

**OTTOMANS ABROAD: THE CIRCULATION AND TRANSLATION OF  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS**

**ERIN HYDE NOLAN**

Boston University School of Graduate Studies, 2017

Major Professors: Kim Sichel, Professor of History of Art and Architecture and Emine Fetvacı, Professor of History of Art and Architecture

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation maps a cross-cultural portrait atlas that traces Ottoman faces within the spaces and places of the nineteenth-century visual economy between 1863-1908. These photographic portraits reveal a reciprocal exchange and shared discourse between modernizing Ottoman and Euro-American worlds as mediated by expositions, publications, and museums. Three case studies are considered: sultanic portraits by Ottoman studios and their varied appearances in the picture press; the sumptuous album of regional Ottoman costumes commissioned in 1873 the *Elbise-i Osmaniyye* for the Weltausstellung Wien; and student portraits in a fifty-one volume photographic study gifted to the United States and Great Britain by Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1893 and 1894. It positions Ottoman portraits by photographers such as Pascal Sébah and Abdullah Frères as more than “Eastern” or “European,” “other” or “Islamic.” It considers these photographs multi-cultural, cosmopolitan, and politically complex entities that chart an international and networked history of art.

*Ottomans Abroad* explores the ways in which contradictory notions about Ottoman identity materialize in a range of portrait images, and demonstrates how these photographs confront the effects of cultural belonging in a place where identity, and representations of that identity, have always been fluid. My first chapter maps the stories behind the small number of Ottoman sultanic photographic portraits made of Abdülaziz and Abülhamid II between 1863 and 1908. My second chapter concentrates on the 1873 *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*, exploring sartorial customs and regional costumes as portraits in their own right. My third chapter concentrates on school imagery in the 1893 Abdülhamid II albums, identifying how these photographs localize the topography of the nineteenth-century imperial terra firma; it connects regional portraiture to regional landscape, thus, broadening representations of likeness in nineteenth-century photographs. By articulating a local history of Ottoman photographs, tracing individual images and the stories that surround them, this project argues that photographs not only represent cultural identity, they also produce it. In so doing, this dissertation subverts a conventional biographical model, situating Ottoman portrait photographs in a multivalent, messy and transnational framework, which, in turn, generates photographic meaning.