developed and adjusted in order to fit the broader context. One of the numerous questions that TULLIP might help to answer is concerned with the relationship between lithographic illustration and popular iconography. When considering book production in the Near and Middle East, one has to keep in mind that books do not only contain printed words. In largely illiterate societies such as nineteenth century Iran, the illustrations included in lithographed books might even have conveyed stronger and more lasting impressions than the printed word, similar to the impact exercised by illustrations in other popular media, such as tile-work, stucco-work, glass painting or picture carpets.

Osman Zeki Bey
and
His Printing Office the Matbaa-i Osmaniye

Nedefet Kuran-Buçoğlu
Yeditepe University, Istanbul

Introduction

Osman Zeki Bey was an Ottoman calligrapher who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century in Istanbul. He was the printer who was given the first legal permission to print the Qur’an, by the Palace. This paper which is based on family documents and research done by the great granddaughter of the printer aims to present Osman Zeki Bey’s life story within the socio-cultural context of his time,1 as well as giving information about his printing office the Matbaa-i Osmaniye and its publications. By doing this it also aims to highlight a particular phase of the Ottoman history of printing.

Osman Bey, the Printer

The calligrapher Osman Zeki Bey who got the first legal permission from the Ottoman Palace to print the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam, was the first Chamberlain (Başnambevcı) at the Palace during the reign of Abdulhamid II. His birth date is unknown. His burial date is given on his tombstone as 1888 (1301).

His father, Hakkakzade Mustafa Hilmi Efendi was a well-known calligrapher and his name ‘Hakkakzade’ indicates that Osman Zeki Bey’s grandfather had been a

1 The author of this paper started her research on Osman Bey’s Printing Office and its publications in January 2000. The initial research that had been mainly based on the author’s family documents, focused on Osman Bey’s life and general information about his Printing Office. That part was completed the same year and the following two articles were published: Nedefet Kuran-Bucoğlu, ‘Sarıy’das’ İlki Delfi Kit’ani’ı Veren Karım Başına İmmi Alan Hattar: Matbaa-i Osman Bey’, Tarih ve Toplum Dergisi 35, issue 209 (2001) 312–20, Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık; Nedefet Kuran-Bucoğlu, ‘Matbaa-i Osman Bey’, Journal of Turkish Studies: Essays in Honour of Barbara Farnum Ed. by Şinasi and Göziş Tekin; guest editor: Jan Schmidt, 26/I (2002), 97–112, Harvard University: NELC. The second article covers some additional information about family members that is reflected in the family tree.
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well-known engraver. Mustafa Hilmi Efendi had received calligraphy lessons from Hattat Ömer Vaskı Efendi, great master of nasıh and stilis who was known as ‘Lâz Ömer’, and had married the daughter of Ibrahim Süküt Efendi, who had also been a famous calligrapher and at the same time the guard of the Palace of Esma Sultan. Starting from 1819 on, Mustafa Hilmi had taught calligraphy in the schools that had been founded by Nakşudil Valide Sultan, the mother of Sultan Mahmud II, and by Bezmiâlem Valide Sultan, the mother of Abdülmecid, in Fatih and Çemberlitaş, respectively. His son Osman Zeki was among the pupils whom he had trained as calligraphers. Mustafa Hilmi Efendi must have been a prolific person who had written three copies of Mustafî Şerif (‘glorious Qur’an’) upon the order of Sultan Mahmud II, and received his compliments for the excellent job he had done. His famous work is called Mîzâni‘î hattâlâ va‘zîl-istâdâ-i seîlî (‘Measurement of Calligraphy and Styles of Preceding Masters’), which was written in the first half of the nineteenth century (see Figures 2 to 6). Furthermore, Mustafa Hilmi Efendi produced innumerable calligraphies for mosques, inns, soup-kitchens and schools, as well as wrote the inscription on the tombstone of his father in law Ibrahim Süküt Efendi, who had died in 1834 (1250 H), and was buried in Edirnekapı. Mustafa Hilmi Efendi himself died in 1852, and was buried in Ayaspaşa Cemetery near Taksim.

Not much is known about the life story of Mustafa Hilmi Efendi’s son Osman Zeki Bey. However, the cited information above indicates that he was born into a family of calligraphers and engravers. Elder family members claim that he originated from Safranbolu, an old Ottoman settlement near Zonguldak. He died in Istanbul in 1888 (1301) and was buried in the Sultan Mahmud II Cemetery, in Çemberlitaş (Figure 7). Historian Johann Strauss indicates in his article, ‘Le livre français d’Istanbul (1730–1908)’ that Osman Zeki had grown up in the vicinity of the Palace during the rule of Abdülmecid (1839–61), and that he had been the closest friend of the Sultan.  

