

RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PRE-MODERN OTTOMAN TEMPORALITY VIEWED THROUGH OTTOMAN ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS

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Abstract

The Ottoman Empire is considered pre-modern prior to the 19th century reforms, which aimed at reshaping, modernizing and optimizing the society and state. The reformists shared the pre-existing Western view that the Ottoman society is lazy and inefficient. In the pre-modern Ottoman Empire, time was measured using seasonal hours, which later became the *gurubi* system (the *Alaturka* Hour System). Islamic prayer times played a central role in dividing the day into convenient segments, shaping the people's daily routines and temporality, which led to a characteristic lack of punctuality. The Ottomans encouraged and valued acts of worship, charity, and working for one's hereafter over work for profit, which created a clear contrast with the Western understanding of work and efficient use of time for profit. The *ulema* and Sufi luminaries who held important state positions in the pre-modern empire produced morality books and religious manuscripts that affected the morality and temporality of the people. Islamic Ottoman manuscripts serve as an authentic window into the pre-modern Muslim Ottoman mentality which perceived life and time with a central focus on religion. This paper discusses the religious influences on Ottoman temporality and provides examples from pre-modern Ottoman Islamic manuscripts located at the National Library of Latvia.

Keywords: *Ottoman Empire, temporality, religious manuscripts, Islam, Sufism.*

Introduction

Traditionally, the Ottoman society is labelled as “pre-modern” for the period before the start of the Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century [Sariyannis 2017: 231]. From the Western point of view, the pre-modern Ottomans were observed to lead slow-paced unhurried lives; they often found time to lounge, drink coffee, and smoke, and they did not show ambition in their trade ventures, preferring to suffice themselves with earning their keep rather than expanding business [Hafez 2022: 17; 118; 141]. European travellers in the 17th and 18th centuries often described the Ottomans as “idle”, “lazy” [Sariyannis 2017: 235] or “indifferent of time” [Wishnitzer 2015: 121]. However, this description does not necessarily have an ideological basis but is rather based in a fundamental difference between the two cultures in measuring time, defining the ideal state of being, and prioritizing the activities that constitute the best use of a person’s time.

The mean time system did not enter the Ottoman society until the middle of the 19th century, and even then, was used in parallel with the previous hour system called the *gurubi* system or *alaturka saat* [Wishnitzer 2010: 47]. In contrast with the consistent and precise mean time system used in the West, the *gurubi* system had variables that changed from day to day, making precise timekeeping a difficult task to achieve [Wishnitzer 2010: 47]. Instead, Ottoman people relied on the daily Islamic prayer cycle which was in tune with the natural cycle of the sun to divide their days into segments which organized their daily activities [Wishnitzer 2010: 49; 50]. This method of timekeeping resulted in “approximate time” and contributed to the lack of punctuality and uniformity in the Ottoman society.

In addition to the effect of the time-keeping system on Ottoman temporality, Ottomans did not share the Western understanding of the concept of work and thus had different priorities when it came to utilizing their time. While the West understood work for profit as a pillar of civilization, the Ottomans placed that value on acts of worship and morality based in their faith. The Islamic framework not only governed the daily activities and routines of the population but also defined their understanding of the concept of work. In contrast with the Western understanding that time equals money, where the value of time lies in using it effectively to work and earn profit, the Ottomans attributed a different value to time focused on using it for acts of worship and good deeds, thus resulting in a different meaning attributed to the concepts of work and laziness [Hafez 2022: 54].

In this paper, Ottoman temporality is viewed as shaped by their timekeeping system, their definition of the ideal state of being, and their understanding of the concept of work, centring the Islamic influence on these aspects. Furthermore, the paper offers quotes from two Islamic Ottoman manuscripts from the pre-modern

Ottoman period to show direct examples of the Islamic framework that shaped the understanding of these concepts.

Information about the selected manuscripts

The two Ottoman manuscripts quoted in this paper can be found in the Rare Books collection at the National Library of Latvia, Riga. The first manuscript (RXA222S,6) is a copy of *En'am-i şerif* prayer book (*islāmticīga rokasgrāmata*) estimated to be from the 18th century¹. The second manuscript (RXA222S,24) is titled *Prayer book* (*lūgšanu grāmata*), and the time of its writing is unknown, however, it matches the pre-reform Ottoman Islamic copied manuscripts in layout and content. Both manuscripts contain a compilation of Quranic chapters followed by a selection of various *du'a* and *evrad* among other components related to Islamic and Sufi practices.

