

French revolutionaries in the Ottoman empire: diplomacy, political culture, and the limiting of universal revolution, 1792-1798

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Abstrak

This book examines the political and cultural impact of the French Revolution on Franco-Ottoman relations, as well as on the French communities of the Ottoman Empire. The French Revolution did not happen in metropolitan France alone; it also had a direct and immediate impact in other places in the world, and in particular in localities with strong ties with mainland France. The major trading cities of the Ottoman Empire were such a case, especially so because they were home to permanent French communities. Our current interpretation of revolutionary ideological expansionism is very much influenced by contemporary propaganda as well as the efforts to export the Revolution into the territories conquered by the revolutionary armies. Against all expectations, however, French revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire exhibited neither a crusading mentality nor a heightened readiness to use force in order to achieve ideological goals. Instead, in matters of diplomacy as well as in the administration of French expatriate communities, revolutionary policies were applied in an extremely circumspect fashion. The focus on the effects of the French regime change outside of France offers valuable new insights into the revolutionary process itself, which revises common assumptions about French revolutionary diplomatic practice. In addition, a close look at the establishment of the new political culture of the French Revolution within the transcultural context of the French expatriate communities of the Ottoman Empire serves as a thought-provoking point of comparison for the emergence and development of French revolutionary political culture.