This could explain his important position as the first Chamberlain at the Palace, during Abdüllaham II’s rule (1876–1909), as well as his authorization by the Sultan to set up the Matbaa-i Osmanîye (Typographie et lithographie Osmanîe) and print the Qur’ân, the holy book of Islam. To receive this permission from a Sultan like Abdüllaham II, who was known to be a person who did not trust his men, must have been quite an honourable privilege for Osman Zeki. Having been his old friend he must have gained the Sultan’s confidence and was given this important mission. Another explanation for Abdüllaham’s patronage could have been to keep the whole activity of the press under the control of the Palace. The categories of the books that had been chosen for publication in the Matbaa-i Osmanîye seem to justify this hypothesis. Osman Zeki Bey’s respectful position within the Palace team was also reflected in his title. He was designated as ‘Serkerenâ-i Hazret-i Şehriyâ Osman Zeki Bey’, meaning, ‘Chief Chamberlain Osman Zeki Bey, affiliated to the Sultan.’

With the legal permission to print the holy book of Islam, that had been denied to others before him since the foundation of the printing office in the Ottoman Empire by Ibrahim Müteferrika and Said Bey, in 1727, Osman Zeki Bey must have evoked anger and hatred amongst the scribes and calligraphers of his time, as a great number of them would lose their jobs. The printed Qur’âns were cheap and easier to obtain than the handwritten ones. In a short time it was printed in large numbers and sold not only in the Ottoman Empire, but also in neighbouring Muslim countries. Thus the Matbaa-i Osmanîye fulfilled an important mission, it contributed to the spread of Islam, the third monotheistic religion after Judaism and Christianity, among a large number of people, and it also brought a large revenue to its owner. As he was a well trained calligrapher himself, Osman Zeki Bey showed great care in keeping to the

2 İbnülhüsn Mahmud Kenal İnal, Sco Hattatlar (Istanbul 1955), 213.  
3 Ibid., 213; also in Şevket Rado, Türk Hattatlar (Istanbul), 208; and in Abdüllâhî Karîf Dedeoğlu (ed.), Introduzione’, Mîzâni‘î hattî (Istanbul 1986).  
4 The first part of this book was reprinted by Abdüllâhî Karîf Dedeoğlu with the following title: Mîzâni‘î hattî, in 1986, in Istanbul.  

7 See part 2, paragraph 1.  
8 Johann Gutenberg’s discovery, the printing press had been brought to Istanbul in 1492 by the Jews who had escaped from Spain and found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. In 1567, seventy-five years later the Armenians founded a printing office in Istanbul, which was followed by the press set up by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Fanoia, in 1627. The first Ottoman printing office was founded by Ibrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian convert, and Said Efendi, in Müteferrika’s house in Yarımzel, in 1722. (Kat 1994: 308, in Kuran-Buçoğlu, ‘Matbaa-i Osmanî Bey’, 99). As the opposition of the calligraphers and scribes was quite powerful, these two initiators had to use a clever strategy, in order to overcome this obstacle. Thus they first got the firmán (decrees) of the Sultan Ahmed III, the şâhâ (formal declaration) of the Şâh-ül-Islâm Yeniçehirî Abdüllah Efendi, and the consent of the Grand Vizier Damat Ibrahim Pasha, and through these they could secure the success of their initiative (Franz Fihlänger, Stammler Buchwesen im 18. Jahrhundert (Leipzig 1919) However, their permission was limited to secular books, the permission to print the Qur’an, the Hadith, and other sacred texts was denied to them.
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aesthetic values of the holy book. Hence after a meticulous analysis, Hāfiz Osman’s handwritten version of the Qur’ān was selected as the best model to be printed, and lithography was found the most appropriate technique to be used in printing it (Figure 8).9

Osman Zeki Bey had a large family. His wife Fatma Zehra Hanım bore him three sons and three daughters. His daughters Sabiha, Nadiye and Fetiye got married to well-known Generals of the Empire. One of his sons, Ömer Vasić10 became the Director of the Foreign Correspondence at the Palace, and his eldest and youngest sons Cevat and Saim worked in the Mathba-i Osmâniye. As a man of vision Osman Bey had bought a large site in Istanbul in 1870s, in a newly developing area of the city, which still bears his name. This area is nowadays at the crossroads of Halâskârgazi and Rumeli Streets between Şişli and Harbiye. The whole family of Osman Bey lived in that area in the mansions he had built for himself and for his children until this place was transformed from a residential to a commercial area. Some buildings there still belong to his family members.