Although the Ottoman Muslim identity was a Sunni Hanafi identity, there was a substantial Sufi influence on the Islam practiced within the empire [Al-Tikriti 2021: 62; Pfeifer 2021: 41]. Most of the morality book writers which shaped the population's understanding of various concepts before the 19th century were members of the *ulema*² and Sufi luminaries; they had extensive Islamic knowledge and addressed their books to the "virtuous Muslim" (usually assumed to be a male from the elite) who inhabited a "moral space shared by all who are together bound to God" [Hafez 2022: 41; 49; 54]. In addition to morality books, Sufi scholars and their students often occupied themselves with creating and copying religious manuscripts for pay or for educational purposes [Ahmad 2021: 374]. Although initially the manuscripts were intended for the use of the educated elite, some of the copied manuscripts, such as *En'am-i şerif*, which contained a collection of Quranic chapters, verses, *du'a*, *evrad*, and other religious texts and illustrations, were donated to libraries to be used by religious commonfolk [Bain 1999: 132]. Most of these copied religious manuscripts were produced from the 17th to the 19th century, with simpler versions produced in the sixteenth century, and although they changed over time, the changes primarily affected the quantity and variety of religious texts and illustrations included, while the texts themselves saw little change over time [Bain 1999: ii; 13; 64; 69; 75; 78]. Thus, these copied Islamic Ottoman manuscripts provide a direct view into the religious framework that the Muslim Ottoman mentality was shaped by during pre-modern times.

¹ The manuscript was estimated to be written in the 18th century. See: Hašaba, S. (2024). *Research Analysis of Theoretical and Practical Aspects of the Ottoman Manuscript "Islamic Handbook"*. Master's thesis. University of Latvia, <https://dspace.lu.lv/items/e6aadf18-5e60-4946-a2e8-e003158d45a1>

² Islamic scholars.

It is important to note that the quotes extracted from the selected Ottoman manuscripts in this paper are in Arabic, as Islamic Ottoman manuscripts were often written in both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish [Bain 1999, 16]. Arabic language was used especially for Islamic texts and prayers in Ottoman manuscripts as Arabic is the language of Islam, and Ottoman calligraphers were well-versed in it [Faroqhi 1999: 27].

Keeping time in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire

Prior to the 19th century reforms, the Ottomans were characteristically unpunctual even in governmental and commercial structures [Wishnitzer 2010: 50]. This can be attributed to the frequently changing nature of the indigenous timekeeping system which was kept in use even after the introduction of mean time into the empire and was only abolished in 1926 with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey [Wishnitzer 2010: 47]. In addition, the convenience and habit of relying on the Islamic daily prayer cycle to tell time played a large role in delaying the necessity for precise mechanical timekeeping.

The Ottoman timekeeping system is based on the ancient scheme of seasonal or temporal hours where the day and night are each divided into twelve equal units. The daytime hours were counted from sunrise, while the nighttime hours were counted from sunset, which meant the length of the daytime hours was usually different than the length of the night hours [Wishnitzer 2015: 125]. However, for the Ottoman commoners, clocks were generally only interesting as a technological product of a foreign culture until the Tanzimat reforms [Wishnitzer 2015: 122]. The 16th, 17th and early 18th-century Ottoman historians seldom used hour precision, despite mechanical clocks already being known to the elites in the empire [Sariyannis 2017: 245]. In the 18th century, the use of mechanical clocks was more common in state decrees and chronicles but remained exclusive to the government until the second half of the 19th century [Wishnitzer 2015: 126]. The use of mechanical clocks for state affairs in the 18th century did not result in punctuality in state institutions, as the timekeeping system was inherently inconsistent and necessitated that all clocks are set to 12:00 at sunset every day to roughly indicate the seasonal hours [Wishnitzer 2015: 126]. Moreover, adjusting the clocks daily to 12:00 at every sunset wore down their mechanisms frequently and resulted in slight variations between different timepieces [Wishnitzer 2015: 127]. Since seasonal hours were non-uniform, and the time of sunset also varied on a daily basis, the clocks would show an approximate time [Wishnitzer 2015: 126]. Even in the 19th century, when time was referred to by the hour alone, time was still approximate. For example, in 1851, the schedule of a regular ferry states that it would depart “at approximately eleven o’clock, just before nightfall” [Wishnitzer 2015: 121]. The issue was not exactly in the availability

and widespread use of mechanical clocks, as the construction of clock towers and the expansion of private watches did not result in change in the social organization of labour and did not influence to the philosophical view of society, compared to the way this change affected pre-Enlightenment Europe [Sariyannis 2017: 251]. This was not viewed as an issue by the Ottomans, as they were used to organizing their days according to the Islamic prayer cycle in accordance with the sun cycle rather than exact mechanical time.

Nevertheless, Ottomans were not completely foreign to precise timekeeping, but only when it came to religious practice. Since it was important to determine exact time for daily prayers and fasting purposes, Muslim astronomers developed the science of determining time called *'ilm al-miqāt* based on astronomic observations and mathematic calculations [Wishnitzer 2015: 128]. The *muvaqqits*, or scholars versed in *'ilm al-miqāt* were responsible for setting the times of daily prayers including the time of the sunset [Wishnitzer 2015: 128, 129]. The Ottoman tradition starting from the fifteenth century was to measure time in twelve equal hours, where the sunset is considered the start of a day cycle and marked as twelve o'clock, however, this system of equal hours was limited to astronomers and *muvaqqits* until much later [Wishnitzer 2010: 48]. In the 19th century, this equal-hour system became known as the *gurubi* system or *alaturka saat*, and the day was counted from one sunset to the next, dividing the day into twelve equal hours [Wishnitzer 2015: 127]. The Islamic day was considered to start at sunset since the months begin at the appearance of the new moon, which is first seen shortly after sunset [King 1993: 249].

