

## A STUDY ON THE ACTIVITIES OF MECENAT IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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### ABSTRACT

*Mecenat which means safeguarding and support of artists and scientists without waiting for a return, was carried out by rulers and noble families starting from the period of the Roman Empire. In the Early Renaissance or Middle Ages, art has been an integral part of culture in the entirety of social values. At that time, it is possible to say a lot of things about societies by looking at art and cultural values. The importance of art in a society and its place in society, helps to explain the concept of order in society with cultural norms and traditions. From the most simple jewelry, to the most magnificent works of art, both in the palace, and outside, Ottoman Empire has been trying to equip the world with the aesthetic qualities. Ottoman sultans became protectors of culture and art, a lot of artists were brought up during that period and works of art emerged. The palace was not only the residence of sultan and his family, during the Ottoman Empire, but also it has been a university and an art academy. In this study, it was tried to reveal by the method of literature review, during the period Ottoman Empire, which dominated civilization for 700 years, the mecenat activities of the rulers for artists and scientists who were pioneers in this regard.*

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Mecenat

### INTRODUCTION

Mecenat activities that protect and assist the development of art and science, is the basis of sponsorship. In ancient times, the works that satisfy the beauty and luxury affection of administrators and nobles were made. Those who have made these works were also protected. In ancient times, especially the Greek statesman Pericles, was well known for his support on the arts. However, during this period, the artist and mecen did not established very close relations with each other, the artist was considered only a skilled person "who was commissioned the work". Mecenat, could not go beyond being the indicator of wealth and luxury. In this era, the Macedonian king Alexander the Great, accommodated many poets, thinkers and artists in his palaces. If we look at ancient Rome, possessing the objects having artistic value have been a cultural indicator. However, during this period, poets and writers were preserved, painters and sculptors, could not go beyond being the masters who were "commissioned the work" as in Greek Civilization. In medieval times, art patronage, came under the influence of religion, and generally applied by the monasteries. During this period, these persons who ordered the picture, whether they were clergyman or respectable people, were pictured as the "donor" or "founder" in the picture. They were included in most of the pictures, quite smaller than the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus. Later on, especially with the Renaissance, they began to hold an important place in the picture as the holy people ([http://www.sanatteorisi.com/Makaleler.asp? Sayfa=Oku &id=330](http://www.sanatteorisi.com/Makaleler.asp?Sayfa=Oku&id=330) .E.T.02.10.2012).

The word of mecen that stems from the name of Gaius Clinius Maecenas who was the friend and adviser and gained the confidence of Roman Emperor, Augustus and caused him to adopt the idea of protection the artist was used for the people who protected art, artist, and science (Soyer, 2003, p.23;

Çamdereli, 2000, p.117). Protective in other words mecen , finds talented persons in the community and support them financially, and provides recognition by the community, in doing so does not wait any response from the supported person, however fame of mecen increases (Okay, 1998, p.36). Development of the mecenat in Ottoman Empire, is different than the West . While palaces, principalities and rich people become mecen in Western countries, in the period of the Ottoman Empire, the state is seen as a patron of the arts. During the Ottoman period, the sultans assumed the protection of the cultural and artistic field and have benefited from their services by taking the people talented in this area to their palaces (Okay, 2005, p.31). In this study, the Ottoman rulers who took care the arts, culture, science and supported and protected scientists and artists were tried to be revealed by the method of literature review.

### **Purpose of the Research**

For centuries, art patronage, was carried out by rulers and noble families without any expectations other than their fame. The people who protected art and artists were called mecen. When we look at the first examples of mecenat, we see that mecen finds the gifted ones, supports them financially and provided recognition of these individuals by the society, and fame of the mecen increases correspondingly and recognized by the society. We might think that mecenat is sometimes of a secret demonstration of power and concern of respect.

The applications of the mecenat in its historical development that started with the patronage of art is seen in the ottoman state . Ottoman sultans were protectors of culture and art. Divan literature has developed under the auspices of the Ottoman sultans. Sultans took the persons who were capable in the field of culture and arts in their palaces and have benefited from their services. These persons who have been called peculiar or virtue carried out a variety of services at. These persons who have been engaged in craft and art both inside and outside of the palace were supported and preserved by the sultans. Ottoman sultans supported and preserved artists, scientists by keeping them under their aegis. Behind of every architectural work, a work of music, pictures or other works of art, lies protectionism of the art and science and the people engaged in this work by the sultans. At the time, the palaces were not only the resident of sultans and their families , but also was transformed into a university, an art of academy . The purpose of this study, is to evaluate the activities of mecenat in the Ottoman Empire that have been made distinctly from the west.