Mathba-i Osmâniye

There are different opinions about the foundation date of the Mathba-i Osmâniye. As it will appear below, a Greek journalist who visited it in 1888, gives this date as 1878. Johann Strauss gives it as 1868 (1285).11 However in the list of the printed books of the Mathba-i Osmâniye in the National Library in Ankara there are three books listed that had been printed prior to this date. According to this list, the earliest publications of this office was Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi’s Sefaretname-i Mehmet Efendi, which was printed in 1866 (1283), and the two others that followed were Seyyid Vahid Paşa’s Sefaretname-i Fransa, and Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi’s Serefitname-i Fransa, both printed in 1867 (1283).12 This indicates that the Mathba-i Osmâniye was already active in 1866.

9 This miniature Qurʾān is in a item in Kuran-Baroğlu’s family collection.
10 Ömer Vasić, who had been the great-grandfather of the author of this paper, died at an early age, in 1895. He is buried with his two brothers, Cevat and Saim, one sister, Nadiye and his parents, Osman Zeki Bey and Fatma Zehra Hanım in the cemetery of Sultan Mahmud II, in Çemberlitas.
12 They are ordered under the following numbers: 723, 722, 768.

For this printing press in Çemberlitas Osman Bey had procured equipment, and even foremen and typographers from Germany. According to a contemporary observer it was ‘sans contredit, la plus belle et la mieux ouïtée de tout le ville.’13 In his above mentioned article Strauss states that most of the printing offices — Imprimeries & lithographies — had that been printing semi-official books during the reign of Abdüllaziz (1861–76), had closed down towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Mathba-i Âmire, the imperial printing office, which had also been going to shut down in 1902, had not printed books in western languages.14 These facts had obviously motivated the newly founded the Mathba-i Osmâniye to fill this gap, and print along with the holy book Qurʾān also official publications, as well as books in eastern and western languages. Thus in a short time it became an unrivalled press that printed public documents, border protocols, international agreements, directories, educational books, dictionaries, as well as great literary works, such as the works of well-known Islamic and Ottoman personalities as Gazzâlî, Namık Kemal, Halîd Ziya Uşâklîgil and Cevdet Paşa.

A detailed description of the Mathba-i Osmâniye was given by a Greek journalist, who visited it in 1888. In his essay that he published under his column, in the daily newspaper Epistevrisyjî, on April 8, 1888 in Athens, the journalist compares it with the printing offices in Athens that he had thought were the best printing offices of their time before he visited Osman Bey’s press. In this essay in which the columnist designates the Mathba-i Osmâniye as the ‘best printing office in the Orient’, he describes the space of the office as well as the equipment of the press.15

The site plan of the press justifies the Greek journalist’s description. (See Figure 9).16 The journalist states that the printing office had been founded in 1878, and moved to that two-storied rectangular building in Çemberlitas in 1884. The name of the press that hung on the building was written in three languages, in French, German and Turkish. In the building there were halls and rooms in different sizes. The large hall in the middle contained 18 presses that were run by steam engines. Nine of these were used for lithographies, and the rest for typographies. Next to these 18 presses,
there was a manually operated press and five paper-cutters. In the opposite room there were cameras and equipment for film-development. The next room was used for letter casting. In the third room books were bound.

The columnist furthermore claims in his essay that the Matbaa-i Osmanîye had along with the equipment that was necessary for lithography, typography, all the necessary equipment for stereotypography, photography, halography, xylography and galvanoplasty. However, the main function of the press was to print the huge number of Ottoman books.

Apart from the technical information the Greek columnist also gives in-house details of the life in the press. The workers in the press earned 6 to 30 piasters a day according to their qualification and performance. Another interesting detail is about the lunch that was served in the dining hall of the press for the personnel. The menu, which was prepared by the owner of the press himself, was typed in gold letters in two languages, in French and Turkish, on a cardboard and hung at the door of the hall. This is an indication that the staff of the press was taken good care of by their boss, Osman Bey, and later by his two sons, Cевat Bey and Saim Bey who took over the press.