According to Wishnitzer, pre-modern Ottoman temporality in various studies is often reduced to its religious dimension [Wishnitzer 2015: 122], as the Islamic daily prayer cycle was used to express time and keep schedules by commonfolk and by the state alike. The five daily Islamic prayers are dependent on the position of the sun in the sky and are thus defined in terms of astronomical phenomena [King 1993: 249]. The day began with the sunset prayer (*maghrib* – مَغْرِب), followed by the evening prayer at nightfall (*'isha* – عِشَاء), then the dawn prayer at daybreak (*fajr* – فَجْر), and the two remaining prayers are the noon prayer shortly after astronomical midday (*zuhr* – ظَهْر) and the afternoon prayer determined by the length of shadows (*'asr* – عَصْر) [King, 1993: 250]. Early Muslims found it easy to determine the times of prayer using seasonal hours based on the hours of daytime passed, and precise measurements of when these prayers should begin were provided when the *muvaqqits* appeared starting from the thirteenth century [King, 1993: 250, 251].

For the Ottomans, relying on the prayer cycle for temporal orientation was instinctive, as it made perfect sense with the ancient seasonal hour system and the natural cycle of the sun. The first found description of a workday in the Ottoman Empire dates back to 1678, where a charter of a library stated it would be open “three

days a week from sunrise until the afternoon prayers” [Sariyannis 2017: 247]. In the late 18th century, when the use of hours was more common, it was still relative to prayer times. For example, in 1789, an imperial degree to the chief of financial services ordered that all clerks “come to the office in the third hour after the morning prayers and return home at half past ten after the afternoon prayers” [Sariyannis 2017: 248]. The shift away from using daily prayers to tell time happened at different times depending on region and industry, and some industries maintained defining time in terms of daily prayers until the end of the 19th century, such as the Anatolian silk and cotton industries [Sariyannis 2017: 250]. The prayer times were deeply interconnected with the Ottoman *alaturka* hour system, to the point where attempts made to replace the *alaturka* system with mean time faced opposition which claimed that “to abolish our clock is to abolish the prayer” [Wishnitzer 2010: 68].

To the Ottoman Muslim, religion and its rituals were the centre of life. The daily prayer is the second pillar of Islam and a stable, mandatory component of daily routine for every believer. Centring prayer in a Muslim’s routine is a way of centring God in their daily life, and a reminder that all time belongs to God and must be used in His service. Ottoman religious manuscripts before the 19th century include texts that express this as a fact from the Islamic point of view.

In the Ottoman religious prayer book, manuscript RXA222S,24, located at the National Library of Latvia, there are several quotations that support this statement. On page 74 there is an example from a Sufi *evrad* stating “الليل والنهار لله” (night and day are for Allah). This can be interpreted with a double meaning: night and day belong to Allah and should be spent for Allah. On page 78, the text of a *zikr* states “اللهم بك أصبحنا وبك أوجينا وبك نموت” (O Allah, by You we have reached morning and by You we have reached the culmination [of the day] and by You we live and by You we die”. This prayer is still repeated in modern times, however, “وبك أوجينا” (and by You we have reached the culmination [of the day]) is replaced by “وبك أمسينا” (and with You we have reached the evening), which has a similar meaning and is based on a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari, instructing that this *zikr* should be repeated in the mornings [*Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 573–1199]. Another example can be found in the text of a *zikr* on page 86 “اللهم هذا ادبار اليك” “وإدبار النهارك”. The text, however, contains grammatical and spelling mistakes (which are not uncommon in Ottoman manuscripts, as Arabic was often not their native language), and one verb is miswritten. Since the prayer is still used nowadays and can be found in Islamic prayer and hadith books, the quote can be corrected to “اللهم هذا إقبال ليلك وإدبار نهارك”, a *zikr* that should be repeated at sunset from a hadith narrated by Al-Albani, and it translates to “O Allah, this is the coming of Your night and the retirement [end] of Your day” [*Da’if al-Jami’ al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu al-Fath al-Kabir* 774–4123].

The second Ottoman religious manuscript, a copy of an *En'am-i şerif* prayer book, RXA222S,6, located at the National Library of Latvia, contains similar expressions. On page 80, a quote from a *du'a* titled "دعاء قربان" (supplication; prayer as an offering) states "إن صلاتي ونسكي ومحياي ومماتي لله رب العالمين", which is a sentence taken from verse 162 from the sixth Quranic chapter "Cattle" (*al-An'ām* – الأنعام). M. Khattab translated this text as "Surely my prayer, my worship, my life, and my death are all for Allah – Lord of all worlds" [Khattab 2015: 142]. Page 115 contains a *du'a* that should be recited in the morning to gain protection throughout the day, and it states "اللهم صباحنا صباحك" (O Allah, our morning is Your morning). These quotes reiterate that all time belongs to Allah and must be used in His service.

