women were matched with home and men were the public spaces as streets, coffee houses, taverns, government offices etc. So, almost all of the relations were obliged to stay between the same-sex people. Unquestionable absence gave way to a great desire against the opposite-sex for both of males and females. Therefore, the natural shape of sentimental and sexual relationships between the opposite-sexes somehow turned into same-sex bounds. There is no doubt that spatiality stimulated this situation to a great extent. Once the people from different sexes are not equal, men and women had been forced to get together among themselves in characteristic places. Man could not earn a woman's trust and vice versa, sexes needed to reflect their natural sexual problems and desires to the same-sex people around them (Evren & Girgin, 1997, p. 166).

There are two type of particular examples concerning this situation. First one is the cupbearer (*sâki*). And the second example is dancing boys (*koçek*). These two characters are the main symbols of homoerotic desires amongst the Ottoman men. When we look at the cupbearer, we may immediately realize that this boy is

not a real man. He was just a boy whose beard and moustachio had not been grown yet and it made him a charm as fresh as a daisy for those who were looking for a young same-sex lover in their vicinity. Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, an Ottoman writer of the sixteenth century, noted the attributes of young boys in detail and said:

"In the present time, vile men have more interest in beardless and non-moustached boys when it compared to the desire for attractive and beautiful women. For, women are kept confidential because of the fear of handlangers. And now, friendship with young boys (civans) is a gate of sleeping with them which is always open, either clandestine or overt. Furthermore, young boys are nearby to their masters both in journey and home. However, moon-faced women are neither friends nor be with their masters on this way" (Âli, 1978, p. 59).

What Mustafa Âli says is clearly supporting the claim above-mentioned on young boys without facial hair. In spite of the fact that it is a close and intimate bound, we could assume that these civans were the female character of the same-sex relation between two males. There is another point which needs to be mentioned that young boys also belonged to their masters as an object and so, their master had the exact chance to do whatever he wanted with them. By this way, a master probably was using the young boy who was in his command not only as a sex-tool but also as a cupbearer (*sâki*) or sometimes as a dancing boy (*koçek*) for his own entertainment as well. One of the other miniature from *Hamse-i Atâyî* describes a scene of tavern as love.

Miniature explicitly shows that there are ten men in the picture. Two of them are the musicians who play in an Ottoman tavern. The one who is standing and pouring alcoholic beverage in a jug is most likely the owner and administrator of the tavern. Image is so far so casual but when we look at the men who were drinking and enjoying themselves, we realize that cupbearers have no beard or moustachio. This is an interesting view to see, because of what Mustafa Âli said above is doubtlessly indicating these two young boys who do not wear any beard or moustachio.

Second objects that draw attention of homoerotic desires were the dancing boys. These men were (in some areas of Turkey still "are") dressing like women, making their toilets as young girls, growing hair and dancing with passion in front of their male spectators. As cupbearer boys, *koçeks* were in demand by especially employers of taverns, coffee houses and crowded festivals. In the beginning, candidates had to fulfill a deal of

preconditions to be chosen for dancing. First of all, they were obliged to have a feminine outlook so that they could draw the lustful attentions of the customers. Due to their feminine features, some dancing boys were pseudonymed such as *Zalim Şah* (*Cruel Shah*), *Fitne*

Şah (*Riot shah*), *Nazlı Şah* (*Coquettish Shah*) or *Saçlı Ramazan Şah* (*Haired Ramazan Shah*), *Can Şah* (*Soul Shah*), *Küpelî Ayyaz Şah* (*Earringed Ayyaz Shah*) instead of their real names (Sevengil, 1990, p. 59).



Fig. 2. The poet Atâ'î talking to a learned man in a tavern. (Source: Hamse-i Atâyî. Walters Art Museum, fol: W.666.44a)

These statements about the dancing boys in Ottoman culture of entertainment bring another important question into the mind. For what reason *kocheks* were always called *shah*? Reasoning on this, we may presume that these names were just the stage names of the dancing boys. However, it does not look like this is the only reason. There is no doubt that the dancing boys were after a great fame but they definitely sought to have an impression upon their male spectators as well.