In his visit to the press, the Greek journalist found the opportunity to watch the printing of the Qur'ân in 6,000 issues and was impressed by the efficiency and precision the Ottomans had gained in this printing business. For him this should also be seen as a sign of the importance given to furthering science and education, and efforts to propagate them in the Empire, as well as a sincere effort to develop and improve the state. Abdülhamid II must have played a significant role in this endeavour. Johann Strauss, in his article entitled, 'Zum Istanbuler Buchwesen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts'17 confirms this and states that the activity of the printing presses, that had started to increase during the reign of Abdülaziz (1861–76) continued to increase during Abdülhamid II's reign (1876–1909), and that this Sultan had collected books for the library of his Palace, and that he had books translated from European languages which he had found interesting.

A final point the Greek journalist makes in his essay is about how he was impressed by the modesty of the people he had observed in this press.

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According to the documentation of the Turkish National Library the Matbaa-i Osmanîye seems to have flourished after 1881 and was very active until 1927. Osman Bey's oldest son Cевat Bey seems to have run it quite successfully and had made this unique printing office of the holy book an unrivalled institution for official publications. After Cevat Bey's death in 1911 his younger brother Saim Bey took over the press. In 1920s it was sold to Darüşşafaka, a well-known Turkish charity organization. In 1928 it was closed down and its building demolished.

Publications of the Matbaa-i Osmanîye

It is interesting to note that the first secular publication of the Matbaa-i Osmanîye that appeared in 1866 was Yirmisezkiz Mehmet Çelebi's book Sefername-i Mehmet Efendi. Yirmisezkiz Mehmet Çelebi was namely the father of Said Efendi, who was one of the two founders of the first Ottoman Printing Office in 1727. Said Efendi got this inspiration in his stay in Paris with his father Yirmisezkiz Mehmet Çelebi, who was an important Ambassador of the Ottoman Empire. His famous book had been translated into French, under the name Relation de l' Ambassade de Mehemet Efendi à la cour de France en 1721, and was published in Paris in 1757. This first publication in Turkish was realized by the Matbaa-i Osmanîye. This choice should be taken as an indication of Osman Zeki Bey's commitment to printing.

As was mentioned above, the Matbaa-i Osmanîye became known at first for its Qur'ân publications. However, soon it started to publish secular books and with the growing demand official documents and educational books. It also printed books in eastern and western languages. The list of its publications, prepared by the Turkish National Library details 996 items within a time span of 62 years, that is from 1866 to 1928 (page 52).18 This distribution shows that the printing office was very active between the years 1881 and 1906, after that there was a stagnation in 1907, a year before the Second Constitution, and then again it became very busy until 1927, a year before it closed down (Figure 10). This also shows that the printing office continued its mission not only during the last 57 years of the Ottoman Empire but also during the first 5 years of the Turkish Republic.

18 Qur'ân publications are not included in this list.
A rough categorization of the printed books and documents in the *Matbaa-i Osmaniye* shows that almost half of them (420 items) were official publications related to state affairs (pages 53–4), then come scientific and technical texts (115), followed by educational publications (100), texts related to rhetoric, language and literature (90), religious texts (85), histories (55), military publications (25), medical publications (20), dictionaries (10), calligraphy (5). That the majority of the books that were printed by the *Matbaa-i Osmaniye* were state documents indicates how close this printing office had been to the Palace. The large number of technical and educational books indicates how much importance was given to education in those years that mark a change in the Ottoman culture towards western norms.

The quality of the printed books of the *Matbaa-i Osmaniye* was quite high, as the cover page of *Musavver Tarihi Hayvanat* exemplifies (Figure 11). The title page of this book (Figure 12) which was written by Mehmed Emin and published in the *Matbaa-i Osmaniye* by Serkureş-i Hazret-i Şehriyâri Osman Zeki Bey, in 1310 (1893) gives an important note about the copyright of the printing office which shows that it was a thoroughly professional institution (of the nineteenth century!) and was protecting its rights.

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19 It is important to note here, that research concerning this last part of the paper is still in progress, and the works have not been examined properly by the author yet.

20 The titles of 40 items in the list are ambiguous and therefore could not be classified. Further research will reveal their proper place within this categorization.

21 *Musavver Tarihi Hayvanat* is in Kur'an-ı Burçoğlu’s family collection.
Figure 2. The ideal proportions of Arabic letters drawn by the calligrapher Mustafa Hilmi.
Matbaacı Osman Bey’in Kitabesi:

Hurre‘l-Hallaku’t-l-baki
Ser kureni-yi hazret-i sehiriyari
Iken iştihal-i dar-i beka iden
Merhum ve magfur’l-multac
Ila rahmet-i Rabbuha’t-l-gafur
Ulum-i aliyyeden me’mun
ve mesahir-i hattatin el-Hac
Hafiz Osman Zeki Beg’in
Kabirleri rahi-i serfine Fatihə

1301

Figure 6.