Although time was generally relative to the Islamic daily prayer times, setting a meeting "after the afternoon prayer", for example, referred to a rather loosely defined range of time. Ottoman Muslims usually performed prayers at the same time when the *azan*³ sounded, however, the duration of performing daily prayers could vary from person to person. In addition to the mandatory daily prayers observed by all Muslims, there are also non-obligatory recommended prayers that the more pious performed with regularity, while others performed on occasion. Moreover, a believer could choose to read daily recitations such as *du'a* or *zikr* before or after the obligatory prayer, lengthening the duration spent in worship. A. Bain mentions several examples of such prayers from Ottoman religious manuscripts that included the instruction "Read every morning and evening" in accordance with daily prayer times [Bain 1999: 66; 67; 252].

All Islamic actions are based on one's intention (*niyat*), where the believer often sets their intention verbally before the action [Bain 1999: 1]. The setting of intention can be performed before ritual ablution (*wudu'*) or before an obligatory or non-obligatory prayer [Bain 1999: 1]. Manuscripts RXA222S,24 and RXA222S,6 from the National Library of Latvia both contain a list of expressions to set intention before each daily prayer, mentioning the formulation for the obligatory and the additional non-obligatory prayers. These texts can provide an insight into the daily prayers performed by Ottomans before the 19th century.

Manuscript RXA222S,24 formulates the setting of intention for the obligatory daily prayers on pages 87–89, as follows: "نويت أن أصلي فريضة الصلوة الفجر ركعتين" (I intend to pray the obligatory dawn prayer, two *rak'as*, facing the direction of the Kaaba, purely for the sake of Allah Almighty, Allah is the Greatest). Similar intention statements are repeated for each of the obligatory noon prayer (فريضة الصلوة الظهر), the obligatory afternoon prayer (فريضة الصلوة العصر), the obligatory sunset prayer (فريضة الصلوة المغرب),

³ *Azan* or *adhan* (أذان) – daily call to prayers.

and the obligatory evening prayer (فريضة الصلوة العشاء). The number of *rak'as* is also mentioned for each, where the noon, afternoon, and evening prayers are four *rak'as*, while the sunset obligatory prayer is three *rak'as*. In addition, the manuscript lists the intention formulations for optional daily (recommended) prayers that are to be performed before or after the obligatory ones (depending on the prayer). The formulation of the intention is the same, however, the optional prayers are called *sunna* prayers (Arabic: سُنَّة, spelling in the manuscript: سُنَّت – Prophetic practice or tradition) instead of *farīda* (فريضة – obligation). The manuscript mentions the following non-obligatory prayers: the dawn *sunna* prayer (صلوة سُنَّت الفجر) – two *rak'as*, the noon *sunna* prayers (سُنَّت الظهر) – one is four *rak'as* and one is two, the sunset *sunna* prayer (صلوة سُنَّت المغرب) – two *rak'as*, and the evening *sunna* prayer (سُنَّت العشاء) – two *rak'as*.

Manuscript RXA222S,6 does not list the intention formulations for all daily mandatory prayers but provides some examples of setting intentions before prayers on page 106. The manuscript includes the statement used for the obligatory Friday prayers: نويت أن أصلي فريضة هذا الجمعة مستقبلاً بالقبلة مقتدياً بهذا الإمام أداءً لله⁴ (I intend to perform the obligatory Friday prayer facing the *qiblah*⁵, following this imam⁶, in devotion to Allah Almighty, Allah is the Greatest). For the non-obligatory Friday prayer, the formulation is as follows: نويت أن أصلي سُنَّة الجمعة مستقبلاً بالقبلة أداءً لله تعالى الله أكبر (I intend to perform the *sunna* Friday prayer facing the *qiblah*, in devotion to Allah Almighty, Allah is the Greatest). This manuscript also makes a distinction between the *farīda* prayers and the *sunna* prayers. In addition, it mentions an intention statement for a non-obligatory Friday prayer that is not tied to a specific time: نويت أن أصلي سُنَّة المطلق هذه الجمعة مستقبلاً بالقبلة أداءً لله تعالى الله أكبر (I intend to perform the *sunna al-muṭlaq* [unrestricted] prayer this Friday, facing the *qiblah*, in devotion to Allah Almighty, Allah is the Greatest). This manuscript shows that there were cases where the obligatory noon prayer was not prayed right away but rather delayed to the end of its allocated timeframe and performed shortly before the afternoon prayer. The intention set in this case is, as follows: نويت أن أصلي هذه الظهر الأخيرة مستقبلاً بالقبلة أداءً لله تعالى الله أكبر (I intend to pray this last noon prayer facing the *qiblah*, in devotion to Allah Almighty, Allah is the Greatest). The manuscript also indicates that sometimes the obligatory noon prayer is delayed too long and its timeframe is missed, in which case the believer would set their intention slightly differently: نويت أن أصلي آخر الظهر أدركت وقته ولم

⁴ The sentence contains some spelling mistakes and can be corrected to: نويت أن أصلي "فريضة هذه الجمعة مستقبلاً بالقبلة مقتدياً بهذا الإمام أداءً لله تعالى الله أكبر"

⁵ The direction of the Kaaba to which Muslims turn during prayer.