It is possible to reach the following conclusions in accordance with these assessments :

- Development of the mecenat in Ottoman Empire, is different than the West .
- Mecenat in individual sense did not developed in the Ottoman Empire, since a bourgeois class did not emerge.
- In western countries, palaces, principalities and rich people were mecen, while in the period of Ottoman Empire it was seen that the state only was the protector of art .
- Sultans during the Ottoman period, were in charge of protection of talented people on culture, science, and art branches .
- Behind every architectural work, a work of music, picture, or other work of art, lies protectionism of the sultans for art, science, and the people engaged in this work .
- In the period of the Ottomans, palaces were not the residence of sultans and their families only, but also they turned into a university and an art academy .

### **METHOD**

In this study, a literature survey was made on mecenat activities of the Ottoman Empire, from the sources obtained. The data obtained were evaluated.

### Differences Between Mecenat and Sponsorship

Mecenat is the protectionism of art made without any aim. Although the origin of sponsorship today is based on this concept, it has reached a completely different structure. The reason for using the term of mecenat today, especially in terms of promoting artistic activities, is due to support of Maecenas for the artists. However, the concept of sponsorship covers the field of art, and sport area, as well as activities in the social sector. Mecen supports without waiting for a concrete response from the person or organization supported. He does this support even his or organization's name is not referred or a link is not created to the supported activity or person. Sponsorship is a concept based on the mutual benefits, having commercial purposes underlying.

There are tangible or intangible returns expected in sponsorship. The point to be looked, to determine whether the activity is sponsorship or donation is for which goals and objectives is the activity is made. Sponsorship can be made by enterprises for a wide variety of goals. On its basis lies mutual benefits. Helps made without expecting anything and promotional benefits are referred to as donation (Tengilmoğlu, Öztürk, 2004, p.199). If the organization obtains a benefit and promotion as a result of his assistance, it can be said that the activity is sponsorship. The sponsorship that development, especially in the United Kingdom and United States of America turned into a processing debt imposing on both sides with the effect of changing advertising methods on radio and television broadcasting (İmamoğlu, 2003, p.38).

Mecens, support persons or organizations without waiting for any response. Mecens, do support, even his or organization's name is not referred in the incident supported. Expenditures made by mecenat cannot be financially identified, due to its nature. Because many of the support cannot be known by the public (Okay, 2005, p.21). Sponsors wait for response from those who are sponsored for their support. All supports of the sponsorship, aim for contribution to the marketing and communications activities established by sponsor. Mentioning of the event performed with the name of the sponsor, ensures brand awareness on one hand, allows the transmission of images on the other hand, advertising of sponsor is made, and due to contribution to the operation, its reputation on public opinion increased at the same time.

### The Historical Development of Mecenat

Gaius Clinus Maecenas who was the advisor and close friend of the Roman emperor Augustus, supported talented artists and the famous Latin poet Horatius, Propertius and Vergil has provided them engaged with literary works only. They had an enormous contribution for gaining valuable and important works of art to the society and the world.

Before the Middle Ages, protection of the art has been one of the main functions of the state director and noble people. The people who made claims about the reigning, patronized art and artists that icons and indicators of it. Art was reserved as one of the most prominent privilege of the caste system. In the Maecenas period, not just artists, but fighters and skilled gladiators were also supported by wealthy individuals (Okay, 2005, p.27).

For centuries, art patronage have been achieved by rulers, princes and noble families without an expectation other than fame. The activities of art protection and charity was given the name of Maecenas, charitable people were called mecen. After the invention of the printing press in 1450's and replacement of aristocracy by bourgeoisie patronage of art was not in the monopoly of the noble people and started to be made by the wealthy people also. Besides literary arts, such as poetry, fine arts that were previously despised were started to be supported as well.

Continuity of mecenat was provided largely by Italian Medici family during the Renaissance. Medicis were dealing with banking, they were not happy enough for their gains obtained by usury which was prohibition by the church and they spent a significant amount of their income for charity works. The artists in period of Medicis had to comply with the wishes of mecens and the works were determined in accordance with the wishes of the Medici family (Okay, 1998, p.38). Medici family has supported artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello, and Botticelli. In addition to Medicis, Este Sforza and Visconti families contributed in the ideas of the artists whom they have supported (Okay, 2005, p.27; Thiel, 1989, p.15). Art patronage started to be made in other European countries other than Italy. The prince of Schack from Munich , Adolf Friedrich, supported the painter Feuerbach and Böcklin , duke of Weimar the supported Goethe, a part of the mecens made support by buying the art products or by the direct financial help (Thiel: 1989, p.18; Okay, 2005, p.30).