2. Ottoman Barbers and Masculine Morality

In a way, shaving the man's beard and moutachio is a rebellion against it. For this reason, there was a need of some people who could bear the shaving process in history. Because of the deeply rooted belief which offers that setting apart a man from his own facial hair is an insulting, humiliating and almost a criminal act, those undertake this duty were the barbers. Actually we might presume that a barber is in some occasions may expose his executioner side, considering what he does to the other man. That is why they also look alike to the doctors. Doctors are the scientific agents of the issues like living and dying as barbers decide what shall exactly happen to the man's beard or mustachio. Perhaps this analogy paved the way for barbers on being not only

hair cutters and designers, but also practicing in surgery and some other medical subjects such as circumcising. Indeed, Ottoman barbers were circumciser (*sünnetçi*), dentist (*dişçi*) and bloodletter (*hacamatçı*) and they used to make medicines and pomads in order to cure a deal of skin diseases as baldness, chiragra, scrofula, eczema and so on (Koçu, 1961, p. 2515).

Barbership fulfills the essential desires of the people of looking good in some certain circumstances, different spaces with a wide range of shaving tools. This occupation had been performed in the streets, piers, squares by mobile barbers as well as in the barbershops (Yayla & Çağdaş, 2014, p. 502). So, in conformity with the shaving tradition there were two sorts of barbership in the Ottoman daily life. One of them was performed indoor, when the second one was outdoor barbership. Indoor shaving had the classical rituals as in the barbership practice of other countries. Barbershop was one of the hubs from which the gossips of the neighborhood were spreading. The authority of cutting the beards and moustachios of Ottoman men was making the barbershops very special for the government. Insulting the barbers in any way was a crime to be punished severely. In one instance, a man

named Boğos had just stolen some soap materials from a barbershop. He was punished with being shackled for three months by an imperial order (S.A.P.M., 1846). Besides, having cut the beard or moustachio against the Islamic tradition had some serious consequences, too.

One of the unexpected outcomes of shaving the traditional Islamic beard was to be held responsible for inconsiderateness. We may observe the example of this case in a situation that occurred in 1857, one of the members of *Meclis-i Maarif* (Council Board of Education) Şinasi Effendi. He had had cut his beard indecently. Upon this behaviour, he was deprived of his rank and duty. Afterwards, the situation was revealed and government realized that he had shaved his beard due to his health issues and so his rank and duty was restored immediately (S.A.P.M., 1857). Şinasi Effendi had likely to justify himself and prove that he was an ill man. This example indicates what a decent masculine identity of Ottoman man was to be had already been decided by some social, religious and fashion determinants especially in so far as they were settled in the mind of public authorities.

Furthermore, barbershops were deliberately kept under the control of the state because of their social, political, and moral potentials. Given the heterogeneous structure of the Ottoman cities, a wide range of customers had the chance to show up in barbershops of their vicinities during the day and this situation might have easily caused political relations, organizations or maybe the worse licentiousness, which seldom it did. So, barbershops were public spaces. No matter how customers were going to have their hair, beard or mustachio cut, they also socialized there and spread the

words about politics as well. For instance, in 1808, a number of rumors about the government was going to abolish the Janissary corps had been instigated in the barbershops. Besides, tension of the people had been climbed by the fear of losing state soil in favour of Russia. These fears and rumors that stemmed from them were mostly fabricated in coffee houses and barbershops. Upon this, central government had sent an order to the qadi of Galata and commanded that the tradespeople in the area should have dealt with their own occupations but not the criticism of the state (Turna, 2006, p. 175).