Figure 7. Osman Zeki Bey’s tomb stone and the inscription on it.

22 Asılar Hoyumca Istanbul Ansiklopedisi‘nde yayımlanan Sultan Mahmud Turbesi Hâkemindedeki Kabirlerin Listesi redelikleri (s. 223) (bkz. belge 3) ile mezar taslari üzerindeki tarihler birbirini tutmamıştır, yazinin ekle kıstının ber iki kaynaktaki tarihler birbirine yorumlananın, adi gegen ansiklopedilediği tarihleri aynı makul bunların yanına (A.L.A.H.) harfleri eklenmiştir.

TUBA 26/11, 2002: 97-112
Figure 8. The signature page of one of these Qur'ans issued printed in Matbası Osmaniye, in 1301 (1888) which is a miniature. It measures 2.5 cm in width, 3.5 cm in length and 1.5 cm in thickness. It is bound and has a tortoise shell cover. A small magnifying glass is attached to it with an ivory chain.

Figure 9. The site-plan of Matbası Osmaniye.
### MATBAACI OSMAN BEY TABLE I

**Distribution of Printed Books According to Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1862</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1926</td>
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</table>

As the dates of publication of 51 works are not listed in the National Library's list, this table covers 945 items.

### MATBAACI OSMAN BEY TABLE II

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<thead>
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<th>Official Prints / State Publications (approx. 420)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Normative and Prescriptive Texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Directions and Explanatory Texts (Tarifnames)</td>
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<td>ii. Regulations, Codes and Statutes (Nizamname ve Düzenlemeler)</td>
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<td>iii. State Orders and Instructions (Talimatnameler)</td>
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<td>iv. Decrees (Kararanameler)</td>
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<td>v. Laws and Annotations (Kanunlar ve Kanun Şerhleri)</td>
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<td>vi. Contracts (Mukavelemeler)</td>
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<td>vii. Declarations (İheyannameler)</td>
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<td>viii. Stipulations (Sartnameler)</td>
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<td>ix. Laws and Decrees of Foreign Countries</td>
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<td>ii. Border Protocols with Neighbouring Countries</td>
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<td>3. Evaluation of Current Political and Economic Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Commentaries and Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Statistics, State Records, Budgets of State Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Official Correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Yearbooks and Almanacs</td>
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<td>9. Directories, Lists and Tables</td>
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<td>11. Calendars</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scientific and Technical Publications (approx. 115)</th>
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<tr>
<td>III Educational Publications (approx. 100)</td>
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<td>2. Practical Education</td>
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<td>2. Narratives i. Literary  ii. Social</td>
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<td>3. Novels</td>
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<td>6. Travel accounts</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Translated Literature</td>
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<tr>
<th>Religion, Ethics, Morality, Conduct, Sufism (approx. 85)</th>
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<td>VII Law (approx. 30)</td>
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<td>VIII Military Publications (approx. 25)</td>
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<td>IX Medicine (approx. 20)</td>
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<td>X Dictionaries (approx. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI Calligraphy (approx. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified (approx. 40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Osman Zeki Bey
II Educational Publications

1. School Textbooks
   i. Language and Literature (see paragraph III below)
   ii. Geography
   iii. History
   iv. Mathematics (Geometry, Algebra)
   v. Biology

2. Practical Education
   i. Agriculture
   ii. Zoology
   iii. Housekeeping
   iv. Leisure
   v. Industry
   vi. Calligraphy

III Language and Literature

1. Literature
   i. Rhetoric and Style
   ii. Poetry
   iii. Drama
   iv. Novel
   v. Narratives, Essays
   vi. Travel Accounts
   vii. Biography
       i. Historical Personalities
       ii. Lives of Saints (Menakopnameler)
   viii. Translations

2. Language
   i. ABC’s
   ii. Turkish
   iii. Foreign
   ii. Grammar
   iii. Turkish
   ii. Ottoman
   iii. Persian
   iv. French
   v. German
   iii. Reading Skills
   iv. Foreign Language Ed.

IV Dictionaries

V Scientific and Technical Publications

i. History
   ii. Geography
   iii. Topography
   iv. Meteorology
   v. Cosmography
   vi. Chemistry
   vii. Engineering
   viii. Accounting
   ix. Law
   x. Medicine
   xi. Veterinary

VI Religion, Ethics and Sufism

VII Military Publications

Figure 10. Chart of Table 1.
Figure 11. Cover page of MSavver Tarif-i Hayvanat.

Figure 12. Title page of MSavver Tarif-i Hayvanat.