The concept of mecenat has gained different dimensions with the growing world. Especially in beginning the poets were under protection , other fields of art and scientific doctrines began to be supported as well. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, organizations have launched mecenat operations. (Imamoglu, 2003, p.38). The idea of social responsibility awareness, increase public fame, gaining prestige and tax advantages has been effective in these activities . Due to depressions in the economy, budget constraints and changes in the roles assumed by the state, advances in science and technology, mecenat began to be carried out by foundations . Foundations supported the fields and activities determined in accordance with the objectives of their organization, to carry out the objectives set themselves. Jürgen Ponto Foundation, which was established by Dresdner Bank in Germany, is capable of supporting individuals or groups on music, literature, fine arts and architecture, provided scholarships for capable young people to sustain education with teachers by taking into account and with the purpose to affiliate them to each other by appropriate support programs to create music, play theater, to enrich their lives with literature and the fine arts. This sample could be included in mecenat, because that activity is not used communicative in any place another than business newsletter in the foundation's establishment of Jürgen Ponto Foundation, nor Dresdner Bank . In various countries of the world there are many more foundations such as Jürgen Ponto Foundation, which was established for the purpose of mecenat (Okay, 1998, p.40). Oldest charitable foundation of education and culture in USA was established in 1867, and adopted the name of the founder George Peabody. Smithsonian foundation is also one of the oldest and largest foundations. Andrew Carnegie Foundation and John Rockefeller Foundation are marked with their support to scientific research, medical research and education activities respectively. John Simon Guggenheim Foundation was established in order to support artists of all the countries, Julliard Foundation that was founded by August Julliard , supports musician on all of the countries (And/Şenlik/Çanak, 1981, p.115). There are many foundations on many parts of the world as this foundation that was established for the purpose of mecenat. foundations such as Sumitoma , Asahi Beer, Toyota, Fuji Xerox, based in Japan are among them. Nelson Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Paul Getty, Walter Chrysler are among those that are the most famous ones playing an important role in the cultural activities of the world in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mecenat activities of their families are carried out by the foundations established over time. Nowadays, foundations, partly served as mecens and continue to provide support for art, science and education. Foundations such as Contemporary Life Support Association, Nejat Eczacıbaşı Foundation, Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation, the Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey, Kadir Has Foundation, support the arts, education and science in Turkey

### **Mecenat in Ottomans**

Mecenat that has a Western origin, formed in different ways in the East. Although mecenat examples by the government could be seen in the Ottoman period , mecenat on individual basis did not appear,

since a bourgeois class did not develop. Art patronage has been undertaken by the palace, through the art lover rulers. As the palaces of Western countries, principalities, noble and rich people were mecen, while in the Ottomans, state was seen as the sole protector of the art. Works of art such as miniature, ornamentation and others are made in workshops of the palace, artists in these workshops worked under rulers. These workshops that are called "Muralist house" began to form at time of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror. Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, invited, the Italian artist Matteo de'Pasti from the city of Verona in Italy, and again Italian Costanzio da Ferrarain and Venetian painter Gentile Bellini who came from an artist's family to Istanbul after the conquest of Istanbul. During the Ottoman period, the sultans assumed the protection of culture and art, and supported skilled persons in this area by taking them in palaces.

The start of the first madrasa education at Hagia Sophia immediately after the conquest of Istanbul indicates the importance given by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror to science and education (Ünver, 1964, p.18). Students were placed in chambers of the priest next to Hagia Sophia, the positive sciences, as well as Islamic sciences started to be taught. 1500 noble Greek young men chosen in the vicinity of Trabzon were placed in school of the palace. The Greek scholars who returned to Istanbul after the conquest of Istanbul engaged in the service of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror (Sakaoğlu, 1999, p.108). Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror initiated the tradition of portraiture by having the Portrait of Sultan made by artists brought from Italy. This tradition continued until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The tradition of portraits of sultans in Islamic art, is a tradition seen in the Indo-Mongolian dynasty outside of the Ottomans (İrepoğlu, 1999, p.72). Every branch of the arts had the chance to develop under the auspices of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. Scholars, poets, artisans were provided endless possibilities, while rewarding them for their achievements, did not conceal material and moral support, in no time. Master decorators and calligraphers were brought in the workshop established at palace from Anatolia, and Edirne. The most brilliant and productive Fine Arts, Academy of the century, has been established in the Palace. The value paid to architectural art, is understood from adornment of conquered territories by hundreds of architectural monuments. He preserved Christian monuments in the cities included under his rule, particular Hagia Sophia even from his own soldiers. Decorations of palace with pictures, is seen as an encouragement being a Muslim ruler (Bektaşoğlu, 2008, pp.51-52).

