


An Overview of Ottoman Scientific Activities

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“Ottoman Science” is a term encompassing the scientific activities that occurred throughout the Ottoman epoch in the lands where the empire extended. The Ottoman Empire, which was established as a small principality at the turn of the fourteenth century, gradually expanded into the lands of the Byzantine Empire both in Anatolia and the Balkans. Its sovereignty reached the Arab world after 1517. It became the most powerful state of the Islamic world in a vast area extending from Central Europe to the Indian Ocean and persisted by keeping the balances of power with Europe. Following its defeat in World War I, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated in 1923.

Ottoman science emerged and developed on the basis of the scientific legacy and institutions of the pre- Ottoman Seljukid period in Anatolian cities, and benefited from the activities of scholars who came from Egypt, Syria, Iran, and Turkestan, which were the most important scientific and cultural centers of the time. The Ottomans brought a new dynamism to cultural and scientific life in the Islamic world and enriched it. Thus, the Islamic scientific tradition reached its climax in the sixteenth century. Besides the old centers of the Islamic civilization, new centers flourished, such as Bursa, Edirne, Istanbul, Skopje, and Sarajevo. The heritage, which developed in this period, constitutes the cultural identity and scientific legacy of presentday Turkey as well as several Middle Eastern, North African, and Balkan countries. This article aims to give an overview of the formation and development of Ottoman science in Anatolia and the scientific activities, which expanded later from Istanbul, the capital of the empire, to Ottoman lands

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