⁶ The person who leads the prayer in a mosque.

”اصلّى بعد الله اكبر” (I intend to pray the last noon prayer, I realized its time had passed [or: I reached the end of its time] and I have not prayed yet, Allah is the Greatest).

These examples show that duration of performing daily prayers may vary from person to person depending on whether they are performing only the obligatory prayers or also adding the non-obligatory ones to their daily practice. This could be one of the reasons that contributed to events being scheduled for a non-specific range of time rather than a precise point in time. In addition, the last example from manuscript RXA222S,6 shows that even in the most important and routine daily practices, delays would still occur, although potential reasons were not specified.

The Ottoman pre-modern concept of work

1. Relying on God

Not only did the Islamic prayer times divide the day and organize daily activities, but the entire temporal space of the Ottomans was also governed by religion; it even defined the ideal state of being. From the perspective of the Ottomans, according to E. Glassen (1987), the ideal mental state for a person is *huzur*, translated as “peace of soul, ease”, emphasizing that a person’s main need is tranquillity or *rahat* [Sariyannis 2017: 235–236]. According to M. Hafez (2022), the pre-modern Ottomans strived to live in a state of contentment or *kanaat*, which was viewed by the later reformists of the 19th century as laziness and hedonism as it often presented as passivity [Hafez 2022: 40, 69]. When existing in this state, a person would fully resign and rely on God, trusting him to manage and arrange of all their worldly affairs (Ottoman Turkish: *tevekkül*, Arabic: *tawakkul*) [Hafez 2022: 36].

Tevekkül is an important concept in Islamic religious terminology that had a profound significance in Sufism and in the Ottoman Empire, meaning to entrust one’s worldly affairs to God and rely on him [Lewisohn 2012]. The full reliance on God in Islam means to believe that there is no power and no cause to anything except in God, and results in the believer gaining a sense of reassurance and tranquillity which helps him on his worldly journey and is meant to be the source of his strength and effectiveness [Al-Shamarti 2021: 296]. Muslims believe that *Tevekkül* can be reached only by true believers, as they are able to fully surrender to God, trusting that nothing can happen without his will and all that he wills is for the believer’s greater benefit [Al-Shamarti 2021: 303]. The concept of *tevekkül* is mentioned frequently in the Quran and is part of the ideal mental state that a believer should base their decisions and reactions on when dealing with worldly affairs. Due to its importance, it is also frequently mentioned in various forms of Islamic and Sufi texts such as *du’a* and *evrad*.

In the Ottoman religious prayer book, manuscript RXA222S,24, several such examples can be found. On page 69, a clear example comes forth in the following

prayer: “حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل، يا مُدَبِّرًا بلا وزير سَهِّلْ علينا وعلى والدينا كُلَّ عسيرة، الى” (Allah is sufficient for us and he is the best disposer of affairs. Oh *mudabbir* [manager, arranger, orchestrator] without a minister, make every difficulty easier for us and for our parents. All matters are in Allah’s hands, and Allah is the best of guardians). The first part of this prayer is still globally repeated by Muslims whenever faced with difficulty or tragedy (حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل), and it is a reminder that nothing happens outside of God’s will, and nobody can aid a person except God. The last word in this sentence “وكيل” (*wakīl*), often translated in this context as “disposer of affairs” is defined as a person chosen as a procurator to look after one’s business and govern and dispose on one’s behalf [Lewisohn 2012]. On page 71, another example is present: “لا اله الا الله عليه توكلت” (There is no God but Allah, on him I rely [in Him I trust]), it uses the verb “تَوَكَّلَ/يَتَوَكَّلُ” (*tawakkala/yatawakkalu* – to rely on or trust in), and it signifies complete trust in Allah and reliance on Him as an expression of one’s monotheistic belief in Allah. Another prayer on page 79 contains the sentence “اللهم يسِّرْ أمورنا” (Allah, make our affairs easy), which can be used in a broader sense for any circumstance that created some difficulty or complication in daily life, or as a pre-emptive measure when such obstacles are expected. A quote from page 83 also expresses the concept that only God can cause someone to gain or lose in worldly affairs, whether materially or in terms of status and reputation: “تَعَزَّزْ من تشاء وتَذَلَّ من تشاء” (You exalt [give honour to] whom You will and You disgrace [humiliate] whom You will).