Ottoman sultans, particularly Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, supported the scientific studies and many scientists in the 15th century. With the strengthening of the state of Ottoman, the task of protecting the art and artists has been undertaken by high-ranking officials, such as grand viziers, princes, viziers, lady sultans, state governors, provincial treasurer and the palace landlords together with sultans. Due to beginning of the westernization movement in 18. century in Ottoman palace, recognizing the western style of painting and interest of Europe to the east and in different cultures, contributed to coming of many artists the Ottoman Empire in the time of III. Ahmet. The most famous of these artists, most of whom have been accepted by the palace and stayed longest in Istanbul was Jean-Baptiste Van Mour.

During the Ottoman period, the sultans assumed the protection of the cultural and artistic field and accepted the talented people in this area in the palace and benefited from their services. These people who were referred as "Peculiar" or "Virtue" did a variety of services at the palaces of the sultan. When the artists, scientists, craftsmen outside of the palace were needed their services were used by giving them financial support (Okay, 2005, p.31). It was seen that Divan Literature works developed under the auspices of the Ottoman palace in the period of the Ottoman Empire, some writers and journalists were preserved by the sultans during the Reforms and the Constitutional Monarchy. During the

period Ottoman Empire and the Republic, foundations that support many activities of culture and art for the benefit of society were established and still continue their activities (Okay, 2005, p.32).



**Figure 1. Ottoman Miniature Artist**

([http://d.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?Title=Datei.Ottoman\\_miniature\\_painters.&filetimestamp=20071001210900](http://d.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?Title=Datei.Ottoman_miniature_painters.&filetimestamp=20071001210900)  
E.T.27.09.2012)

The Ottoman sultans, viziers have become aware of the importance of cultural wealth, interested in art closely. The palace management, established the community of artists under the name of ehl-i huref in the palace organization . This group which did all kinds of art and crafts work of the palace and took salary from the palace, had a quite crowded staff during the bright period of the empire. When we talk about art in Ottoman, first miniature art comes to the mind. This art form began to develop during I. Selim period (1512-1520) . When I. Selim took Tabriz from Safavids in 1514, muralist house in Tabriz was full of famous artists of the Islamic world. I. Selim, brought the heads of these artists to Istanbul, provided their training in the palace. Besides Ottoman muralists selected from Istanbul shopkeepers, muralists from Horasan, Tabriz joined to the muralist house in Istanbul . Thus, a combination of muralist having different styles, a unique style of the Ottoman Empire created. These years were also the years Ottoman Empire has been enriched and gained power in the world. Studies in the muralist house of the Ottoman palace gained intensity during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the protection and supervision of the palace administration, the miniature art culminated during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century especially in the period of III. Murat.



**Figure 2. Musicians from Aleppo (18<sup>th</sup> century)**

(<http://d.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?Title=Datei.:Aleppomusic.Jpg&filetimestamp=20090624114923>.E.T.27.09.2012)

Gifted culture and art connoisseurs have been taken by the Sultans to the palaces without waiting for any return (Tengilimoğlu, Öztürk, 2004, p.200). Yavuz Sultan Selim and Sultan Süleyman the

Magnificent the number of artists in the palace workshops have also increased . Especially the divan literature developed under the auspices of the Ottoman sultans (Okay, 1998, p.31). The great architect of the most brilliant era of the Ottoman Empire and a worldwide artists Architect Sinan , gave a lot of works in the period of I. Suleyman. Wrestling which is one of our traditional spors, made progress especially with the support of Sultan Abdulaziz. Abdulaziz took the athletes under his auspices, has allocated apartments at the Summer Palace and Ortakoy Mecidiye Gate for athletes . Wrestlers who sheltered in these places, fed with a special food here took part in the service of Sultan at the same time (Hiçyılmaz, 1995, p.20). As in the Western countries, during the Ottoman Empire , the foundations were situated to raise economic life levels and meet the needs of talented people on this issue such as health, education and culture and supported by the rulers.

Sultan Abdulaziz Artist who was an artist himself, protected poets and scientists. Although Sultan Abdulaziz was a composer and played each instrument, he loved to play the ney, since he attained to Mevlevi conversations in his youth (İnal, 1958, pp.18-23) protected art and artists due to his relationship with the environment of art . During the first few years of throne of Sultan Abdulaziz, he nominated the good players of light comedy which was a traditional Turkish theatre, to Muzika-i Hümayun and assigned them salary (Ali Rıza, 2001, p.155). Abdulaziz supported light comedy and has sought to make it popular. Musicians, calligraphers, writers and poets who were popular in his reign and settled in the palace , also reached an advanced level in their profession. Sultan, did not make religious and racial discrimination while protecting artists. Composer Nikogos who grow in the beginning of the XIX. Century and with Armani origin was called to the musical councils of Abdulaziz due to his ability of music, and advanced knowledge and his works liked (İnal, 1958, p.71). Abdul Aziz, tried to eliminate negative image of Turks in the West by supporting the foreign artists from abroad (Şeker, 2007, pp.68-71).