On the other hand, outdoor barbershop was indicating a different activity in terms of gender codes. In such a way, what the Ottoman outdoor barbers did was not consisted of shaving a man's facial hair but also they served to reproduction of their customer's social identities as masculinity in the daily life. Hence, it could be claimed that their job was not solely cutting the beard or moustachio when it is compared with the indoor shaving. The outdoor shaving was probably almost a ceremony in terms of the customer and the barber himself. Because shaving a customer outside of the barbershop was allowing the shaver to show his abilities to the public, and beyond that, the one who was being shaved was declaring his masculine identity and reproducing himself in a public area in fact. This was the most obvious testimony of the social construction of manhood itself. In this respect, shaving and circumcising are in an exceptionally resemblance. As Peterkin suitably put, the emergence of obstreperous beard is equal to the erected penis in the eyes of people (Peterkin, 2014, p. 139).



Fig. 3. A scenery of cartpostal showing shaving outdoor barbers from the early 20th century Constantinople

Ottoman barbershop as an occupation had taken its place in law books from the earliest times. One of the oldest examples of this is the Lawbook of Yavuz Sultan Selim (Kanunnâme-i Sultan Selim Han). 194th verdict of the Lawbook commands:

“And the barbers are watched over; they shall not shave the heads of Muslims by the razor that they have shaven the heads of infidels. They shall not clean the faces of Muslims by the towel that they cleaned the faces of infidels” (Akgündüz, 1991, p. 115).

As it is seen in the passage, there were two types of masculine identity for the Ottoman mechanisms of power beginning from the early ages: Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman men. This order demonstrates us that manhood had been regulated and constructed in Ottoman social sphere in terms of religious practices. And Muslim manhood was the mere socially legitimated hegemonic model amongst the Ottoman masculinities. So, barbership had become not merely a part of shaving activity or an occupation but more a sign to separate the manly essential elements in social structure from the second class men. However, we should not overlook the fact that the barbershops and deed of shaving was the basic determinant of manhood, even they split during the shaving process.

3. Modernization, Science and Otto(man)hood

In the year of 1875, T. S. Gowing had said in his spectacular work *The Philosophy of Beards* that the rise and fall of beard had more influence on the progress and decline of nations. In his opinion, even though there were some individual exceptions, the absence of beard was a sign of physical and moral weakness for a man (Gowing, 1875, p. 5). In this case, we can agree with Gowing and express that the facial hair was in the center of masculine identity codes particularly throughout the nineteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As an inseparable part of manhood, beard and moustachio was confirming the plurality of masculinities in every different age and in the age of modern science, for sure, they were to be treated accordingly.

If we will attempt to examine the condition of beard and moustachio in the late Ottoman social universe, we ought to begin with the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1908) and then come to the early years of the Republican period so that we may see the real effects of modernization movements in the area of facial hair. In the time of Sultan Abdülhamid, European-like barbershops were opened their doors to their customers and they adopted the name “perükâr” for separating themselves from the traditional barbershops (Koçu,

2003, p. 48). This meant a real change in the way of shaving habits of the men in the Empire because the new barbership was offering a lot more than shaving a man’s beard, moustachio or his hair. These barbers were more professional comparing to the older ones and they did not solely shave the man but beautify him at the same time.

Meanwhile, modern medicine submitted its experiences in the service of manhood. Baldness, beardlessness or being without a moustachio was posing a direct threat to the Ottoman masculine identity and therefore, modern science should have helped manhood on the way of constructing a new package of gender codes. After all, the new science had the all capacities to do anything people want or at least it seemed so at the date. And facial hair was almost the only ornament of man which distinguishes him from the opposite sex and herewith, modern medicine was to save the manhood by repairing the worn out facial hair.