The second Ottoman religious manuscript, a copy of an *En’am-i şerif* prayer book, RXA222S,6, contains similar expressions on the importance of *tevekkül* for the believer. On pages 84 and 85, the manuscript included some *ayat şerif*, which are specific Quranic verses isolated and read for particular benefits that can be drawn from them or used by Sufis in Ottoman times in their amulets and talismans [Bain 1999: 64]. The first of these verses written in the manuscript is a verse (*āya* – آية) about *tevekkül*, and it is verse 51 from the ninth Quranic chapter “Repentance” (*at-Tawbah* – التَّوْبَةُ): “قُلْ لَنْ يَصِيبَنَا اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ”. M. Khattab translated this verse as follows: “Say, ‘Nothing will ever befall us except what Allah has destined for us. He is our Protector.’ So, in Allah let the believers put their trust” [Khattab 2015: 175]. The fourth of the five *ayat şerif* selected in this manuscript was also about *tevekkül*, and it is the 56th verse from the eleventh Quranic chapter “Hūd” (هُود): “إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا”. M. Khattab translated this verse: “I have put my trust in Allah—my Lord and your Lord. There is no living creature that is not completely under His control. Surely my Lord’s Way is perfect justice” [Khattab 2015: 201]. In both of these verses, Khattab translated “فليتوكل” (*fal-jatawakkal*) and “تَوَكَّلْتُ” (*tawakkaltu*), both forms of the Arabic verb “تَوَكَّلَ/يَتَوَكَّلُ” (*tawakkala/yatawakkalu*),

as “putting trust” in Allah. On page 88 in this manuscript, a *du’a* includes the sentence “عليك توكلت وانت رب العرش العظيم” (in You I put my trust [on You I rely] and You are the God [Lord] of the Mighty Throne). This part of the prayer references the 129th verse of the ninth Quranic chapter “Repentance” (*at-Tawbah*), where the text is slightly different, “عليه توكلت وهو رب العرش العظيم”, translated by M. Khattab as “In Him I put my trust. And He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne” [Khattab 2015: 184].

The concept of *tevekkül* is essential to Muslim believers to maintain the correct state of mind in dealing with worldly affairs. This concept is frequently mentioned in the Quran, some of those verses were emphasized as *ayat şerif*, and the concept is also mentioned in the texts of various prayers included in Ottoman religious manuscripts to serve as daily reminders to their users. *Tevekkül* as a constant state of being played an important part in the creation of the framework on which Ottoman temporality was based, as the ideal state of being was a state of calmness, contentment, and complete reliance on God. This meant that worrying about wealth or working diligently to accumulate it indicated a lack of reliance on God, thus made the effort in this aspect unnecessary, and excessive effort frowned upon.

2. Working for the Hereafter

The West considered efficient, organized hard work as a pillar for civilization. On the other hand, the Ottoman language in the 19th century did not yet have a direct translation for the word civilization, rather translating it to various words including *ahlak* (morality), *edep* (proper manners, conduct, or civility), *terbiye* (education/breeding), *talim* (learning), among others [Benesch et al. 2015: 107]. These translations show that the Ottomans considered morality, rather than work for profit, to be the foundation of their societal order and the main influence on their worldview and priorities.

Generally, work and the effective use of time was understood through the lens of ethical practice of faith, where performing activities to attain a perfection of one’s character was a virtue, whereas failing to do so due to laziness was a vice [Hafez, 2022: 54]. For the educated Ottoman elite, aside from acts of worship, work was primarily defined as attaining knowledge or giving charity [Sariyannis 2017: 236]. Moralistic Ottoman writers of the 18th century, such as Nâbî, also encouraged their readers to work, however, the word work or *sa’y* (Arabic: سَعَى) was defined as attaining knowledge such as sciences and literature [Sariyannis 2017: 235].

Before the mid-19th century, and as early as the eighth or ninth centuries, early Muslim moralists appropriated the Aristotelian virtue ethics method to shape the “Islamic” ethics tradition which remained the main approach until the reform period [Hafez 2022: 54]. Ottoman Islamic morality books organized the information

based on the concepts of virtues and vices, and work was never viewed as an obligation or duty for the common folk until the late 19th century [Hafez 2022: 51]. Rather than a duty (*farīda* – فريضة), working for one's livelihood was considered a right (*haqq* – حق) [Hafez 2022: 57]. The reasoning for this was also based in Islam, as Al-Sarakhsi explains that if one does not work and earn their keep, they will not have the circumstances necessary to perform their religious obligations [Hafez 2022: 57].

In contrast, laziness was seen as a deficiency in desire that restricted the person's willingness and ability to perform actions ranging from religious obligations to acts permissible by religion, including but not limited to working for their livelihood [Hafez 2022: 55]. Laziness regarding work and worldly affairs was also understood as a separate notion to laziness that hinders a person from their religious duties. When it comes to worldly affairs, it was sufficient to earn one's livelihood and not strive for more profit, as being too involved in chasing profit can be considered greed, and it furthermore limits the time the person has left for religious matters [Hafez 2022: 58]. Laziness that affects the person's ability to perform their religious duties, on the other hand, was viewed as far more compromising of a person's character and more condemnable, as it costs a person their eternal happiness [Hafez 2022: 57, 58].

Thus, work in a context of performing religious rites and good deeds was seen as more valuable and important than work for profit, creating an alternative understanding of the concept of work as working for one's Hereafter. Ottoman religious manuscripts RXA222S,24 and RXA222S,6 provide some examples where words related to work were used in a context of performing religious actions for benefits in the Hereafter.