Artisans working in muralist house which was established at Topkapi Palace under the command of chief muralist , worked on all kinds of decoration arts from miniaturized books to decoration and painting of mosques and palaces. It was reported that as much as five hundred masters has been working in the palace muralist house of the Conqueror.

The art of painting emerged and developed in Iran. A workshop was assigned to muralist Şahkulu who was brought from Iran during Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent and a salary was established and he has performed the art in the muralist house of Arslanhane building . At the same time famous masters of ornamentation and miniature work Kara Memi, and Master Saban were working in the muralist house of Ottoman. In the early period of the Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent Master Kıncı Mahmut has also manifested himself by his works. During this period of Sultan III. Murat Ottoman painting lived its classic period . During this period, muralist Seyyid Lokman created his work "Hünernâme-i Al-i Osman". This work was ornamented with the most beautiful examples of 16th century Ottoman miniature art. ([http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osman%C4%B1\\_nak%C4%B1%C5%9F\\_sanat%C4%B1](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osman%C4%B1_nak%C4%B1%C5%9F_sanat%C4%B1) E. T.28.09.2012).

The period of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, was the beginning of a new era not for the Ottoman, but for other countries in the world. Teacher of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, Akşemseddin contributed to science by discovering the microbe for the first time. We must mention about an incident that took place in the period of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror again for the science. Turkish scientist Ali Kuşçu who thought mathematics, and astronomy in Samarkand, was invited to Istanbul by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, and Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror and the Ali Kuşçu, started the first serious astronomical research. In 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror had a strong

interest in science, supported many scientists. In fact, the palace of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, has become an academy.

## CONCLUSION

Mecenat work that began with the support of Gaius Clinus Maecenas who was the adviser and close friend of Roman Emperor, Augustus, to talented artists, made an enormous contribution in bringing important works of art to the societies, and world.

In today's concept of sponsorship, it emerged with cash assistance and service assistance for expectation of mutual benefit for support activities in various fields of business organizations, after the emergence of capitalism in the age of the enlightenment in the West . When we look at the first examples of mecenat, we see that mecen finds skilled persons, provides support financially for them for the recognition by the community of these individuals , in turn, the reputation of the mecen has increased , recognized by the community. We could think that mecenatte sometimes is a secret concern to demonstrate power and respect. For centuries, art patronage was carried out by rulers, princes and noble families without an expectation other than fame. The activities of the art protection and charity, given the name of Maecenas and charitable people were called mecen . In 1450's with the invention of the printing press and replacement of aristocracy with bourgeoisie, the monopoly of arts patronage was terminated and wealthy people also became mecen. Besides the literary arts such as poetry, the fine arts despited before supported as well .

Continuation of mecenat during the Renaissance was largely provided by Italian Medici family , they spent a significant amount of earnings for charity works. The artists in period of Medicis had to comply with the wishes of mecens. The works were determined in accordance with the wishes of the Medici family (Okay, 1998, p.38). Medici family has supported artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello, and Botticelli. In addition to Medicis, Este Sforza and Visconti families contributed in the ideas of the artists whom they have supported (Okay, 2005, p.27; Thiel, 1989, p.15). Art patronage started to be made in other European countries other than Italy. The prince of Schack from Munich , Adolf Friedrich, supported the painter Feuerbach and Böcklin , duke of Weimar the supported Goethe, a part of the mecens made support by buying the art products or by the direct financial help (Thiel, 1989, p.18; Okay, 2005, p.30).

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Mecenat that has a Western origin, formed in different ways in the East. Although mecenat examples by the government could be seen in the Ottoman period , mecenat on individual basis did not appear, since a bourgeois class did not develop . Art patronage has been undertaken by the palace , through the art lover rulers. As the palaces of Western countries, principalities, noble and rich people were mecen, while in the Ottomans, state was seen as the sole protector of the art.

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It could be seen that the mecenat activities that were carried out formerly by noble families and then wealthy families in the West, was done by the state with the commands of Ottoman sultans by one hand in the east. It is a well known fact that, support and protection of the art, and science in any manner significantly contributed to the emergence of the permanent great works in the territory where mecens exist.

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