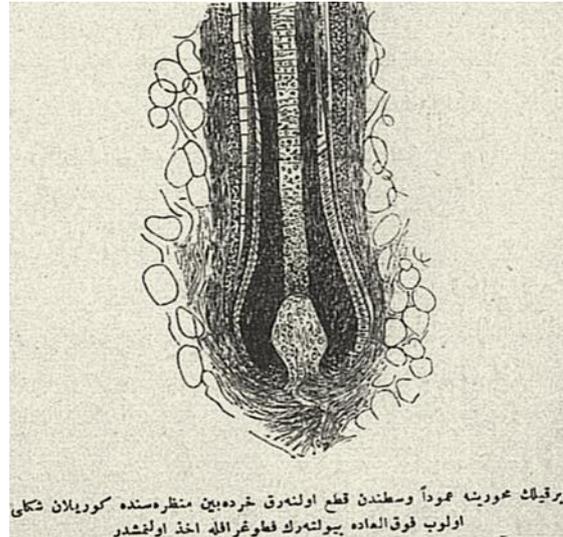


Fig. 4. A hair that is extraordinarily enlarged and photographed in microscope. (Source: Nasih Abdüşşükür, *Saç ve Sakal Hakkında Mütalaat-ı*)

Particularly during the early twentieth century, many articles and books concerning facial hair were printed. One of them was published in 1906, under the name of *Saç ve Sakal Hakkında Mütalaat-ı Sihhiye* (Considerations of Health on Hair and Beard). Name of the author of the book was Nasih Abdüşşükür who was a major and the secondary doctor in *Mekteb-i İdadi-I Harbi-i Şahâne* (Imperial Lycee of Military). Abdüşşükür had made his prelude to the book by explaining the medical and daily advantages of facial hair:

“Hair makes not only an arrangement in the face in the way of completing it but it also has a number of utilities and physiologic

advantageous. So much so that, it prevents the head from outer damages which is the most important member and the manager of the body. It also amends the effects of bitings on the head and lessens the heat and cold. Hair blocks the sweat from flowing which is stemmed from the outer side of skin of the head. It is sufficient to ask the men who has no hair in their heads how much distressful and fed up with this situation they are. As for the beard, it invites the people you are with to be respectful and makes you a trustworthy person in the eyes of them. 'I have no beard so that my words might be listened' is an idiom that advises us to hear the voices of bearded ones and follow their suggestions" (Abdüşşükür, 1906, p. 4).

As it is seen in the passage, the author aimed at analyzing the facial hair in the context of health and practicality in the daily life. But here a further question emerges as well: What was the meaning of health by the opinion of science in the late Ottoman medical comprehension? Common cultural, scientific and political discourse of the modernization suggests that the both genders are constructed on one hand and re-identified them as subjects of the mutual relationships on the other. This is true that modernization as a process of identification shows us what actually individuals are and should be not only on the intellectual level, but also in their outlookings.

Thereby, Turkish modernization had to create an imprint of changing people in terms of their daily routine, habits of consumption, their clothes and even their hairs or beards and moustachios, too. Hair as a natural endowment was presented an indicator health and youth, even if it is on the head or on the face. What's more was the idea about hair that it was revealing some sort of mental or psychological issues on the human body:

"As consequence, hair is a gift for women and beard is for men that nature bestowed as well as their colours and somberness, their growth with intensity indicate youth and health. And their sparsity and alteration of colours and shortness and drop imply a mental or psychological illness or a sign of health old age. For this very reason, one should not be idle and neglectful about the means of health that the hair needs and keep his distance from what is harmful for the hair" (Abdüşşükür, 1906, p. 13).

On the other side, there were some people who evaluated the hair, beard and moustachio under the framework of fashion. Actually, when we turn our attention to the articles concerning the relation between fashion and facial hair, we can claim that these papers were written to criticize the modernization itself. In one instance, it was put forward that fashion did not merely interfere in civilized women and men's dresses but regulated their hairs and beards, too. If there was a possibility so that their other members could be changed, it also would interfere with them (Anonymous, 352).