Manuscript RXA222S,24 contains several examples of this. A quote from pages 76–77 states “اللهم اجعلنا مشغولين بأمرك” (O Allah, make us preoccupied [busy] with Your cause [with what You ordered]), where “مَشْغُول” (*mašğul*, pl. *mašğulūn* – مشغولون) means “busy” or “occupied”. On the same pages, the text continues to say “مُبْغِضِينَ لِلدُّنْيَا مُحِبِّينَ لِلْآخِرَةِ” (despising *dunya* [life, the material world], loving the Hereafter), emphasizing that actions of a person should be focused on religious reward rather than worldly rewards. On page 81, a prayer includes a part of verse 286 from the Quranic chapter “The Cow” (*al-Baqarah* – البقرة) “لَا يَكْفُلُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ” (The Cow), translated by M. Khattab as “Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford. All good [it earns] will be for its own benefit, and all evil [it acquired] will be to its own loss” [Khattab 2015: 67]. The verbs used in this verse are “كَسَبَ/يَكْسِبُ” (to earn) and “اِكْتَسَبَ/يَكْتَسِبُ” (to earn, gain, or acquire) are associated with work and earning, in this context used for gaining or losing benefits in the Hereafter based on a person's actions. On page 93, the verb “سَعَى/يَسْعَى” (to strive, seek, or work) is used in the sentence “إِيَّاكَ نَسْعَى” (we strive for/to You). Page 94 contains the sentence “اللهم انِّي أسألك فعل الخيرات”

وتترك المنكرات” (O Allah, I ask You to enable me to do good deeds and to refrain from evil deeds), framing actions of a person through the religious ethics of vices and virtues. Finally, on pages 94-95, the text continues to this statement “اسئلك حبك وحب من يحبك وحب عمل يقربني الى حبك” (I ask You for Your love, the love of those who love You, and the love of work [actions] that draw me closer to Your love). The word used here is “عَمَل” which directly translates to “work” and is usually used to mean labour, profession, or action.

Manuscript RXA222S,6 contains less direct use of terms associated with work in the Islamic context, however, page 114 contains a prayer that shows the priorities of a Muslim Ottoman man: “اللهم ارزقنا رزقاً حلالاً طيباً طاهراً وزوجةً سالحةً وولداً مؤمناً” (O Allah, provide us with [grant us] *halal*, good, and pure sustenance, a righteous wife, a believing child, beneficial knowledge, and accepted work”. The word used to refer to work accepted by God is “عَمَل”, similar to the last quote from manuscript RXA222S,24, here used to refer to work, actions, or good deeds. Moreover, this quote asks Allah to provide sustenance using a verb and noun from the root ر-ز-ق (r-z-q). The word *rizq* (رزق) translates to “something granted by someone to someone else as a benefit” and is usually used to mean sustenance, indicating that sustenance is granted by Allah rather than as an outcome of one’s toil [Bosworth and McAuliffe 2012].

Muslim Ottomans believed that it was sufficient to work just enough to make ends meet and spend the rest of one’s time in worship, as God was considered the provider. It was commendable to rely on God to manage one’s worldly affairs, as He is the only one who can provide sustenance. Both Ottoman manuscripts contain frequent mentions of Allah as the provider of riches and sustenance, emphasizing His generosity.

The Ottoman religious prayer book, manuscript RXA222S,24, offers various examples. On page 63, a prayer includes the text “لا اله الا الله خير الرازقين” (There is no God but Allah, the best of providers). On page 83, a prayer states “ترزق من تشاء” (You provide for whomever you will [wish] without measure, O Allah, provide for us without measure). These examples use *rāzīq* (رازق) to mean “provider” and the verb “رَزَقَ/رَزَّقَ” (to provide) to refer to Allah as the provider. At times, the verb can also be used to express that God can provide in a non-material sense as well, for example, the text on page 78: “أرنا الباطل باطلاً” (show us falsehood as falsehood [for what it is] and provide us with the ability to avoid it). In addition to God being the provider of material wealth and righteousness, texts emphasize the generosity of Allah, such as the quote from page 70, “لم يزل ربنا رحيماً ولا يزال كريماً” (our God has always been merciful and is still generous), and another from page 71: “سبحان الله ما أكرم الله” (glory be to Allah, how generous Allah is!).

Ottoman manuscript RXA222S,6 also contains some examples on material *rizq*, as on page 85, where selected *ayat serif* include verse 60 from the Quranic chapter 29 “The Spider” (*al-‘ankabūt* – العنكبوت): “وَكَايْنِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ لَا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اللَّهُ – وهو السميع العليم”. M. Khattab translates this verse as follows: “How many are the creatures that cannot secure their provisions! It is Allah Who provides for them and you as well. He is indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” [M. Khattab 2015: 350]. On page 111, a text states “الحمد لله الذي أطعمنا وسقينا” (praise be to Allah who has fed us and given us drink), and on page 105 a text contains the phrase “بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الْكَافِي” (in the name of Allah, the Sufficient). In a non-material sense, on page 79, the verb “رَزَقَ/يَرْزُقُ” (to provide) is also used to ask Allah to grant or provide forgiveness “ارزقنا عفوا”. These quotes show a strong belief that Allah is the sole provider of material or immaterial gains.

Moreover, both manuscripts refer to Allah’s Most Beautiful Names (*Al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā* – الأسماء الحسنى), which include names describing Allah’s capability to provide and his generous nature. These names of Allah were extracted from the Quran and hadiths by pious Muslims. They may vary in number but are usually ninety-nine, called the Most Beautiful (*al-ḥusnā* – الحسنى), and are not only used to refer to Allah, but also often memorized and repeated with the use of a rosary to gain benefits [K. Fleet, G. Krämer, et. al. 2007: 713]. The names selected from each manuscript are the ones that refer to Allah as a provider of sustenance and riches. In manuscript RXA222S,24, on pages 66-68, the manuscript mentions the following names of Allah: “يَا رَزَّاقُ” (O Provider), “يَا مُنْعِمُ” (O Benefactor, Giver, Granter), “يَا غَنِيَّ” (O Rich One, Wealthy One), “يَا مُغْنِيَّ” (O Enricher), “يَا مُعْطِيَّ” (O Giver), and “يَا نَافِعُ” (O One who Benefits [others]). In manuscript RXA222S,6, on pages 67-68, the following names of Allah are mentioned: “الْوَهَّابُ” (the Bestower), “الرَّزَّاقُ” (the Provider), “المُغْنِيَّ” (the Nourisher), “الكَرِيمُ” (the Generous), “الوَاجِدُ” (the Resourceful), “المُقْتَدِرُ” (the All-Determiner), “ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ” (the Lord of Majesty and Generosity), “الغني” (the Rich), “المغني” (the Enricher), and “النَّافِعُ” (He Who Benefits [others]).

The examples provided above, whether taken from Quranic verses, prayer texts, or the names of Allah, show a strong belief in the nature of Allah as a provider of wealth, sustenance, and the ability to do good deeds. Thus, the sustenance of a believer is provided by Allah, but so is his good moral character. With this context, the Ottoman Muslim would define work as religious worship and good deeds, prioritizing perfecting his moral character through prayer and worship, and gaining benefit in the Hereafter over worldly gains which he trusts God to provide.

Conclusion

In the pre-modern Ottoman Empire before the reforms of the 19th century, the Ottomans lived slow-paced lives. The delay in the introduction of precise mechanical timekeeping in their society did not pose a problem, as they were used to approximate time in reference to the position of the sun and the daily Islamic prayer times. The five obligatory Islamic prayer times were of utmost importance to the routines of the Ottoman Muslims and served as a way to conveniently partition the day and arrange their schedules. In contrast with the West, work for profit was not viewed as an obligation, as that, for the Ottomans, was replaced in importance with working for the Hereafter.

Ottoman Islamic manuscripts from the pre-modern period, RXA222S,24 and RXA222S,6, contained within their texts ample evidence that painted a clear picture of the religious framework that shaped the temporality of the Ottoman Muslim. Regarding the Ottoman understanding of time, the manuscripts pointed to an ingrained belief that all time in this world belongs to God and must be spent in His service, rather than chasing worldly gains. The statements used to set intention for obligatory and non-obligatory prayers found in the manuscript show that aside from the five daily prayers (*farīda*), there are non-obligatory prayers (*sunnā*) that may be performed by some Muslims, which can lengthen the time they spend in worship. Since the prayer times were used to set schedules, the variations in time spent in prayers may have further contributed to the lack of sense of punctuality. The ideal state of being for an Ottoman Muslim is to be in a state of *huzur* (peace of soul) which leads a person to fully resign their worldly affairs to God (*tevekkül*). Quotes extracted from the Quranic and non-Quranic texts in both selected manuscripts evidence a belief that God is the only disposer of all affairs and must be relied on, as he has agency over everything. Thus, wealth and well-being can only come from God, so one has no need to exert excessive effort or place too much importance on working for worldly profit. Since time belongs to God and He must be relied on to manage worldly affairs, the Ottoman Muslim placed importance on spending their time in worship and good deeds based on Islamic ethics. The selected manuscripts contain texts that show that a person must focus on gaining religious rewards earned through their actions. Various words related to work were used in a religious context, rather than work for profit. Moreover, the manuscripts showed various references to God as the sole provider of sustenance, wealth, and ability to do good deeds, emphasizing His ultimate generosity.

In conclusion, the pre-modern Ottoman Muslim's temporality was religion centric. This was displayed by the importance of daily Islamic prayer in daily routines, scheduling, and orientating in time. The ideal state of being for an Ottoman Muslim

was based in a calmness obtained through full reliance on God and letting go of chasing worldly gains. Full reliance on God in this context meant to focus instead on improving one's character in an Islamic understanding, believing that worship and good deeds are primary, while the worldly affairs and sustenance will be managed and provided by God.

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