CONCLUSION

Taking the facial hair as one of the measures of masculine identity was perhaps a rampart against modernization and its consequences. Shaving as foreigners did had a possibility to upset the status quo of Muslim Ottoman manhood and this act might have paved the way for internalising the Westernization as a means of social decadence. Therefore, facial hair played a pivotal role in the construction of masculine identity as the Islamic tradition did in the moral symbolism of the early twentieth century. Whether the point of view was scientific or moralistic, modern Ottoman manhood perceived a deep connection itself with the facial hair. In the classical age, beard or moustache seen in a man had indicated the decent male character. For, in that period beardless boys had been used in taverns or the manly places of entertainment such as. And this shows us that "parlak/tüysüz oğlan" was probably a subject of male sexuality in those places.

Along with the modernization era, modern sciences defined what a man should have been like from the point of zero to the top. Fashion aided at designing the modern straight man and gave a great importance the ways of facial hair. Modern understanding against the shapes of beard or moustache was not only distinguishing the gayness but also declaring the sexual preference, class relations and intellectual tendencies, even the style of education. Thus, facial hair gained an essential role when it comes to put forward what is manly and what is not. Besides, giving a shape to beard or moustache of his own was about a self-confidence as well. A grown man with facial hair has shown that he owned his external members of his body but no one else. This was a manifestation for a healthy man of being a man, indeed. To put it simply, we can say that what having a sexual member means for a man facial hair means the same. Modern sciences as well as the society does not accept a man without penis as a real man and similarly to that, beard or moustache is the main banner for manhood.

As to the Ottoman men, we bump into a great deal of facial hair styles. As such in the Western societies, in the Ottoman social world beards and moustachios meant the scholarly, piety, class, political choices and most other things. When janissaries opted for grown a thick and bushy moustachio, an imam had to shape his beards according to the traditional ways. Shaving the beards or moustaches was another issue. Especially being shaved by the outside barbers could mean a defying that putting an emphasis on the masculine character of the client. The one who being shaved was not just being a man who was having his beard or moustache cut, but at the same time he attempted to show his equals that he was a real man with facial hair.

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Modern Erkeği Çizmek: Sakal/Bıyık, Moda ve Geç Osmanlı Toplumunda Maskülinitenin Mediko-Sosyal İnşası (1900-1920)

Cem DOĞAN

Anahtar Kelimeler:

1. Sakal/Bıyık
2. Osmanlı Tıbbı
3. Moda
4. Erkeklik
5. Efeminelik

Özet

Bu makale, sakal ve bıyığın Osmanlı toplumunda erkekliğin türevlerini belirleyen alameti farikalardan biri olduğu yolundaki temel önermeye dayanmaktadır. Sakalın ve bıyığın muhtelif türlerinin erkeklerin gündelik yaşantılarında kullandıkları bir süs aracı oldukları bilinmektedir. Lakin daha yakından bakıldığında saç ve sakalın salt erkeğin dış görünüşüne ait bir şey olduğu kadar erkekliğin kendine vurgu yapan bir tür ideolojik sembol olduğu da görülür. Bu nedenle de, burada geç Osmanlı moda ve mediko-sosyal söylemleri açısından sakalın ve bıyığın maskülen kimliği kurgulayan birer vasıta olduğunu göstereceğim. Bunu yaparken, Osmanlı erkeklerinin sakalsız/bıyıksız bir erkeği (tüysüz/parlak) gerçek anlamda bir erkek olarak kabul etmediklerini ve hatta çoğu zaman bu gibi kimselerin efemine (oğlan) bir doğaya sahip olduklarının düşünüldüğünü öne süreceğim. Böylece, sakalın/bıyığın Osmanlı erkekleri arasında bir tür cinsel tercih sembolü olarak değerlendirildiğini iddia edeceğim. Sonuç olarak, sakallı ya da bıyıklı olup olmasına göre bir erkeğin kendisini “diğerleri”nden nasıl ayırt ettiğini sorgulayacağım.